

Ethics I [4AANA002], Autumn 2011
Lecture schedule and reading list

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Schedule

We will meet on Tuesdays from 12 – 1. If you wish to meet to discuss the material, please send me an email at the address above or stop by during office hours.

Reading List

The readings for this course will be available as a course packet.

If you are looking for helpful guides to supplement the readings, I can recommend two texts for issues in metaethics Alexander Miller, *An Introduction to Contemporary Metaethics* (Polity) and Michael Smith, *The Moral Problem* (Blackwell). For issues in normative ethics, I recommend Julia Driver, *Ethics: The Fundamentals* (Blackwell) and Mark Timmons, *Moral Theory* (Rowman & Littlefield). If you find a copy of *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory* that is reasonably priced, you should purchase it. Also, helpful entries under the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy are listed below. They are not required reading, but they are recommended.

Week 1: Introduction

Part I

Week 2: Non-Cognitivism

Q: If our moral judgments motivate us to act, are these judgments simply beliefs about how things are or are they the expression of something non-cognitive?

* Smith, “The Humean Theory of Motivation”

Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*

* Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic*

Hare, *The Language of Morals*

(See also [Moral Motivation](#) and [Moral Cognitivism vs. Non-Cognitivism](#))

Week 3: The Objectivity of Morality

Q: What reason is there to think that our moral beliefs are systematically in error?

Moore, *Principia Ethica*

Mackie, *Inventing Right and Wrong*

McDowell, “Values and Secondary Qualities”

Firth, “Ethical Absolutism and the Ideal Observer Theory”

(See also [Moral Non-Naturalism](#) and [Moral Anti-Realism](#))

Week 4: The Normativity of Morality

Q: If conforming to moral rules would only frustrate your desires, is there any reason to conform to these rules?

Williams, "Internal and External Reasons"

Foot, "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives"

Brink, "Kantian Rationalism: Inescapability, Authority, and Supremacy"

(See also [Internal and External Reasons](#))

Week 5: Moral Responsibility

Q: On the assumption that determinism is true, how can we be held responsible for our actions?

Augustine, *On the Free Choice of the Will*

van Inwagen, "The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism"

Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility"

(See also [Compatibilism](#), [Arguments for Incompatibilism](#), and [Free Will and Divine Foreknowledge](#))

Part II

Week 6: Utilitarianism

Q: When our acts affect one person, we aim to provide them with the greatest sum of benefits minus burdens understood in terms of pleasure and pain, so when our acts affect more than one person, should we not do likewise?

Mill, *Utilitarianism*

Moore, *Principia Ethica*

Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*

(See also [Consequentialism](#), [Hedonism](#), and [Well-Being](#))

Week 7: Utilitarianism (II)

Q: Because it is never rational to pick an acknowledged lesser good over a greater one, no acceptable moral theory could say that our obligation is to do anything but bring about the best states of affairs we can. Correct?

Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*

Foot, "Utilitarianism and the Virtues"

Vallentyne, "Against Maximizing Act Consequentialism"

(See also [Deontological Ethics](#))

Week 8: Virtue Ethics

Q: Why would you need a plurality of virtues to deal with moral conflict?

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*

Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* [You'll need to get this from the library. See Chapter 1.]

Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy"

Hursthouse, "Virtue Theory and Abortion"

Driver, "Virtue Theory"

(See also [Aristotle's Ethics](#) and [Virtue Ethics](#))

Week 9: Kantian Ethics

Q: There is nothing we can conceive of that is unconditionally good apart from the good will. What does that mean and why would anyone think that was true?

Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*

Baron, "The Alleged Repugnance of Acting from Duty"

(See also [Kant's Moral Philosophy](#) and [Kant and Hume on Morality](#))

Week 10: Pluralism and Particularism

Q: There might not be some single principle that tells us what makes right acts right, but are there some general principles that identify the reasons that together determines what our obligation is?

Ross, *The Right and the Good*

McNaughton, "An Unconnected Heap of Duties?"

Dancy, "Ethical Particularism and Morally Relevant Properties"

(See also [W. D. Ross](#) and [Moral Particularism](#))

Course requirements:

Assessment is by one two-hour exam (summative) taken in May, plus two 1000-word essays (formative), one essay to be handed in by the end of each miniterm (weeks 6 and 10). You will have a weekly tutorial (attendance at these is compulsory) for which you will need to produce a short (500-word) piece of writing to help prepare for the formative essays (see prompts above to get started); one student will also make a short (5 minute) presentation at each tutorial based on that week's written assignment.