

Philosophy 4: Introduction to Ethics

University of California, Santa Barbara

Spring 2017

Instructor

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Course Description

Broadly, ethics is the branch of philosophy concerned with answering questions about what sort of life is worth living, how we should treat ourselves and others, what actions or states of character are deserving of praise and blame, and so on. Our journey into this branch of philosophy will proceed in two stages. The first stage will be mostly theoretical; we will begin by examining three major traditions in ethical theory: consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics. This will prepare us for the second stage of the course, in which we will examine a series of relatively concrete ethical problems: the badness of death and the ethical status of euthanasia and non-human animals. By the end of the course you will have gained a deeper understanding of some of the major problems and approaches in contemporary ethics, and you will have greatly developed your ability to engage in ethical reasoning.

Grading Criteria

Section Participation: 10%

Gauchospace Quizzes: 15%

Midterm: 35% (Assigned May 9)

Final Exam: 40% (June 13 at 8am)

Academic Integrity

According to the UCSB Office of Judicial Affairs, "All members of the UCSB community share the responsibility of upholding academic integrity at the University. Academic dishonesty is a serious act that erodes the University's mission, cheapens the learning experience, and the value of one's degree. It is

expected that all UCSB students will support the ideal of academic integrity and that they will be responsible for the integrity of their work. Materials (written or otherwise) submitted to fulfill academic requirements must represent a student's own efforts unless otherwise permitted by an instructor." Students caught cheating on an assignment in any capacity will receive no credit for that assignment, and, depending on the severity of the case, risk automatically failing the course and expulsion from the school.

Tentative Schedule

Readings can be found in the course reader. The reader can be purchased at SB Printer, located in the UCen.

Note 1: All dates are subject to change.

Note 2: Optional readings will be discussed in lecture, but I will not assume that you have read them. Material from optional readings will show up on exams only if that material was covered in lecture.

Unit 1. Normative Theory (Weeks 1-6)

1.1 Introduction, Setting the Stage (Week 1)

"Should we eat the bodies of the dead or burn them? If you were a Greek, one answer would seem obviously correct; but if you were a Callatian, the opposite would seem equally certain." – James Rachels

Required Readings:

- James Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism"

Optional Reading:

- Martha Nussbaum, "Judging Other Cultures: The Case of Genital Mutilation"

1.2 Utilitarian Consequentialism (Week 2, 3)

"The Creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness." – John Stuart Mill

Required Readings:

- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* ch. 1, ch. 2, ch. 3
- Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"

Optional Reading:

- William MacAskill, "Replaceability, Career Choice, and Making a Difference"

1.3 Kantian Deontology (Week 3, 4)

"Now I say that the human being and in general every rational being exists as an end in itself, not merely as a means to be used by this or that will at its discretion; instead he must in all his actions, whether directed to himself or also to other rational beings, always be regarded at the same time as an end." – Immanuel Kant

Required Readings:

- Immanuel Kant, Selections from *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*
- Onora O’Neill, “Kantian Approaches to Some Famine Problems”

Optional Reading:

- Christine Korsgaard, “Kant’s Formula of Universal Law”

1.4 Virtue Ethics (Week 5, 6)

“...the virtue of man also will be the state of character which makes man good and which makes him do his own work well.” – Aristotle

Required Readings:

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 1, Book 2
- Rosalind Hursthouse, “Virtue Theory and Abortion” (Part 1)

1.5 Catch Up, Review (Week 6)**Unit 2. Applied Ethics (Weeks 7-10)****2.1 The Badness of Death (Week 7)**

“Accustom yourself to the belief that death is nothing to us. For all good and evil lie in sensation, whereas death is the absence of sensation.” – Epicurus

Required Readings:

- Epicurean Selections
- Thomas Nagel, “Death”

Optional Reading:

- Anthony L. Brueckner and John Martin Fischer, “Why is Death Bad?”

2.2 Euthanasia (Week 8, 9)

“A few months with cancer had taught me that a tumor rarely invades a region smaller than an extended family.” – David Velleman

Required Readings:

- Philippa Foot, “Euthanasia”
- David Velleman, “A Right of Self-Termination?”

2.3 Animal Ethics (Week 10)

“So, what gives puppies a higher moral status than the animals we eat?” – Alastair Norcross

Required Readings:

- Alastair Norcross, “Puppies, Pigs and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases”

Final Exam Tuesday, June 13 8am-11am