

PHI V3701-001
Fall 2006
Milbank
MW 2:40-3:55pm

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Moral Philosophy

Course Description:

This course provides an introduction to the central theories of normative ethics: consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics. Our focus will be on questions concerning the morality of individual behavior. The first section of the course starts us off with "Why be moral?" The second part consists of an extended treatment of consequentialism and its main rival, deontological ethics. We will ask "What things are good or valuable?"; "Can all goods be ranked according to a single scale, or are there incomparable values?"; "What is the relationship of value to morality?"; "What is the relationship between the right and the good?"; "Is a unified theory of ethics possible?" In the third section, we turn to critiques of the opposition between consequentialism and deontology, and to virtue ethics. In this last section, we may also look at interpretations of weakness of will, the question of moral relativism, and the desirability of perfectionist ideals in ethics.

Prerequisite: One course in philosophy.

Required Texts:

All required reading is available online, on the 'Moral Philosophy' course website available through CourseWorks at <<https://courseworks.columbia.edu/>>. The 'Assignment' portion of the site is password-protected and available only to students enrolled in the course. If you have not already done so, you must make sure that you have a UNI and password as soon as possible. You will need these to access the site. You can download and print out the papers. It's a good idea to get a folder or 3-ring binder in which to keep the course readings together.

Important: You must ensure that it is possible for you to print the assigned reading while you are on campus, during office hours. If you have any technical problems, you should contact someone in Academic Technology, or at the library reference desk (for problems accessing JSTOR), or at CourseWorks, as needed, to help you. Late work will not be excused for reasons concerning any difficulties in accessing the course texts. Unexpected glitches can appear at any time; do not leave retrieval of the reading material to the last minute.

Required Work and Grading:

There will be two in-class short-answer quizzes, a short 300 word paper, a longer 1500 word paper, and a final exam. Before you write the longer paper, you must submit online an outline of the proposed argument structure, a clear explanation of the question you are addressing, and why you think it is relevant. This will not be graded, but if it is not done, your class participation grade becomes an 'F'. In addition, you are required to contribute to the course website Discussion page at least two times per month on the topics being covered in class. Due dates listed below are subject to change, in keeping with the pace of the course.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>% of total grade</u>	<u>Due Dates</u>
First quiz	10	Monday, Sept. 25
Short paper	10	Wednesday, Oct. 4
Paper topic and outline		Wednesday, Oct. 25
Longer (1500 word) paper	25	Monday, Nov. 20
Second quiz	15	Monday, Dec. 4
Final exam	25	Wed., Dec. 20, 1:10-4
Class participation	15	on-line and in-class

- Come prepared to all classes. Read the assigned articles *prior* to the class for which they are assigned. Some of these are short and deceptively simple. *Read them more than once.*
- **No late assignments will be accepted and there will be no make up exams.** Papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date. If you have a well-documented *bona fide* emergency, discuss it with me *as soon as is practically possible.*
- Unless it is officially changed by the Registrar, the final exam date will NOT be changed. This means that you should not schedule travel plans or buy a flight ticket for a time before the exam (and don't let your parents do so, either!). It is your responsibility to inform your parents of the class and college policy. Under no circumstances will a makeup exam be given before the officially scheduled time.
- Keep a hard copy of all your written work. Save your work frequently in two separate places. I will not accept excuses concerning lost work or other computer mishaps.
- Proofread your papers: correct errors in spelling, punctuation, and grammar. If you have any questions about this, consult a handbook such as Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*, or Diana Hacker's *Rules for Writers*. You are also strongly encouraged to visit the Writing Centers at 121 Reid Hall or at 310 Philosophy Hall.
- Acknowledge all ideas and words not your own with appropriate citations of the original sources! **All violations of academic integrity will be dealt with in strict accordance with university and college policies.**

Course syllabus

(Readings may be added and amended as we progress, depending on the pace of class discussion.)

Introduction: Moral motivation, moral principles, and course overview.

Morality and Self-Interest: Why be moral?

Plato, "The Ring of Gyges", *The Republic* Book II (357a-367e)
Feinberg, "Psychological Egoism"
Gauthier, "Morality and Advantage"

Foot, "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives"
Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism"

Consequentialism and Deontology: How ought I to act?

Mill, from *Utilitarianism*

Bentham, "Pleasure as the Good"
Nozick, "The Experience Machine"

Taylor, "The Diversity of Goods"
Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"
Singer, "The Singer Solution to World Poverty"

Hare, "What is Wrong with Slavery"
Nagel, "War and Massacre"
Kagan, "Constraints"
Brandt, "Toward a Credible Form of Utilitarianism"

Kant, from *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*
Korsgaard, Introduction to Kant's *Groundwork*

Nagel, "Moral Luck"

Virtue Ethics: What sort of person should I be?

Aristotle, from *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books 2 and 7
Nussbaum, "Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach"
MacIntyre, from *After Virtue*, Chapter 15

Wolf, "Moral Saints"
Williams, "Persons, Character, and Morality"