

St John's University Spring 2018

Ethics. Honors Class. HON 2020 CRN 10517

MR 12:15 pm - 1:40 pm MARILLAC HALL 305

Professor Christian Perring

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Office Hours: Meetings can be arranged after class.

Textbook:

[Russ Shafer-Landau. The Fundamentals of Ethics 4th Edition](#)

[Publisher: Oxford University Press; 4 edition](#)

[ISBN-13: 9780190631390](#)

Course Description. This course will cover central philosophical debates about the nature and justification of morality and will focus on the role that morality plays in everyday life interacting with other people.

Bulletin Description

The philosophical study of ethics has a dual purpose: it seeks, on a theoretical level, to clarify and ground the meaning of ethical and moral concepts, such as right and wrong, good and bad, obligation, responsibility, and objectivity. This aspect is often called meta-ethics, and is the chief concentration of the philosophical study. In addition, like everyone else, philosophers have a practical interest in ethics; they want concrete directives to apply in their personal lives. These questions demand normative answers, the complementary concern of philosophical ethics. It should be obvious that normative answers inevitably presuppose meta-ethical commitments.

Course Goals

- Students will read, understand, and evaluate primary texts in Western Philosophy from which conceptions of the Human Good arise
- Students will learn about the historical development of Ethics in Western Philosophy, identifying the key principles and major figures
- Students will compare consequentialist and non-consequentialist theories of ethical justification
- Students will be introduced to the nature of moral disagreement, especially that which arises because of diverse life experiences and perspectives. In this context, students will consider the possibility of genuine moral progress in a manner that is both principled and respectful.

Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to define the central terms of philosophical ethics; a list of terms will be provided
- Students will be able to discuss the claim, and its importance, of objectivity in ethics
- Students will be able to present and critically discuss the principles of the major philosophical systems, especially those of Aristotle, Kant, and Mill
- Students will be able to apply the various lessons of these foundational systems to contemporary concerns, such as the possibility of happiness, the nature of moral rules and authority, the challenges of technology, and the justification of force in an age of terror
- Students will recognize the central importance for philosophical ethics of the dignity and inviolability of the human person, particularly in a society that is increasingly global and interdependent.

- Students will be able to articulate the sources of human dignity as well as the contemporary threats to it, such as violence, racism, poverty, terrorism, and discrimination.
- Students will understand the ethical foundations of social justice in its economic, social, gender, racial, and religious dimensions

On taking this course. You should come to this course questioning attitude and exploring ideas. You should be ready to engage in intellectual debate about important aspects of life. You should also be able to consider ideas that are new or foreign to you.

Skills: you will be developing your ability to do close reading of philosophical texts. You need to be able to see how arguments can be made to defend different points of view. You need to be able to engage in philosophical discussion both verbally and in writing.

SNOW DAYS etc.: If class gets cancelled due to bad weather or illness, I will assign online work as a substitute activity.

Attendance.

Students are expected to attend all classes. If you miss a class, you need to do make up work, summarizing and possibly discussing the assigned reading in at least 600 words. This must be submitted on Blackboard no later than 2 weeks after the missed class.

Penalty for missing a class with no make-up work done: 1% of total grade

Missing exams: if you miss an exam, you will need to have a documented excuse in order to do a make-up.

Personal Problems. Every semester some students have major problems that make them miss many classes or make them unable to complete assignments. I will not be in the position of judging whether your problem is serious enough to merit special treatment and second chances. I require a note from a dean or your academic advisor saying that you deserve opportunities that other students did not get. Therefore if you are having personal problems, you should stay in communication with your academic advisor, a dean, or someone at St John's with whom you are ready to share details about what is going in in your life. It may be possible to work out a solution, but you should be staying in communication with me and your advisor.

Required Work (Subject to change)

Paper (35%)

Midterm exam (25%)

3 Assignments on Blackboard Discussion Forums (30%)

Attendance and participation (10%)

Paper: At least 2500 words.

Final deadline. May 2. No work accepted after this date.

Schedule. Subject to Revision

Date	Topic	Reading	Work Due
Jan Thur 18	Introduction	FUND: INTRODUCTION	
Mon	The Big	James Feiser: Ethics. http://www.iep.utm.edu/ethics/	

22	Theories: Outline		
Th 25	Utilitarianism	FUND: Chs 9+10	
M 29	Kantian Rationalism	FUND: Chs 11+12	
Feb Th 1	WD Ross: Duties and Intuitions	FUND: Chs 15 + 16; Anthony Skelton: WD Ross. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/william-david-ross/	
M 5	Aristotle: Virtue Ethics	FUND: Ch 17. Richard Kraut: Aristotle's Ethics. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/	
Th 8	Natural Law	FUND: Ch 6; Mark Murphy: The Natural Law Tradition in Ethics. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/natural-law-ethics/	
M 12	Ethics of Care	FUND Ch 18; Virginia Held: The Ethics of Care as Moral Theory [Available on Blackboard]	First Online Assignment
Th 15	Metaethics: An overview	FUND: Chs 19, 20, 21	
Wed Feb 28: ONLINE WORK	Experimental Philosophy	Mark Alfano & Don Loeb. Experimental Moral Philosophy: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/experimental-moral/	
Mar Th 1			MIDTERM EXAM
M 5	Hume: Morality and Emotions	Rachel Cohon: Hume's Moral Philosophy https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hume-moral/	
Th 8	Dewey: Morality as an Experiment	Elizabeth Anderson: Dewey's Moral Philosophy. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/dewey-moral/	
M 12	Contractarianis m	FUND: Chs: 13+14	
Th 15	Habermas: Discourse Ethics	Jürgen Habermas 1998. Communicative Ethics. https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/habermas/1998/ communicative-ethics.htm Torn Halves blog: Habermas's Discourse Ethic In A Nutshell, http://tornhalves.blogspot.com/2008/09/habermass- discourse-ethic-in-nutshell.html	Paper Topics provided.
M 19	Prinz: Morality and Emotions	Jesse Prinz THE EMOTIONAL BASIS OF MORAL JUDGMENTS. http://subcortex.com/PrinzEmotionalBasisMoralJudgments.pd f Jesse Prinz Can Moral Obligations Be Empirically Discovered? http://subcortex.com/EmpiricallyDiscoveredMoralsPrinz.pdf Do Emotions and Morality Mix? A philosopher explains how feelings influence right and wrong. Kazuyoshi Nomachi / Corbis	

		LAUREN CASSANI DAVIS https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2016/02/how-do-emotions-sway-moral-thinking/460014/	
Th 22	Writing a Philosophy Paper		
M 26	Moral Emotions: Love (Romance, Family, Friends)	Kieran Setiya, "Love and the Value of a Life" (on BB) Kate Abramson Adam Leite, Love as a Reactive Emotion http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/233898?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents J. David Velleman, Love as a Moral Emotion (on BB) Michael Smith, THE 'WHAT' AND 'WHY' OF LOVE'S REASONS http://www.princeton.edu/~msmith/mypapers/TheWhatandWhyofLovesReasons.pdf	Second Online Assignment
April M 2	Hate, Anger, and Resentment	Rae Langton, Virtues of Resentment http://web.mit.edu/langton/www/pubs/VirtuesOfResentment.pdf Martha Nussbaum: Beyond Anger https://aeon.co/essays/there-s-no-emotion-we-ought-to-think-harder-about-than-anger Anger and Forgiveness Lecture by philosopher Martha Nussbaum https://youtu.be/fGcHFD9wtoQ Martha Nussbaum, "What Is Anger, and Why Should We Care?" https://youtu.be/0UmWoqhkJdU	Paper drafts due
Th 5	Integrity, Honor, Respect	Cox, Damian, La Caze, Marguerite and Levine, Michael, "Integrity", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = < https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/integrity/ >. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/integrity/ Peter Olsthoorn, Honor as a Social Motive, https://philpapers.org/archive/OLSHIP.pdf Dillon, Robin S., "Respect", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = < https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/respect/ >. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/respect/ Stephen Riley and Gerhard Bos, Human Dignity http://www.iep.utm.edu/hum-dign/	
M 9	Shame, Embarrassment	The Shame of the Philosophers. History of the Emotions Blog entry https://emotionsblog.history.qmul.ac.uk/2012/02/the-shame-of-the-philosophers/ Heidi Maibom, The Descent of Shame Jennifer Manion, The Moral Relevance of Shame (in BB)	

		<p>Luke Purshouse, Embarrassment: A Philosophical Analysis (in BB)</p> <p>Richard Arneson Shame, Stigma and Disgust in the Decent Society, (in BB)</p>	
Th 12	Modesty, Humility	<p>Daniel Statman, Modesty, Pride, and Realistic Self-Assessment (in BB)</p> <p>Norvin Richards, Is Humility a Virtue?</p>	
M 16	Moral Responsibility: Theories	<p>Peter Strawson: Freedom and Resentment (in BB).</p> <p>Knobe, J. & Doris, J. Responsibility. (2010). In J. Doris and The Moral Psychology Research Group. The Moral Psychology Handbook. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 321-354.</p> <p>https://campuspress.yale.edu/joshuaknobe/files/2016/02/Knobe-Doris-y0gfjw.pdf</p>	
Th 19	Blaming and Punishment	<p>D. Justin Coates and Neal A. Tognazzini, The Nature and Ethics of Blame</p> <p>http://djustincoates.com/uploads/3/1/5/2/3152230/justin_et_al-2012-philosophy_compass.pdf</p> <p>Thomas Scanlon, 2013, "Interpreting Blame"</p> <p>http://lawweb.usc.edu/centers/clp/events/documents/Scanlon_InterpretingBlame_final.pdf</p> <p>Mason, M., 2011, "Blame: Taking it Seriously", Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, 83: 473–481. (in BB)</p>	Paper Due
M 23	Excuses	<p>JL Austin, A Plea for Excuses</p> <p>https://sites.ualberta.ca/~francisp/NewPhil448/AustinPlea56.pdf</p> <p>Botterell, A. (2009). A Primer on the Distinction between Justification and Excuse. Philosophy Compass, 4 (1), 172–196.</p> <p>http://publish.uwo.ca/~abottere/JustificationExcuse.pdf</p> <p>Miranda del Corral, Excuses and Exemptions, Tópicos, Revista de Filosofía,</p>	
Th 26	Forgiveness	<p>Garrard, Eve & David McNaughton, 2002, "In Defence of Unconditional Forgiveness",</p> <p>http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.405.1078&rep=rep1&type=pdf</p> <p>Paul Hughes, 2016, "Two Cheers for Forgiveness (and Even Fewer for Revenge)" (in BB)</p> <p>Byron Williston The Importance of Self-Forgiveness, (in BB)</p>	
M 30	Summing up.		Third Online Assignment