

Philosophy 2: Introduction to Ethics

Winter 2013
MWF: 9:15-10:20
E-mail: ejramirez@scu.edu

Instructor: Erick Ramirez
Office Hours: MW 2:10-4 pm
Office location: Kenna 207

Course Description

Ethics is the branch of philosophy dealing with questions about goodness, badness, rightness, and wrongness. Normative ethics offers answers to the question: what is the good? Ethics is also an *action-guiding* discipline. What this means is that a study of ethics should help you *apply* your normative theories make real world ethical decisions and give you the resources and tools to justify your ethical claims to others. In accordance with the mission of the Philosophy department at Santa Clara University, we will focus on building both a theoretical understanding of moral theory and how that understanding can be practically applied to contemporary moral questions.

This course should be understood as an introduction to the *practice* of engaging in ethical deliberation and so we will focus on and read about normative ethics. We'll also explore two other branches of ethics: meta-ethics and applied ethics.

Meta-ethics focuses on questions about the nature of morality itself. Is morality dependent on a religious foundation? Why/why not? Is there an objective basis for our moral claims or are all moral claims subjective? We'll begin the course looking at some of these questions and look at how, and to what degree, these challenges to ethical theory can be met.

'Applied ethics,' makes use of the theories of goodness and rightness and applies them to contemporary moral problems. We will end the quarter looking at two important issues in applied ethics: whether non-human animals have moral status/rights and whether (and to what degree) we have moral obligations to aid the distant needy. We will look at a variety of readings on both issues. Philosophy Department Mission Statement: <<http://www.scu.edu/cas/philosophy/mission-goals.cfm>>

Requirements

Grade Breakdown:

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1) | An in-class midterm exam focusing predominantly on issues pertaining to egoism, utilitarianism, deontology, and criticisms of these theories [25%] |
| 2) | Several short reading quizzes will be given throughout the course of the quarter. I will drop your lowest quiz grade [15%] |
| 3) | A final paper (~2400 words) applying your understanding of meta-ethics and normative ethics to address questions about global justice and vegetarianism [30%] |
| 4) | Three short 'application papers' in which students describe a contemporary event (using a specific source: news story, article, forum discussion, etc) and explain how material from the course applies to it [15% total, 5% each] |
| 5) | Consistent attendance and participation [15%] |

Late Assignments

Late assignments will not be accepted without prior notification to and an okay from me. This means giving me at least **24** hours notice that you will not be able to turn in a paper on time. You will be given each assignment far in advance of its due date so be prepared to explain why you couldn't complete an assignment within the allotted time frame.

If a paper will be turned in late it is subject to a penalty (out of fairness to students that turn their papers in on time) unless evidence of significant illness or other hardship is presented. Please see me if you have any questions regarding the policy over late papers.

Office Hours

I will hold office hours every week and am available by appointment also. Please don't hesitate to ask for other meeting times if you can't make my posted office hours.

Disabilities Accommodation:

To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources in Benson Center, (408) 554-4111 or TTY (408)554-5445. Students must register with Disability Resources and provide appropriate documentation to that office prior to receiving accommodations. For more information please refer to: <<http://www.scu.edu/advising/learning/disabilities/index.cfm>>

Academic Integrity:

The University is committed to academic excellence and integrity. Students are expected to do their own work and to cite any sources they use. A student who is guilty of a dishonest act in an examination, paper, or other work required for a course, or who assists others in such an act, may, at the discretion of the instructor, receive a grade of “**F**” for the course. In addition, a student found guilty of a dishonest act may be subject to sanctions, up to and including dismissal from the University, as a result of the student judicial process as described in the Student Handbook. A student who violates copyright laws, including those covering the copying of software programs, or who knowingly alters official academic records from this or any other institution is subject to similar disciplinary action. For more information please refer to: <<http://www.scu.edu/academics/bulletins/undergraduate/Academic-Integrity.cfm>>

Tentative Schedule

Below you will find a tentative reading schedule. All readings listed under under “HW” are required reading; those listed under [B] are recommended but not required. I will try to make recommended readings available on CAMINO but feel free to ask me for copies if they aren't available online. I've tried to keep readings short and accessible; this reading list is subject to modification.

Week 1

- M** Introductions to the course
HW: [A] Read “The Pink Guide to Taking Philosophy Classes” pages 1-10
- W** Reading Philosophy Articles, an Introduction to Claims, Arguments and Validity
HW: [A] Sayre-McCord “The Nature of Ethics”

- F** Making and Assessing Arguments Exercises
HW: [A] Rachels “Does Morality Depend on Religion?” 4.1-4.3; [B] section 4.4 is optional

Week 2

- M** Euthyphro's Dilemma and the Role of Religion in Ethics
HW: [A] Listen to Simon Blackburn, “Subjectivism” this is an audio interview available here: http://www.philosophybites.libsyn.com/simon_blackburn_on_moral_relativism and on our CAMINO course page
- W** Blackburn and Herodotus on Subjectivism and Relativism
HW: Sayre-McCord “Moral Relativism”

F Classes Canceled

*****Last Day to Turn In First Application Paper*****

- [B]** Optional Reading: Brink “The Autonomy of Ethics”

Week 3

- M.** **Classes Canceled - Martin Luther King Jr. Observance**
- W** Arguments Against Relativism, Discussion and Case Studies
HW: [A] Rachels “Egoism”
- F** Is Altruism Possible? The Challenge of Psychological and Ethical Egoism
HW: [A] Ring of Gyges Assignment
- [B]** Optional Readings: Joel Feinberg, “Psychological Egoism”; Jeremy Bentham, selections from *The Rationale of Reward* (94);

Week 4

- M** Egoism, the Ring of Gyges, and the Role of Emotion
HW: [A] Jesse Prinz, “The Genealogy of Morals” only pages 221-243 are required
- W** The Role of Emotions In Moral Judgments: Prinz's Sentimentalist Speaker-Relativism
HW: [A] Mill “Utilitarianism”
- F** Consequentialism, Utilitarianism, and Hedonism: An Introduction to Classical Utilitarianism
HW: [A] Sayre-McCord “Consequentialism: It's Difficulties”
- [B]** Optional Readings: David Brink, “Mill's Deliberative Utilitarianism” ; Henry West, “Reconstructing Mill's 'Proof' of the Principle of Utility;” John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*. “What Utilitarianism Is”

Week 5

- M** Mill's Expansion of Utilitarianism: Rule-Utilitarianism and the Harm Principle
HW: [A] Robert Nozick "The Experience Machine;" Williams "Against Utilitarianism"
- W** Nozick and Williams' Criticism of Utilitarian Hedonism
[A] Feinberg's "Offense Principle" homework assignment
Rachels "The Idea of A Social Contract"
- F** Social Contract Theory and the Prisoner's Dilemma
HW: [A] "The Role of Consent"

*****Midterm Study Guide Handed Out*****

- [B]** Optional Readings: Richard Arneson "Rawls Versus Utilitarianism In The Light Of Political Liberalism"; Richard Arneson "Consequentialism versus Special-Ties Partiality"; John Rawls "Classical Utilitarianism"

Week 6

- M** Problems for the Social Contract Theory"
HW: Kant "Ethics Is Based on Reason;" "Deontological Ethics" skip the section called "Ross' Ethics"
- W** Kantian Morality: The Goodwill and The Categorical Imperative
HW: Study for Midterm

*****Last Day to Turn In Second Application Paper*****

F MIDTERM

- [B]** Optional Readings: David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*. [2.3.3-4]; David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*. "Appendix 1: Concerning Moral Sentiment"

Week 7

Reflective Equilibrium: Testing our intuitions and theories
Case Study: The Moral Status of Non-Human Animals

M Classes Canceled – President's Day Observance

- W** An Introduction to Applied Ethics and Animal Welfare: "A Conversation with Koko"
HW: [A] Peter Singer "All Animals Are Equal"
- F** Human Equality, Animal Equality: Peter Singer's Argument
HW: [A] Tom Regan "Utilitarianism, Vegetarianism, and Animal Rights"
- [B]** Optional Readings: John Cohen "Do Animals Have Rights?"

Week 8

- M** Regan's Critique of Singer and a Rights-Based Argument for Equality
HW: [A] Ingmar Persson, "A Basis for (Interspecies) Equality"
- W** Moral Luck and Persson's Argument for Equality
HW: [A] Immanuel Kant "We Have Only Indirect Duties to Animals"
- F** Rational Agency As the Marker of Moral Status: Kant's Indirect Duty View
HW: [A] Elizabeth Anderson "Animal Rights and the Values of Nonhuman Life"

Week 9

- M** The Failure of A Single Criterion for Human Equality: Anderson's Contractualism
HW: [A] Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence and Morality"
- W** Global Justice, Inequality, and Singer's 'Famine, Affluence, and Morality'
HW: [A] Garrett Cullity, "Asking Too Much" skip sections 6 and 7
- F** Cullity, the Severe Demand, and an Internal Contradiction
HW: [A] Nell "Lifeboat Earth"

Final Paper Assignment Handed Out (due Finals week)

Week 10

- M** Nell and the Right Not to Be Killed
HW: [A] Jan Narveson "Is World Poverty A Moral Problem for the Wealthy?" focus especially on Narveson's arguments about economic *desert*
- W** Narveson on Desert and Global Poverty
HW: [A] Thomas Pogge "Assisting' the Global Poor"
- F** Pogge on Direct and Indirect Global Injustice:
HW: Work on Final Paper
- [B]** Optional Readings: Liam Murphy "The Demands of Beneficence"

*****Last Day to Turn In Third Application Paper*****

FINAL PAPER DUE XXX