

PHILOSOPHY 335 - Moral Philosophy
Winter 2017

Class meets: Monday and Thursday 11:30 am-12:50 am

Instructor: Prof. Colin Macleod

Office: CLE B328

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Office Hours: Monday 1:00 pm –3:00 pm and by appointment

Texts

Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* edited and translated by Allen W. Wood (Yale University Press 2002).

Stephen Darwall (editor), *Contractarianism/Contractualism* (Blackwell Publishing 2003).

Some readings will be placed on reserve at the library or will be available online (e.g., via J-STOR)

Recommended Reading and Some Useful Websites

Peter Singer (editor), *A Companion to Ethics*.

<http://ethics.sandiego.edu/>

<http://plato.stanford.edu/contents.html>

<http://www.laits.utexas.edu/poltheory/cuws/>

<http://www.utilitarianism.com/index.htm>

Course Outline/Course Objective

This course explores some of the most important and influential theories about the nature of morality that have been developed in the tradition of Western philosophy. Towards this end, we will study excerpts from some of the classic texts of Hobbes, Kant and Sidgwick as well as some important contemporary work in moral theory by John Rawls, Derek Parfit, David Gauthier and Thomas Scanlon. The objective of the course is to provide students with a sound understanding of the main problems in normative ethics and the different moral theories that have been developed in response to them. We devote special attention to the following broad theories: consequentialism (especially utilitarianism), Hobbesian contractarianism, contractualism, and Kantian theory. Although the course examines some classic texts in the history of philosophy, we will approach the material with an emphasis on the relevance of the material studied to contemporary moral philosophy.

About Colin Macleod

Colin Macleod B.A. (Queens), M.A. (Dalhousie), Ph.D. (Cornell) is a Professor of Philosophy and Law. He joined the Philosophy department at the University of Victoria in 1998. His research focuses on issues in contemporary moral, political and legal theory with a special focus on the following topics: (1) distributive justice and equality (2) children, families and justice and (3) democratic ethics. He is the author

of *Have A Little Faith: Religion, Democracy and the American Public School* (University of Chicago Press 2016) [co-written with Ben Justice]; *Liberalism, Justice, and Markets: A Critique of Liberal Equality* (OUP 1998) and coeditor with David Archard of *The Moral and Political Status of Children* (OUP 2002). His articles have appeared in journals such as *The Chicago-Kent Law Review*, *Theory and Research in Education*, *Politics and Society*, *The Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, *The Canadian Journal for Law and Jurisprudence*, *Law and Philosophy*, and *Dialogue*. He is an executive editor of the *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*. When he is not engaged in philosophical discussion and argument, he enjoys playing hockey and tennis and strumming his guitar while jamming with his musical friends.

Formal Course Requirements

Written work for the course consists of 1 term paper (approximately 3,000 words in length), 1 midterm exam, 1 final exam and (as many as) 10 quote and comment assignments. The term paper is worth 40% of the course grade, the midterm is worth 20% of the course grade, the final exam is worth 30% of the course grade and the quote and comment assignment is worth 10% of the course grade.

Informal Course Expectations

Although no grade is assigned for participation in class discussion or attendance, I expect students to attend class regularly and to participate actively in class discussion. You should feel free to pose questions and raise philosophical issues related to the material we are studying. I expect students to be attentive to and respectful of the perspectives of others in the class but this does not mean you should not voice disagreements with or raise criticisms about the philosophical views presented by members of the class. We can all learn a lot from lively exchanges of different points of view so I encourage you to voice your views in an open and thoughtful manner. You should expect to challenge the views of others and to have your views challenged by me and other members of the class. If there is material in the course that you find puzzling or difficult to understand please ask me about it at an appropriate juncture in class or discuss your questions with me during my office hours.

Appropriate Academic Conduct

Students are expected to understand and abide by the University regulations concerning academic misconduct - e.g., plagiarism, cheating etc. For further information about these matters students can consult the University Calendar. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism or academic misconduct, consult me before submitting an assignment

Late assignments/missed tests and Grace Period Policy

Unless you provide me with a written note that provides a compelling reason (e.g. documented medical problem) for granting an extension or for missing an exam, I will not change the due date of assignments nor will I reschedule exams for you. I will accept, without grade penalty, essays (but no other assignments) that are submitted up to one week after the due date. However, essays that are submitted in

this period will not receive any comments. After this grace period unexcused essays will not be accepted. For other information with regards to missing deadlines, etc. please see the UVic University Calendar.

Grading System

Percentage	Letter Grade	Grade Point	Grade Definition
90-100	A+	9	An A+, A, or A- is earned by work which is technically superior, shows mastery of the subject matter, and in the case of an A+ offers original insight and/or goes beyond course expectations. Normally achieved by a minority of students.
85-89	A	8	
80-84	A-	7	
77-79	B+	6	A B+, B, or B- is earned by work that indicates a good comprehension of the course material, a good command of the skills needed to work with the course material, and the student's full engagement with the course requirements and activities. A B+ represents a more complex understanding and/or application of the course material. Normally achieved by the largest number of students.
73-76	B	5	
70-72	B-	4	
65-69	C+	3	A C+ or C is earned by work that indicates an adequate comprehension of the course material and the skills needed to work with the course material and that indicates the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and/or participating in class activities.
60-64	C	2	
50-59	D	1	A D is earned by work that indicates minimal command of the course materials and/or minimal participation in class activities that is worthy of course credit toward the degree.
0-49	F	0	F is earned by work, which after the completion of course requirements, is inadequate and unworthy of course credit towards the degree.
0-49	N	0	Did not write examination or complete course requirements by the end of term or session; no supplemental.

For information regarding N grades and DEF stats, please consult the Uvic calendar.

Returning of graded work If you do not wish to have your graded work returned during class or my office hours, you must sign a waiver form. The Protection of Privacy Act prevents me from placing your graded work in the departmental boxes, located outside the general office, unless you have signed this waiver.

Important Dates

Term Paper: Due on or before April 3 (Grace period ends April 10)

Quote and Comment Assignments: Throughout the term (maximum 1 per week)

Midterm Exam: Thursday February 9

Final Exam: As Scheduled by the University

Reading Schedule

Note: This is a provisional reading schedule. Some revisions may be made during the course of the term.

CS = available on course spaces

January 5 - The Ethical Impulse and Enduring Puzzles about Value

Allen Wood 'Relativism' (CS)

Week of January 9 - The Good Life: Pleasure, Desire, Achievement & Experience

Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* Chapters 1-4 available online at

<http://www.laits.utexas.edu/poltheory/bentham/ipml/ipml.toc.html>

Robert Nozick, 'The Experience Machine' (CS)

James Griffin, 'Utilitarian accounts: state of mind or state of the world' (CS)

Derek Parfit, 'What Makes Someone's Life Go Best?' (CS)

Week of January 16 - The Moral Life: Morality and Consideration of the Interests of Others

Ian Parker, 'The Gift' in *The New Yorker* August 2, 2004 (available online via UVic Library)

Larissa MacFarquhar, 'The Kindest Cut' in *The New Yorker* July 27, 2009 (available online via UVic Library)

Watch Peter Singer's TED talk: <https://www.thelifeyoucansave.org/Videos>

Visit: <https://www.effectivealtruism.org/>

Recommended background reading: Singer, P. (1972). Famine, affluence, and morality. *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 1(3), 229-243. (available online via UVic

Library)

Week of January 23 – Consequentialism & The Varieties of Utilitarianism

Henry Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics*, Book III, chapters 11- 14 and Book IV, chapters 1-2 (available online at <http://www.laits.utexas.edu/poltheory/sidgwick/me/index.html>)
Derek Parfit, “The Repugnant Conclusion” (CS)
Derek Parfit “The Non-Identity Problem” (CS)

Week of January 30– Integrity and Demandingness

Bernard Williams, ‘Against Utilitarianism’ (CS)
Julia Driver, ‘Consequentialism and Feminist Ethics’, *Hypatia* Vol. 20, No. 4, (Autumn, 2005), pp. 183-199 (online via UVic Library).

Recommended background readings: Friedman, M. (1987). Beyond caring: The demoralization of gender. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy ; Supplementary Volume, 13*, 87. (available online via UVic Library)

Railton, P. (1984). Alienation, consequentialism, and the demands of morality. *Philosophy & Public Affairs, 13*(2), 134-171 (available online via UVic Library)

Week of February 6 - Contemporary Contractualism

Thomas Scanlon, ‘Contractualism and Utilitarianism’ (in Darwall collection)

Recommended supplementary reading: Macleod, Colin “Making Moral Judgements and Giving Reasons”, *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 31, No. 2 June 2001: pp. 263-290. (available online via UVic Library)

FEBRUARY 9 MIDTERM EXAM

Week of February 13 – (READING WEEK)

Week of February 20- Introduction to Kantian Ethics - The Good Will and Duty

Allen Wood, ‘What is Kantian Ethics’
Kant, Preface of *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*
Kant, First Section of *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*
Marcia Baron, ‘Acting from Duty’ (in Wood text)

Week of February 27 – Interpreting the Categorical Imperative

Kant, Section Two of *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*
Christine Korsgaard, ‘Kant’s Formula of Universal Law’ *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, vol 66, # 1 & 2. (available online via Uvic Library)
Barbara Herman, ‘Mutual Aid and Respect for Persons’ *Ethics*, 94, No. 4 (July 1984), pp 577-602 (available online via UVic Library)

Week of March 6 – Kant’s Contemporary Legacy

Shelly Kagan, ‘Kantian Consequentialism’ (in Wood text)

John Rawls, excerpts from *A Theory of Justice* (in Darwall collection)

Week of March 13 - Life without Morality: ‘Nasty, Brutish and Short’?

Excerpt from Plato’s *Republic*, Book II from 357-368e (The Ring of Gyges available online)

Hobbes, *Leviathan* Chapters I, V, VI, XIII (pp. 11-29 in Darwall collection)

Week of March 20- Contemporary Hobbesian Contractarianism: Morality as Mutual Advantage

Hobbes, *Leviathan* Chapters, XIV, XV, (pp. 29-48 in Darwall collection)

David Gauthier, ‘Why Contractarianism?’ (in Darwall collection)

David Gauthier, Excerpt from *Morals by Agreement* (pp. 108-137 in Darwall collection)

Week of March 27– Feminist Perspectives

Samantha Brennan, ‘Recent Work in Feminist Ethics’ *Ethics*, Vol. 109, No. 4 (Jul., 1999), pp. 858-893 (available online via UVic library)

Week of April 3 – REVIEW

Quote and Comment Assignment Instructions

Over the course of the term, you may complete as many as 10 quote and comment assignments. However, you may only submit **ONE** quote and comment in any given week of term. Your task is to identify an interesting passage in the assigned readings for the week and offer a clear, concise and thoughtful comment on the passage. Make sure you clearly identify the author and source of the passage you quote. In your remarks, provide a brief explanation of the issue raised in the cited passage and then provide a brief response – e.g., a criticism or comment or constructive question – about cited passage. Your remarks **should never exceed** a single, double-spaced piece of paper. The date, your name, student number and the course number should be clearly indicated at the top left hand side of the page. I will assign full marks to any assignment that reflects a good faith effort to engage the material in a thoughtful way. To receive credit for a quote and comment assignment **you must submit your assignment in class.**

Guide To Marginal Notations (used in marking papers)

? = the significance or relevance of a point is unclear or obscure

^ = missing word(s)

BX = be more explicit; develop the point you are making more fully

C = confusing passage;

CIT = incomplete or incorrect or missing citation

G = garbled; you have not effectively conveyed your point

I = incomplete analysis; you have not adequately explained your point

K = awkward or ungrammatical sentence construction

M = misleading

NA = needs argument; you have not developed your argument sufficiently

O = omit; you could have omitted this chunk of text

QL = quoted passage is unnecessarily long

RF = ambiguous or unclear referent

RS = run on sentence

SE = supporting evidence is needed to substantiate a claim

U = sentence or phrase does not clearly communicate your point

VA = vague

W = poor or incorrect choice of word