

# Sample Syllabus – Intro to Moral Theory: Classical Approaches

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2020

Summary: This module of study involves two 1 hour lectures every week for 10 weeks at an undergraduate level on topics in contemporary moral theory.

## Week 1: The Moral Problem and Moral Theories

Lecture 1: The Moral Problem (Reading: Michael Smith, The Moral Problem, Chapter 1.)

Lecture 2: Moral Theories (Reading: Shelly Kagan, Normative Ethics, Chapter 1.)

## Week 2: Utilitarianism

Lecture 1: Hedonism (Reading: J.S. Mill, Utilitarianism Blackwell Publishing 2003, Chapters 1 and 2.)

Lecture 2: Act-Utilitarianism (Reading: J.S. Mill, Utilitarianism Blackwell Publishing 2003, Chapter 4.)

## Week 3: Kantian Deontology

Lecture 1: The Nature of Morality (Reading: Immanuel Kant, Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals, eds. Gregor and Timmermann, Preface and Section I.)

Lecture 2: Autonomy (Reading: Immanuel Kant, Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals, eds. Gregor and Timmermann, Section II.)

## Week 4: Objections to Utilitarianism and Kantian Deontology

Lecture 1: Objections to Utilitarianism (Reading: James Rachels, The Elements of Moral Philosophy, Chapter 8.)

Lecture 2: Objections to Kantianism (Reading: James Rachels, The Elements of Moral Philosophy, Chapter 9.)

Week 5: Non-Kantian Deontology.

Lecture 1: The Will Theory of Rights (Reading: Hart, H. L. A. 1955. "Are There Any Natural Rights?" *The Philosophical Review* 64 (2): 175–91.)

Lecture 2: The Interest Theory of Rights (Reading: Raz, Joseph. *The Morality of Freedom*, Chapter 7.)

Week 6: Virtue Ethics

Lecture 1: Virtue Ethics (Reading James Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, Chapter 13.)

Lecture 2: Normativity of Virtue Ethics (Reading: Rosalind Hursthouse, 'Normative Virtue Ethics', in Roger Crisp (ed.), *How Should One Live?*.)

Week 7: Contractualism

Lecture 1: Contractualism (Reading: Thomas Scanlon, *What we owe to each other*, Chapters 4 and 5.)

Lecture 2: Idealised Contracts (Reading: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Chapter 6.)

and

Week 8: Pluralism

Lecture 1: Rossian Pluralism (Reading: WD Ross, *The Right and The Good*, Chapter 2.)

Lecture 2: Non-Rossian Pluralism (Reading: Ben Sachs, *Explaining Right and Wrong*, Chapter 5.)

Week 9: Moral Scepticism

Lecture 1: Evolutionary Debunking (Reading: Sharon Street, *Philosophical Studies* (2006) 127:109–166.)

Lecture 2: Against Evolutionary Debunking (Reading: Justin Clarke-Doane, "Morality and Mathematics: The Evolutionary Challenge" *Ethics*, Vol. 122, No. 2 (January 2012), pp. 313–340.)

Week 10: Moral Methodology

Lecture 1: Moral Theory and its Dependence (Reading: John Rawls, "Independence of Moral Theory" *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, Vol. 48 (1974–1975), pp. 5–22.)

Lecture 2: Moral Theory and the Gap between Facts and Principles (Reading: G. A. Cohen, *Facts and Principles*, *Philosophy & Public Affairs* Vol. 31, No. 3 (Summer, 2003), pp. 211–245.)

# Applied Ethics: Wealth inheritance, Capital Punishment, Conceptual Ethics/Engineering

## Week 1: Wealth Inheritance

Lecture 1: What is Applied Ethics and Wealth Inheritance (Reading: Daniel Halliday, *The Inheritance of Wealth: Justice, Equality, and the Right to Bequeath*, Introduction.)

Lecture 2: Libertarianism (Reading: Daniel Halliday, *The Inheritance of Wealth: Justice, Equality, and the Right to Bequeath*, Chapter 7.)

## Week 2: Egalitarianism

Lecture 1: Liberal-Egalitarianism (Reading: John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, Part II, and John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* 1999, Sections 43–45.)

Lecture 2: Luck-Egalitarianism (Reading: Daniel Halliday, *The Inheritance of Wealth: Justice, Equality, and the Right to Bequeath*, Chapter 4.)

## Week 3: Objections and Problems

Lecture 1: Libertarianism and its view of Property (Reading: Liam Murphy and Thomas Nagel, *The Myth of Ownership*, §VII of Chapter 2 and §VIII-IX of Chapter 3.)

Lecture 2: Egalitarianism and Inequality of Social Relations (Reading: Elizabeth Anderson “What is the point of equality?”, *Ethics*, Vol. 109, No. 2 (January 1999), pp. 287-337.)

## Week 4: Capital Punishment

Lecture 1: Issues and Justifications (Reading: Matthew Kramer *The Ethics of Capital Punishment: A Philosophical Investigation of Evil and Its Consequences*, Chapter 1.)

Lecture 2: Consequentialist Justifications (Reading: Matthew Kramer *The Ethics of Capital Punishment: A Philosophical Investigation of Evil and Its Consequences*, Chapter 2 Sections 2.1–2.2.)

## Week 5: Non-Consequentialist

Lecture 1: Other Consequentialist Justifications, Incapacitation and Expressive (Reading: Matthew Kramer *The Ethics of Capital Punishment: A Philosophical Investigation of Evil and Its Consequences*, Chapter 4 Section 4.1 and Chapter 5 Section 5.1–5.2.)

Lecture 2: Non-Consequentialist Justifications: Retributive and Purgative. (Reading: Matthew Kramer *The Ethics of Capital Punishment: A Philosophical Investigation of Evil and Its Consequences*, Chapter 3 Sections 3.1–3.2.)

#### Week 6: Objections and Problems

Lecture 1: Substantive Objections (Reading: Matt Stichter ‘The structure of death penalty arguments’, *Res Publica* 20, 2 (2014): 129–43.)

Lecture 2: Procedural Objections (Reading: Benjamin S. Yost, *Against Capital Punishment*, Chapter 3 and 4.)

#### Week 7: Conceptual Engineering/ Conceptual Ethics

Lecture 1: Conceptual Analysis and its Problems (Reading: Burgess, Alexis and David Plunkett. “Conceptual Ethics I”. In: *Philosophy Compass* 8.12 (2013), pp. 1091–1101. and Cappelen, Herman. *Fixing Language: An Essay on Conceptual Engineering*. 2018, Chapter 1–3.)

Lecture 2: Concepts: Philosophical or Psychological? (Reading: Carey, Susan. “Précis of The Origin of Concepts”. In: *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 34.3 (2011), pp. 113–124. and Machery, Edouard “Précis of Doing without Concepts”. In: *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 33.2–3 (2010), pp. 195–206.)

#### Week 8: Types of Conceptual Engineering

Lecture 1: Conceptual Amelioration/Revision (Reading: E. Díaz-León *Descriptive vs. Ameliorative Projects: The Role of Normative Considerations, Conceptual Engineering and Conceptual Ethics* 2020.)

Lecture 2: Concept Replacement (Reading: Kevin Scharp, “Replacing Truth,” *Inquiry* 50: 606–621, 2007.)

#### Week 9: Concepts and Meaning

Lecture 1: Concepts and Meaning as Distinct (Reading: Sarah Sawyer, *Talk and Thought, Conceptual Engineering and Conceptual Ethics* 2020.)

Lecture 2: Metalinguistic Negotiation and Disagreement (Reading: Plunkett, David and Timothy Sundell. “Disagreement and the Semantics of Normative and Evaluative Terms”. In: *Philosophers’ Imprint* 13.23 (2013), pp. 1–37.)

#### Week 10: Limits and Applications of Conceptual Engineering and Applications

Lecture 1: As a Methodology for Philosophy (Reading: Plunkett, David. “Which Concepts Should We Use?: Metalinguistic Negotiations and The Methodology of Philosophy”. In: *Inquiry* 58.7–8 (2015), pp. 828–874.)

Lecture 2: As a Methodology for Philosophy (Reading: Kevin Scharp, Philosophy as the Study of Defective Concepts, Conceptual Engineering and Conceptual Ethics 2020.)