

Ethics

2024-2025

Bastiaan Hoorneman

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Points: 5 ECTS

Level: 100

Course code: 5011VETA

Lecture: Mondays 11:15 - 13:00, Lipsius 0.11

Tutorials: Group 1: Mondays 15:15 - 17:00, PJ VETH 0.07

Group 2: Tuesdays 11:15 - 13:00, Lipsius 2.12

Group 3: Fridays 13:15 - 15:00, Huizinga 0.26

Prospectus: <https://studiegids.universiteitleiden.nl/en/courses/127778/ethics>

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About the course

Ethics is that part of philosophy that seeks to provide understanding of questions such as ‘how to live?’, ‘what ought I do?’, ‘what do I owe others?’, ‘what is good and why?’. These questions come back in various forms in various traditions of thought. In this course we will look at the role that concepts such as values, rights, duties and obligations have to do with these questions and possible answers to them through the study of both contemporary and classical texts. In addition, we will look at things like character, happiness, suffering, and, indeed, the meaning of life. We will investigate whether, and if so, how we can justify the various answers to these questions. Are there appropriate and plausible answers to these questions or is morality simply a matter of subjective feeling?

Course objectives

This course aims to make students familiar with elementary concepts and theories of philosophical ethics. The aim is to educate students to such a level that they can understand ethical theories, recognize these, and use elements of these in valid argumentation.

Students who successfully complete the course will have a good understanding of:

- the following concepts and distinctions: value, duty, virtue, consequentialism, utilitarianism, deontology, social contract; happiness; well-being; virtue, subjectivism, realism, anti-realism, cognitivism, non-cognitivism, naturalism, relativism.
- the ethical theories of central authors in the Western tradition: Aristoteles, Hume, Kant, Mill, Plato, Hobbes, Williams, Scanlon, Nussbaum, Nietzsche, Sartre, Ayer.
- the arguments and the main claims of the supplied study materials.

Students who successfully complete the course will be able to:

- connect these concepts, distinctions, and theories and apply these in simple philosophical argument within ethics;
- independently study and comprehend simple texts in ethics.

Organization of the course

The lectures will be dedicated to general introduction to the topic and the various theories. Note that the material of the lectures is also part of the exam!

The tutorials are dedicated to close reading and analysis of some of the readings as well as discussion about the themes in the readings in smaller groups.

You are expected to read the texts in preparation for the lectures and tutorials. For a detailed overview of the lectures and tutorials, as well as the readings, consult the Program below. Pay close attention to which tutorial group you belong and join the correct group.

Readings

All readings are compiled in the Reader **Ethics 2024-2025**. You can order this reader at <http://www.readeronline.leidenuniv.nl>

Note that once you have paid for the Reader, you can also access all the texts online through the university library website. Any other materials will be made available through BrightSpace.

NB. Make sure that you buy the *correct* reader—and not a reader meant for another Ethics course.

Participation

Attendance.

The lecture and the tutorial are mandatory. You cannot miss more than three (3) classes *for whatever reason*.

Brightspace.

There is a Reader Ethics 2024-2025 that you need to order at [Readeronline](#). All other material, announcements, results, etc. can be found on Brightspace.

Assessment

Two written digital, in situ exams.

The first, midterm exam covers the first half of the material of this course. The second, final exam in January will cover the second half of the material. Participation in the midterm exam is *mandatory* for participation in the final exam. Without it, you cannot take the final exam in January and you will have to take the resit exam. There is one resit exam for this course. It consists of a digital exam about *all* the material covered. No separate resits will be offered for mid-term or final tests. The mark for the resit replaces any partial result.

The midterm exam and final exam are digital exams that you will make in a specially

dedicated exam room at the university. You *cannot* make this exam at home. The exams are closed book exams.

Exam materials.

The exams assess all literature in the Reader Ethics 2024-2025 (including those parts not discussed during class) as well as the material of the lectures.

Practice Questions.

There will be a couple of practice questions each week. You are to make those questions before each tutorial. You can find these questions on Brightspace.

Final grade

The final grade is determined using the following calculation:

- Midterm 40%
- Final 60%

Resit.

If you score less than a 5,5 overall, you have to take part in the resit. The resit is one exam covering the whole course.

Review and feedback.

Partial results for all exams will be posted on BrightSpace together with model answers. For each exam there will be opportunity to review answers and results. The final grades will be posted through uSis.

Remarks.

Note that the results for the various parts of the course are valid only during the academic year 2024-2025. In other words, if you do not complete the course in this academic year, you will have to retake the entire course and exam next academic year.

Should you foresee any problems with these requirements, or if you experience any problems during the course that might impede your studies, please inform Bastiaan Hoorneman as soon as possible, so we can see how to help you.

Finally, if you drop the course—no hard feelings, but we would appreciate if you let us know.

PROGRAM

1. *What is philosophical ethics?*

Lecture

Gilman, “An Unnatural Mother”

Le Guin, “The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas”

Tutorial

Plato, *The Republic*

2. *Classical utilitarianism*

Lecture

Mill, *Utilitarianism*. Chapters 1, 2 and 4.

Nozick, “The Experience Machine”

Huxley, *Brave New World*.

Tutorial

Mill, *Utilitarianism*. Chapter 2. (NB!)

3. *Arguments for and against utilitarianism*

Lecture

Kagan, *The Limits of Morality*

Williams, *A Critique of Utilitarianism*.

Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*.

Tutorial

Kagan, *The Limits of Morality*

Williams, *A Critique of Utilitarianism*.

4. *No Class*

5. *Well-being and happiness*

Lecture

Griffin, *Well-being: its meaning, measurement, and moral importance*

Nozick, “The Experience Machine”

Kazez, *The Weight of Things, Philosophy and the Good Life*.

Tutorial

Griffin, *Well-being: its meaning, measurement, and moral importance*

Nozick, "The Experience Machine"

6. *Kant's rational foundation of morality*

Lecture

Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Section 1

Baldwin, "Going to Meet the Man"

Tutorial

Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Section 1

7. *Kant's laws of morality*

Lecture

Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Section 2

Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Tutorial

Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Section 2

8. *Midterm*

Thursday 31 October 2024

13:00 - 15:00 Universitair Sportcentrum

9. *Rationality as a basis for morality*

Lecture

Hobbes, *Leviathan*

Golding, *Lord of the Flies*

Johnson, "The Sea Serpent"

Tutorial

Gauthier, "Why Contractarianism?"

10. Reasonableness as a basis for morality: autonomy and contractualism

Lecture

Watson, “Some Considerations in Favor of Contractualism”
Scanlon, *What We Owe To Each Other*
Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange*.
Baldwin, “Going to Meet the Man”

Tutorial

Scanlon, *What We Owe To Each Other*

11. Eudaimonia and virtues

Lecture

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Tutorial

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*

12. Modern virtue ethics and the functions of moral theory and of values

Lecture

Nussbaum, “Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach”
Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*.
Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*

Tutorial

Nussbaum, “Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach”
Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*.

13. Metaethics: objectivism in ethics?

Lecture

Fisher, *Metaethics, An Introduction*
Enoch, “Why I Am an Objectivist about Ethics (And Why You Are, Too)”

Tutorial

Enoch, “Why I Am an Objectivist about Ethics (And Why You Are, Too)”

14. Metaethics: subjectivism in ethics?

Lecture

Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*

Mackie, “Subjectivism in Ethics”

Tutorial

Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*

Mackie, “Subjectivism in Ethics”

15. Final

Friday 10 January 2025

13:00 - 15:00 Universitair Sportcentrum
