

Advanced Ethics Survey

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Spring 2019, Tues & Thurs, 10:30-11:50am, ACE 218

Office hours Thursdays, 1-3pm, or by appointment, ACE 303

Course description and Objectives

The **goals of this seminar** are to provide students, through intense reading and discussion, with 1) the intellectual tools to make, grasp and evaluate ethical arguments across a variety of domains and practical contexts and to foster their critical reflection on pressing moral, social and political issues; 2) a solid and comprehensive theoretical and empirical background on these issues; and 3) an overview of both classical and recent essential readings. There are **no prior requirements** in philosophy, but students are expected to be willing to confront with a variety of views, concepts, arguments, and controversies. Debates around the issues covered in this course demand rigor, clarity, and critical self-reflection on both conceptual and empirical matters. The Class will focus on selected readings every week and consist primarily of discussions. It is intended to be as interactive as can be reasonably done while providing comprehensive content. Active participation is therefore required, based on careful analysis and respectful appreciation of others' views.

Readings

No required book. All readings will be made available through Canvas or can be found through the online USF libraries system.

Course requirements and Evaluation

The primary listing for this class is **Philosophy** but it is eligible for **Environmental Studies** or **Gender Studies** credit (pending early declaration of interest and satisfactory completion of a paper focused on a relevant ES or GS aspect of the course materials – discuss details with me at the start of the semester).

Evaluation criteria: a balance of structure and coherence, understanding of references and course-related materials, critical skills and originality, and rigor and clarity. Tests are graded on a numerical basis. Papers and presentations are graded on a qualitative (SAT) scale. You must earn a satisfactory evaluation on at least 4/5 of the following rubrics (details TBA).

- **Papers:** 3 papers, including two response papers and a term paper on a chose topic (*after checking for relevance and feasibility with me at the latest 3 weeks by deadline*). The goal is to discuss views presented in one or several lectures of the course. Details TBA. A **preliminary outline** of the term paper will be required. *Recommended:* Jim Pryor's guides to philosophical terms and methods, reading philosophy, and writing a philosophy paper, available at www.jimpryor.net/teaching/
- **Attendance and participation**
 - Ideally, email me **before missing class**, and consult with me promptly to make up for missed assignments. You are solely responsible for catching up with missed materials and information. Ask your classmates for notes and pertinent information.

- **Active participation** (online and in class). I will assess your demonstrated capacity to engage with arguments, verify assertions, research facts, unpack assumptions, and critically examine your positions. Come prepared with copies of the readings, personal notes and questions. I generally don't call on students but I may kindly ask the most talkative to enable the less talkative to participate. Shy students need not be, but if you truly are, do not hesitate to compensate for it in the online forum.

Policies

- **Laptop** use is strongly discouraged and tolerated for note taking and readings only. Please disable your internet connection during class time. **Cell phones** must be silenced and left in your bag.
- **Academic integrity:** New College of Florida values academic honesty and integrity, as you should. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are easily detectable, will not be tolerated, and may result in failure for the class and other sanctions. Please refer to NCF's standards of academic conduct.
- **Lateness/Extensions:** Out of fairness to other students, I can only grant extensions in exceptional circumstances AND if requested with *a minimum of one week's notice*. As a rule, do not count on extensions as they will only be granted on a case-by-case basis. Do not assume I have received your assignment until you receive confirmation or unless you posted it online.
- **Accommodations:** New College of Florida is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body. Students are welcome to privately discuss any concerns related to barriers to both fully participating and learning in this course. I encourage students with accommodations to meet with me as soon as possible and to contact the office of Student Disability Services (SDS) in order to request official accommodation(s): SDS in-person (HCL3), at 941-487-4496 OR disabilityservices@ncf.edu. Additional information at <https://www.ncf.edu/student-disability-services/> SDS will establish the need for specific accommodations and communicate them to the instructor.

Religious observance: No student shall be compelled to attend class or sit for an examination at a day or time when s/he would normally be engaged in a religious observance or on a day or time prohibited by his or her religious belief. Students are expected to notify their instructors if they intend to be absent for an announced examination, in accordance with this policy, prior to the scheduled meeting.

Outline of Readings and Topics (subject to change)

Part (1): Introduction to Metaethics

Week 1 (Jan 29-31))

Introduction to the beginnings of 20th century metaethics. Students are expected to do the reading either prior to class or after having attended the first class.

G.E. Moore, *Principia Ethica*, §§ 5-13. <http://fair-use.org/g-e-moore/principia-ethica>

William Frankena, "The Naturalistic Fallacy," *Mind* 48 (1930), 464-77

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2250706>

C.L. Stevenson, "The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms", *Mind* 46 (1937), 14-31

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2250027>

R.M. Hare, *Freedom and Reason* (Oxford, 1963), Chapter 6

J. L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, Chapter 1, §§ 7-10

If you don't have time, catch up with the 'brief selection' posted on Canvas.

Part (2): Consequentialism

Week 2 (Feb 5-7)

Shelly Kagan, *The Limits of Morality* ("Against ordinary morality")

Peter Railton, "Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality"

Optional: Mohist Ethics in "Chinese Ethics," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, sec. 3.1

(<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-chinese/#MohEth>)

Week 3 (Feb 12-14)

Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* ("Ethics")

Bernard Williams, "A Critique of Utilitarianism"

Tim Scanlon, "Contractualism and utilitarianism"; "Précis of *What We Owe to Each Other*"

Week 4 (Feb 19-21)

John Rawls, "Two Concepts of Rules"

Tim Mulgan, "How Should Utilitarians Think About the Future?"

Katarzyna de Lazari-Radek and Peter Singer, "Secrecy in Consequentialism: A Defense of Esoteric Morality"

Part (3): Kantian Ethics

Week 5 (Feb 26-28)

Kant, [*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*](#), Introduction, Sections I and II

Christine Korsgaard, "Creating the Kingdom of Ends: Reciprocity and Responsibility"

Week 6 (Mar 5-7)

Kant, *Groundwork*, Section III

Christine Korsgaard, "Morality as Freedom"

Part (4): Contemporary Virtue Ethics

Week 7 (Mar 12-14)

G.E.M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy"

Philippa Foot, "Virtues and Vices"

John McDowell, "Virtue and Reason"

-- Week 8: Spring break --

Week 9 (Mar 26-28)

Gilbert Harman, "The Non-Existence of Character Traits"

Edward Slingerland, "The Situationist Critique and Early Confucian Virtue Ethics"

Optional: Nomy Arpaly, "Moral Worth"; Arpaly, "Open-mindedness as a Moral Virtue"

Part (5): Contemporary (Meta)ethics

Week 10 (Apr 2-4)

Peter Railton, "Moral Realism"

Stephen Darwall, Allan Gibbard and Peter Railton, "Toward Fin de Siecle Ethics"

Brian Leiter, "Moral Skepticism and Moral Disagreement in Nietzsche"

Week 11(Apr 9-11)

Sharon Street, "A Darwinian Dilemma for Realist Theories of Value"

K. de Lazari-Radek and P. Singer, "The Objectivity of Ethics and the Unity of Practical Reason"

Optional: Elizabeth Anderson, "John Stuart Mill and Experiments in Living"

Part (6): Well-being, happiness and meaning

Week 12 (Apr 16-18)

Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, Appendix I

Valerie Tiberius, Well-being: Psychological Research for Philosophers

Week 13 (Apr 25 / no class on 23rd)

Susan Wolf, "Happiness and Meaning: Two Aspects of the Good Life"

Duncan Purves and Nicolas Delon, "Meaning in the Lives of Humans and Other Animals"

Part (7): Practical Ethics

Week 14 (Apr 30-May2)

Peter Singer, "Famine, affluence, and morality"

Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion"

Week 15 (May 7; last day of classes = May 8)

Sally Haslanger, "Gender and Race: What are they? What do we want them to be?"

Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Go Ahead, Speak for Yourself"

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/10/opinion/sunday/speak-for-yourself.html>

Charles W. Mills, "'Ideal Theory' as Ideology"

Optional: Elizabeth Barnes, "Disability, Minority, and Difference"

Suggested research topics

Gun and Drug Policies

David DeGrazia, "The Case for Moderate Gun Control"

Michael Huemer, "Is There a Right to Own a Gun?"

Tim Hsiao, "The Moral Case for Gun Ownership"

Donald Bruckner, "Gun Control and Alcohol Policy"

Paul Smith, "Drugs, Morality, and the Law"

Disability

Jeff McMahan, "Cognitive Disability, Misfortune, and Justice"

Jeff McMahan, "Causing Disabled People to Exist and Causing People to be Disabled,"

Eva Kittay, "At the Margins of Moral Personhood"

Elizabeth Barnes, "Valuing Disability, Causing Disability" and *The Minority Body*

Climate change

Stephen Gardiner, "Ethics and Global Climate Change"

Tim Hayward, "Climate Change and Ethics"

Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, "It's Not My Fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Emissions"

Avram Hiller, "Climate Change and Individual Responsibility"

Dale Jamieson, "When Utilitarians Should be Virtue Theorists"

Equality, Impartiality, Relationships

Tom Nagel, "Equality"

Elizabeth Anderson, "What is the Point of Equality?"

G.A. Cohen, "On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice"

Susan Wolf, "Morality and Partiality"

Samuel Scheffler, "Relationships and Responsibilities"

Niko Kolodny, "Which Relationships Justify Partiality? General Considerations and Problem Cases"
I.M. Young, "Responsibility and Global Justice: A Social Connection Model"

Ethics of Speech and Testimony

Rae Langton, "Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts"
Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Justice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*
Noël Carroll, "Ethics and Comic Amusement"
Luvell Anderson, "Racist Humor"
Shen-yi Liao, "Moral Persuasion and the Diversity of Fictions"

Effective altruism

Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"
Paul Bloom, "Against empathy" in *Boston Review* (<http://bostonreview.net/forum/paul-bloom-against-empathy>;
skim through responses)
Lori Gruen, *Entangled Empathy* (selections)
Amia Srinivasan, "Stop the Robot Apocalypse"