Review: The goal of the course is to learn how to provide valid arguments for (moral) value claims.

Claim: A claim is a statement about how things are, and is typically expressed by a sentence in the indicative mood.

This means that it makes sense to preface an indicative mood sentence by the locution: "It is true/false that"

An *empirical* **claim** is a claim whose truth or falsity can be determined (if at all) by empirical methods.

e.g. "Large amounts of Vitamin D prevent cancer"

A conceptual claim is a claim whose truth or falsity can be determined (if at all) by pure reason (logical/conceptual) methods.

e.g. "Every even number greater than 2 can be written as the sum of two prime numbers"

Do empirical claims *also* require conceptual or logical methods to determine their truth?

A value claim requires not only empirical and conceptual methods, but also value principles, to determine its truth or falsity

e.g. "It was wrong for Pinochet to torture dissident Chileans"

Argument: a set of statements (premises) given to prove another statement (the conclusion).

Practical syllogism: an argument in support of a value claim (value judgement)

Valid argument: An argument such that, *if* all the premises are true, then the conclusion *must* be true (or, *cannot* be false)

One powerful technique is to note the "pattern" of the argument

Generally speaking, arguments with the same pattern have the same logical nature: they're all valid or invalid.

Examples:
1. If you're going to San Francisco, you should wear flowers in your hair.
2. You're going to San Francisco.
3. You should wear flowers in your hair.

Pattern? (Called *modus ponens*)

1. If P, then Q
2. P
3. Q

P, Q, R, … refer to complete indicative sentences (claims)

Conditional statements:

If P (antecedent), then Q (consequent)

Some other patterns:

Modus tollens (denying the consequent)

1. If P, then Q
2. Not Q
3. Not P

1. If it is a good month, then I'll lose 5 kg.
2. I won't lose 5 kg.
3. It isn't (won't be) a good month.

Disjunctive syllogism:

1. P or Q	1. P or Q
2. Not P	2. Not Q
3. Q	3. P

1. The sample is contaminated or OJ did it.
2. OJ didn't do it.
3. The sample is contaminated.

Hypothetical syllogism:

1. If P then Q
2. If Q then R
3. If P then R

1. Pluto is not a planet or Ceres is a planet.
2. Ceres is not a planet.
3. Pluto is not a planet.

Example:
1. If we find life on Mars, life arose independently at least twice.
2. If life arose independently at least twice, human beings are not alone in the universe.
3. If we find life on Mars, then human beings are not alone in the universe.

Constructive dilemma:

1. P or Q
2. If P then R
3. If Q then R
4. R

Patterns with "categories": Categories are groups or set of things: e.g., dogs, cats, left-handed people, things that go bump in the night

One valid categorical syllogism pattern

Barbara (1)
1. All A are B
2. All B are C
3. All A are C

Example
1. All LIBS 7002 students are going to do well on the counterexample quiz.
2. All those who are going to do well on the counterexample quiz are contrary people.
3. ?

A = LIBS 7002 students
B = those who are going to do well on the counterexample quiz
C = contrary people

We use A, B, C, … to refer to categories

Barbara (2)
1. All *A* are *B*
2. *x* is an *A* .
3. *x* is a *B*

Here, "x" refers to an individual thing.

1. All men are mortal.
2. Socrates is a man.
3. Socrates is mortal.

Invalid arguments:

Your second quiz will ask you to recognize whether sample arguments are valid or invalid.

If an argument is **valid**, say so, and give its name (if you remember it: bonus 1 mark)

If an argument is **invalid**, you will be asked to give and explain a "counterexample." (Two of these have names: if you remember them, you also get a bonus of 1 mark)

One way to show that an argument is invalid is to imagine a situation in which all the premises are true, but the conclusion is false

Example
1. If it's raining, then the sidewalks are wet.
2. The sidewalks are wet.
3. It's raining.

Proof by counterexample: We describe a possible situation in which the premises are all true, but the conclusion is false.

This shows the argument is invalid, since a valid argument **must** have a true conclusion, if its premises are all true.

(1) is usually true (unless the sidewalks are coated or under cover), so this is easy to imagine.

We can also easily imagine (2) that the sidewalks are wet.

Given that both premises are true, is it now *possible* that the conclusion is FALSE, that is, that it's NOT raining?

Some other examples:
1. All humans are mammals.
2. Some mammals walk on four legs.
3. Some humans walk on four legs.

Counterexample?
1. No humans are more than 1000 kg.
2. Some creatures that are more than 1000 kg. are not mammals.
3. Some mammals are not human.

Counterexample?

1. If Wimpy is hungry, then he will eat.
2. Wimpy is not hungry.
3. Wimpy will not eat.

1. Some women are left-handed.
2. All left-handed people chew gum.
3. Some women do not chew gum.

Counterexample?

Two common invalid argument patterns

A. Denying the antecedent
1. If P, then Q
2. Not P
3. Not Q

1. If tomorrow is Sunday, then I'll go for a walk.
2. Tomorrow is not Sunday.
3. I won't go for a walk.

B. Affirming the consequent
1. If P, then Q
2. Q
3. P

1. If tomorrow is Sunday, then I'll eat.
2. I will eat.
3. Tomorrow is Sunday.

Recall the general pattern for practical syllogisms

Empirical/conceptual claims
Value principle.
Value conclusion.

Recall also that we seek **sound** arguments (valid arguments with true premises)

So, to evaluate arguments for soundness, we need to:
1. Check the truth of the empirical/conceptual premise(s)
2. Check the truth of the value principle(s).
3. Check whether the argument is valid (does the conclusion *follow* from the premises?)

ETHICAL RELATIVISM: Relativists "believe that conflicting moral beliefs can both be true" (Prinz)

Traditionally: Moral judgements are seen to involve:

(1) **Universality**: if an action is right or wrong for anyone (in given circumstances), it is right or wrong (there) for everyone

(2) **Importance**: Moral obligations trump all other considerations, including convenience, personal gain, and the law

(3) **Praiseworthiness and blameworthiness**

Different types of moral assessment:

a. **sincerity**: a person is praiseworthy as moral if they habitually follow their own standards of morality ("conscience")

b. **objectivity:** acting according to objective moral standards

c. **sincerity and objectivity:** sincerely acting according to objective moral standards

Only here is one's "action fully praiseworthy, from a [traditional] moral standpoint"

An ambiguity in moral theory: We praise or blame an action using both subjective and objective standards

To resolve this ambiguity we need to distinguish "subjectively right" from "objectively right" and determine how they are connected

Subjectively right: "*An action is subjectively right if a person [or group] believes that the action is moral.*"

• thus, we naturally praise someone who consistently follows their conscience, even if we do not always approve of what they do

Objectively right: "*An action is objectively right if the action is in conformity with the moral law*"

• we judge Hitler's actions as deeply immoral, even if he had acted according to his conscience or even the rules of his society

• similarly, (if morality is fully objective) we can judge the objective morality of economic systems or business practices independently of the beliefs of practitioners

DeGeorge's worry: If we ignore the distinction between subjective and objective morality, we lose the objective aspect of moral judgements

We abandon the universal characteristic of morality.

Such a position is sometimes called *normative ethical relativism:* the view that *conflicting moral beliefs can both be true (Prinz).*

DESCRIPTIVE **ETHICAL RELATIVISM**

Some descriptive cultural differences:

• Greeks and Romans believed infanticide is acceptable in cases that we do not

• The Inuit thought it acceptable to ask the elderly to "walk off into the snow," when resources were scarce

• Xerxes had Callations and Greeks debate how to honour dead fathers: by eating or burning on a pyre?

Caution: Mere difference of opinion isn't sufficient to prove true, normative moral differences anymore than differences in arithmetic or science, proves all math or science answers are equally good

Jesse Prinz: Still, the huge differences in cultures over time should create some doubt about this hope, e.g.:

Cannibalism: "Anthropologist Peggy Reeves Sanday found evidence for cannibalism in 34% of cultures in one cross-historical sample."

Blood sports: e.g. Roman gladiatorial combat. "Killing for pleasure … among headhunting cultures, in which decapitation was sometimes pursued as a recreational activity."

Public torture and execution: e.g. Europe before the 18th century.

Painful body modification: scarification, genital infibulation, or footbinding

Permissible marriages: 80% of culturally independent societies permit polygamy. Arranged marriage is also common

"Some cultures marry off girls while they are still pubescent or even younger. In parts of Ethiopia, half the girls are married before their 15th birthday."

Prinz: If morality were truly objective, shouldn't we see greater consensus?

DeGeorge: Though there are many differences, there is also much cross-cultural agreement about moral principles

Consider a basic principle: "What helps the society flourish is moral, and what hinders it is immoral" (Text, 6)

- Even if all cultures share this **moral** principle, De George argues, contextual differences, such as warmth, resources, percentage of men and women, etc. might affect the specific moral rules and judgements needed for social flourishing

- Similarly, differences in *factual beliefs* will affect what actions are believed to be moral: e.g. volcano gods

Descriptive transcultural relativism: the actual differences between cultures values

DeGeorge: Not all cultural differences involve moral concerns, and two cultures may have equally good ways of doing other things, using different practices, just as two different languages can use different methods to express the same things

Prinz: This is also true of moral practices *broadly considered*

Morality's purpose is to allow people to live together in peace, and no group would survive if it allowed violent attacks on members or discouraged child rearing

Prinz: *"*But *within these broad constraints*, almost anything is possible. Some groups prohibit attacks on the hut next door, but encourage attacks on the village next door. Some groups encourage parents to commit selective infanticide, to use corporal punishment on children, or force them into physical labor or sexual slavery…"

NORMATIVE ETHICAL RELATIVISM: Some attempts to formulate

First version: moral right and wrong are not objective categories, but merely express opinion or feeling

Second version: Moral character is (partly?) culturally determined, and so transcultural moral judgements make no more sense than transcultural linguistic preferences

Third version: though there may be a right and wrong answer, we can't determine this, so it is "more prudent and more cautious not to claim either is right or wrong" (8)

DeGeorge: Criticisms through implausible consequences (*modus tollens*)

First form:

(a) if correct, then, e.g. when we say "harming someone is wrong," we are not actually talking about harming, but about our feelings about the action.

Someone who had different feelings would therefore be equally "correct," since they would only be talking about their personal feelings and not the action itself

(b) if correct, true moral disagreement is impossible

After all, people have different emotions, and so not sharing the same feelings about, e.g. chocolate ice cream, doesn't mean that they disagree about the ice cream itself

Reply: No "amount of reasoning can engender a moral value, because all values are, at bottom, emotional attitudes." (Prinz, 3)

"Reason can however be used to convince people that their basic values are in need of revision, because reason can reveal when values are inconsistent and self-destructive." (Prinz, 4)

(c) if correct, no one can be mistaken in their moral judgements, since even if their judgements change, the statement will always still be about their current feeling

(d) if correct, we can change a moral judgement merely by changing our emotions

DeGeorge: But ((a) - (d)) seem clearly to conflict with our own understanding of our moral beliefs, namely that our evaluation of moral beliefs or grounds for changing them are NOT based purely on our feelings

Second form (cultural determination): "…one society holds an act to be right…another society holds a similar act to be wrong because the circumstances in which the act is performed make the acts different. …For instance, a society where it is the custom to have the aged leave the society, to die alone, might appear heartless to someone from a society where the moral thing to do is to care for the aged, keeping them alive as long as possible and by whatever means possible. Both actions might be construed as showing respect for the aged, although the respect is shown in very different ways." (9)

> *DeGeorge* argues however that this is not "…normative ethical relativism; we simply have differing instantiations, on the level of practice, of a similar higher moral norm, which is shared by both societies" (9)

Tim's counter: What could normative *ethical* relativism be then?!

After all, "relative" just means contextual variation or relativity:

> To say that moral rule R has different instantiations in different societies simply means that *the application of moral rule R at the level of practice is (sometimes) relative to the society in which it is instantiated*

And if "respect" etc. can be understood so variably in different contexts, why isn't that relativism in the meaning of "respect"?

The real question, then, is what sorts of relativity are permitted but don't amount to *cultural* relativism

> **DeGeorge** apparently allows that variation in physical circumstances (temperature, availability of marriage partners, food, etc.) can affect moral rules

> **Prinz** counters that physical variation alone is insufficient to explain most moral variability: "Would the inferiority of one group really justify enslaving them? If so, why don't we think it's acceptable to enslave people with low IQs? Would life in the tundra justify infanticide? If so, why don't we just kill off destitute children around the globe instead of giving donations to Oxfam?"

Second interpretation of "culturally relative": "moral" just means *right in that society* or *approved* in that society

> The consequence is that no two societies can actually disagree about the morality of an action, since "A is right" simply means "A is approved of by society S1"; "A is wrong" = "A is disapproved of by society S2"

> But we do disagree with people of different societies about the morality of certain actions (and they with us)

> Not to allow this amounts to "moral isolationism"; yet we are morally required to judge our own and others' actions (Midgely)

> e.g. Samurais bisecting peasants at crossroads.

> **Evaluate?**

DeGeorge's response: When we judge an action like murder to be immoral, we are saying that it is immoral for everyone, not just for ourselves or our culture

> Even if we consider other societies as barbarians, etc., we still hold that all non-barbarians (i.e., moral agents) must follow the same rules

Just because there may be universal moral principles doesn't mean we get them right, nor that we can resolve all disputes, but "it is inconsistent to maintain the universal rule that people in each society should obey the rules of their society while at the same time claiming there are no universal moral rules" (10)

How might a relativist, such as Prinz, respond?

Third Interpretation: Moral relativism follows in practice if not theory, since we have no ***absolutely conclusive method*** for settling moral disputes

But this requirement is too strong: We can often provide rational, if not always conclusive, defences of our moral views

"We do not conclude that there is no satisfactory unified theory of physics simply because we have not yet found one. In both cases, the appropriate response is to continue the search, to continue to make improvements, and to continue to use what we presently have available, despite the deficiencies" (11)

Response?

Moral absolutism: Moral rules are true for all times, societies, cultures, physical environments, etc.

An alternative to relativism that is not absolutism: "morality is not eternal. Rather, it is an attempt by human beings to adopt principles to govern human society and the lives of those within society, principles that will help people live together and abide by rules that all of them, in their reasonable and objective moments, would accept…[this person doesn't need to believe that] some final, ultimate, and eternal moral principle exists somewhere….He need only claim that the idea of such a principle forms an ideal toward which ethics strives" (11)

Response: Why is this *not* (consistent with) moral relativism? After all:

What we reasonably deem as moral in such a process will be *relative to* our current communities, our current understanding of reality, etc.

That these principles can properly be replaced, doesn't imply they are heading to some final point, even though that might happen.

In any case, this final point would still not provide correct moral rules *for us at present*, just because we wouldn't have made the cultural, moral, intellectual changes that would make them a proper moral guide *for us*.

Summary (Tim's view): Cultural moral relativism is simply the view that moral values represent an attempt by a culture to construct moral rules relevant to their physical and social context

1. This view is a relativism, since these rules will be relative to changeable physical and social contexts

2. But this view also allows for moral criticism and growth, since attempts to construct moral rules are always imperfect, based on misconceptions, logical inconsistencies and an incomplete grasp of the consequences of rule choices

Next Week:

First Quiz?

Text Ch. 2: What is Act Utilitarianism?

- Value principle tests ("Value Reasoning" handout)

- Kill one to save nineteen.

"All Animals are Equal" Evaluation