

# 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: Contract Based

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

Lecture 2: Contractarianism (Reading: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Chapter 2 and Chapter 6 Sections 51–52.)  
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.)