PHIL 170/270 ETHICSOC 170: Ethical Theory
Stanford University - Winter 2022
Tue/Th 9:45-11:15 Littlefield 103

Instructors

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Office Hours TBD   Office Hours: TBD

Description
In this course we will read a number of important papers in Ethical Theory (most written in the second half of the 20th century). Rather than a comprehensive survey, the papers are meant to represent some major ideas and themes that continue to shape philosophical ethics. In that way, this material can be thought of as "foundational" (though not necessarily in the sense of being more important). By the end of the course, you'll have done a deep dive into some challenging but worthwhile philosophy, and have a solid basis for studying more philosophical ethics on a wider array of topics (whether in future courses or on your own). The material is challenging, and the course presupposes at least some familiarity with the tools and methods of philosophy; some background in ethical theory in particular is helpful.

Ideally, this course will run as a relatively free-flowing mix of my lecturing on the material, your questions about it, and all of us discussing it together. In addition, there'll be a one hour discussion section led by David Gottlieb, which you are required to attend.

Texts & Readings
All papers will be posted on Canvass and/or available online using your Stanford log-in credentials. **Please plan on reading each paper at least twice before we meet to discuss it.**

Assignments, Grades, Extra Credit
Your grade for the course will be determined according to the following (you must complete **all** required assignments in order to pass the course).

15% Participation (determined by your TA)
15% Three Short Assignments (5% each)
20% 1st paper (3-4 page) paper
25% 2nd paper (3-4page) paper
25% Final Exam

Assignments should be submitted on Canvas. Assignments more than two days late **will not be accepted** without prior arrangement, at the discretion of the instructors.

Philosophy Graduate Students (PhD only – MA/co-term students should follow the other assignment schedule) should write two 9-12 page papers. The first should be submitted by the end of week 6; the second on the day of the final exam. Topics should be discussed and approved in advance.

Schedule
Specific dates by which you are to do the reading assignments will be announced in class. In fact, everything on this schedule is tentative - we may speed up or (more likely) slow down, as necessary, which may also require changing due dates for the assignments. Please stay tuned for updates both in class and on Canvass.

Week I (1/4, 1/6): Introduction
        T: Introduction (no reading)
        Th: John Rawls "Two Concepts of Rules" (1955) *The Philosophical Review*
            J.C.C. Smart "Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism" (1956) *The Philosophical Quarterly*

Recommended "Consequentialism" *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*
Thursday First Short Assignment Distributed – Critical Response Paper (1-1.5 pages)

Week II (1/11, 1/13): Utilitarianism & Its Limits
  T: Bernard Williams "A Critique of Utilitarianism (sections 4-6)"
  Th: John Taurek "Should the Numbers Count?" (1977) *Philosophy and Public Affairs*
  Thursday First Short Assignment Due 5pm

Week III: (1/18, 1/20): Constraints & Contracts
  Tu: Thomas Nagel "War and Massacre" (1972) *Philosophy and Public Affairs*
  Th: John Rawls "Justice as Fairness" (1958) *The Philosophical Review*
  Thursday 2nd Short Assignment Distributed – Argument Reconstruction Assignment

Week IV (1/25, 1/27): Contractualism cont'd
  T: T.M. Scanlon "Contractualism & Utilitarianism" (1982)
  Th: Charles Mills "Ideal Theory as Idealogy" (2005)
  Thursday Second Short Assignment Due 5pm
  Friday First Paper Topics Distributed

Week V (2/1, 2/3): Kantian Ethics
  T: *Guidelines on Writing Philosophy Papers* by Jim Pryor (Tuesday's class will focus on writing)
    Kant *Groundwork* Part I (Parts II & III) required if you have not read before)
    Recommended: David Velleman "A Brief Introduction to Kantian Ethics" (online)
      "Kant's Moral Philosophy" *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*
  Th: Christine Korsgaard *"*Two Arguments Against Lying" (1988)
  Friday First Paper Due by 5pm

Week VI (2/8, 2/10): Kantian Ethics Cont'd
  T: Barbara Herman "On the Value of Acting from the Motive of Duty" (1981) *The Philosophical Review*
  Th: Tamar Schapiro "Three Conceptions of Action in Moral Theory" (2001) *Nous*
  Friday Second Paper Topic Distributed

Week VII (2/15, 2/17): Dissent and Virtue Theory
  T: G.E.M. Anscombe "Modern Moral Philosophy" (1958) *The Journal of Philosophy*
  Th: Philippa Foot "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives (1972) *The Philosophical Review*
  Wednesday 2nd Paper Draft (optional) due 5pm

Week VIII (2/22, 2/25): Virtue Cont'd
  T: Warren Quinn "Putting Rationality in Its Place" (1993)
  Th: John McDowell "Virtue and Reason"
  Wednesday Second Paper Due 5pm
  Thursday Third Short Assignment Distributed – Final Exam Question Writing Assignment

Week IX (3/1, 3/3): The Limits of Ethical Theory
  T: Bernard Williams "Persons, Character, and Morality" (1976)
  Th: Susan Wolf "Moral Saints" (1982) *The Journal of Philosophy*
  Tuesday Third Short Assignment Due 5pm
  Friday Take Home Exam Distributed

<u>Week X (3/8, 3/10): Morality and Meaning</u>
   T: Bernard Williams "Moral Luck" (1976) *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*
    Recommended Thomas Nagel "Moral Luck" (1976) *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*
   Th: Wrap up/no new reading scheduled
   Wednesday 3/16 Final Exam Due

A Note on Working with Others
Talking about philosophy with other people is one of the best ways to develop your philosophical skills and deepen your understanding of the material. You are strongly encouraged to discuss readings and assignments with one another (or with friends, relatives, neighbors, etc.) outside of class/sections. However, **all work submitted must be original,** and the ideas and/or words of others must always be properly cited and credited in any work. If you have any questions or doubts regarding when others should be acknowledged, ask your instructor or TA.