

## PHIL 3200 Ethical Theory (Fall 2009)

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12:20pm–1:10pm MWF Peabody Hall Room 220

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Office Hours: 2:00pm–4:00pm Wednesdays

### **Prerequisite:**

PHIL 1000, or PHIL 2200, or PHIL 2400, or permission of the department

### **Course Description:**

This course introduces students to some of the fundamental questions of philosophical ethics. Some of these questions will be familiar, such as *What makes an act right or wrong?* Many of these questions, however, will be directed at the nature of morality itself rather than particular moral issues. These questions include *Are moral claims the kind of claims that can be true or false? Do moral claims report facts about the world or merely the preferences of particular individuals? What is the source of the authority or normative force moral claims purport to have? Why should we be moral?* Students will be expected to participate in the philosophical investigation of these fundamental questions by evaluating some of the answers proposed by different authors. Over the course of the semester we will examine four broad traditions in normative ethical theory - Aristotle's virtue ethics, Hume's moral sentiment theory, Kantianism, and Mill's classical utilitarianism - as well as several meta-ethical theories about the nature of moral claims and their normativity.

### **Course Objectives:**

To introduce students to and have students engage with the questions and methodology of moral philosophy, as well as several different moral theories.

### **\*Required Texts:**

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., trans. Terence Irwin (Hackett, 1999).
- David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (Hackett, 1983).
- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Hackett, 2002).
- Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (Cambridge, 1998).
- Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge UP, 1996).

\*Please use the editions indicated above.

## Course Requirements:

### 1. Reading Assignments

It is vital to keep pace with the reading assignments. Meaningful participation in classroom discussion depends upon careful and thoughtful reading. **Students are required to bring the assigned reading to class everyday** and are highly encouraged to take notes while reading.

### 2. Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. You may accumulate 5 unexcused absences without penalty. For every unexcused absence in excess of 5, your final grade will be lowered by 2 percentage points.

An absence is considered excused if and only if a.) the absence results from illness, family emergency, or participation in a university sponsored event and b.) the nature of the absence is confirmed by written documentation from a health care professional or appropriate university employee. It is the responsibility of the student to provide appropriate documentation in a timely manner.

### 3. Classroom Participation

Each class meeting will combine lecture and discussion. **All students are expected to participate in classroom discussion.** To this end, students should come to class prepared to discuss the reading assignment. **To earn full credit for the participation component of the course students should aim to make weekly contributions to classroom discussion.** Contributions to classroom discussion include answering questions, asking questions, offering responses to the reading assignments, as well as responses to comments made by classmates.

Students may also be required to complete in-class assignments. These assignments will involve engaging peers in conversation as well as written work. In-class assignments can be made up only in cases of a legitimate and documented absence. It is the student's responsibility to provide appropriate documentation and complete the missed assignment in a timely manner.

### 4. Homework & Quizzes

Homework will be assigned periodically to facilitate student preparation for classroom discussion. All homework assignments must be typed. Quizzes will also be given periodically to ensure that students are keeping up with the reading assignments. Quizzes may or may not be announced in advance. Make up quizzes will be given only in cases of a legitimate and documented absence. It is the student's responsibility to provide appropriate documentation and schedule a make up quiz within one week of the excused absence.

## 5. Exams

**Take-home Exams:** Students will be required to complete 3 take-home exams. Take-home exams will be distributed at least 7 days before the exams are due. Exams must be typed, double-spaced, and abide by a strict word limit. Unless accompanied by a legitimate, documented excuse (see above), exams will be penalized one full letter grade for each school day they are late. For example, if a take-home exam is due on a Monday, the highest grade a paper submitted on Tuesday could receive would be a B+, on Wednesday a C+, and so on. Please note the following dates:

Take-home Exam #1.....Due: Friday, September 11<sup>th</sup>  
Take-home Exam #2.....Due: Monday, October 5<sup>th</sup>  
Take-home Exam #3.....Due: Monday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>

**Final Exam:** A cumulative final exam will be given on Monday, December 14<sup>th</sup> from 12:00pm-3:00pm. This exam cannot be taken at any other time, so students should plan accordingly.

### **Evaluation:**

Your final grade will be calculated according to the following distribution:

Class Participation.....5%  
Homework & Quizzes.....15%  
Take-home Exam #1.....10%  
Take-home Exam #2.....20%  
Take-home Exam #3.....20%  
Final Exam.....30%

And the following grade scale:

100% - 94% = A	79% - 77% = C+
93% - 90% = A-	76% - 74% = C
89% - 87% = B+	73% - 70% = C-
86% - 84% = B	69% - 60% = D
83% - 80% = B-	59% - 0% = F

### **Academic Dishonesty:**

All work you submit for this course should be exclusively yours. While you are encouraged to discuss course material with classmates, collaborative work on exams, homework, and quizzes is unacceptable. Your work should convey your own ideas, expressed in your own words. Reference to the words and/or ideas of others must be clearly cited. All academic work must meet the standards contained in “A Culture of Honesty.” All students are responsible to inform themselves about those standards before

performing any academic work. Students should familiarize themselves with the University of Georgia's Academic Honesty Policy located at <http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/honesty/acadhon.htm>. Failure to comply with these standards will result in a failing grade for the course and will be reported to the University.

### **Classroom Etiquette:**

**Cell Phones:** Ringing cell phones are disruptive. Please turn off your cell phone before class.

**Laptops:** The only legitimate use of a laptop computer in class is note-taking. The instructor reserves the right to **prohibit all laptop use in the classroom** if laptops are being used for any other purpose.

**Late Arrivals:** Class begins at 12:20pm. If you arrive after 12:20, please try to minimize your disruption by choosing the nearest and most accessible seat. This may be different than your regular spot.

### **Reading Schedule:** (subject to change)

*eLC* = Available on eLearning Commons course page

*TSN* = *The Sources of Normativity*

#### **Week 1: The Aims of Moral Philosophy**

- Mon. 08/17: First Day of Class
- Wed. 08/19: Darwall, "What is Philosophical Ethics?" (*eLC*)
- Fri. 08/21: Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, Book I

#### **Week 2: Ancient Ethics: Aristotle**

- Mon. 08/24: Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, Book II
- Wed. 08/26: Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, Book III chapters 6-12
- \*Fri. 08/28: Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, Book VI  
\*Out of Town for Conference – Lecture by Dr. Piers Stephens

#### **Week 3: Modern Moral Philosophy Its Questions**

- Mon. 08/31: Korsgaard, *TSN* pp. 1-10
- Wed. 09/02: Darwall, "Metaethics: The Basic Questions" (*eLC*)
- Fri. 09/04: Korsgaard, *TSN* pp. 10-21

#### **Week 4: Voluntarism**

- Mon. 09/07: No Class – Labor Day
- Wed. 09/09: Darwall, "Theological Voluntarism" (*eLC*)
- Fri. 09/11: Korsgaard, *TSN* pp. 21-27

**Week 5: Relativism**

- Mon. 09/14: Pojman, “A Critique of Ethical Relativism,” pp. 38-44 (*eLC*)
- Wed. 09/16: Pojman, “A Critique of Ethical Relativism,” pp. 44-46
- Fri. 09/18: Pojman, “A Critique of Ethical Relativism,” pp. 46-50  
Mackie, “The Argument from Queerness,” pp. 38-42 (*eLC*)

**Week 6: Realism & Rational Intuitionism**

- Mon. 09/21: Smith, “Realism” (*eLC*)
- Wed. 09/23: Ross, “What Makes Right Acts Right?” (*eLC*)
- Fri. 09/25: Korsgaard, *TSN*, pp. 28-48

**Week 7: Moral Sense Theory - Hume**

- Mon. 09/28: Hume, *Enquiry*, Section I
- Wed. 09/30: Hume, *Enquiry*, Sections II & III
- Fri. 10/02: Hume, *Enquiry*, Sections IV & V

**Week 8: Moral Sense Theory - Hume**

- Mon. 10/05: Hume, *Enquiry*, Sections VI-VIII
- Wed. 10/07: Hume, *Enquiry*, Sections IX & Appendix 1
- Fri. 10/09: Korsgaard, *TSN* pp. 49-66; 86-88

**Week 9: Classical Utilitarianism - Mill**

- Mon. 10/12: Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Chapter II, pp. 6-11
- Wed. 10/14: Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Chapter II, pp. 11-26
- Fri. 10/16: Williams, “A Critique of Utilitarianism,” pp. 82-100 (*eLC*)

**Week 10: Classical Utilitarianism - Mill**

- Mon. 10/19: Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Chapters III & IV
- Wed. 10/21: Korsgaard, *TSN* pp. 78-86
- Fri. 10/23: Mulgan, “Proofs of Utilitarianism” (*eLC*)

**Week 11: Moral Worth - Kant**

- Mon. 10/26: Kant, *Groundwork* 4:387-401
- Wed. 10/28: Herman, “On the Value of Acting from the Motive of Duty” (*eLC*)
- Fri. 10/30: NO CLASS – Fall Break

**Week 12: Categorical Imperatives - Kant**

- Mon. 11/02: *Groundwork* 4:406-420
- Wed. 11/04: *Groundwork* 4:402-404; 4:420-425
- Fri. 11/06: Korsgaard, *Introduction*, pp. xv-xxi

**Week 13: Humanity, Autonomy, & Heteronomy - Kant**

- Mon. 11/09: *Groundwork* 4:428-432
- Wed. 11/11: *Groundwork* 4:432-445
- Fri. 11/13: *Groundwork* III

**Week 14: Freedom & Morality - Kant**

- Mon. 11/16: *Groundwork* III
- Wed. 11/18: Hill, “Kant’s Argument for the Rationality of Moral...” (*eLC*)
- Fri. 11/20: TBA

11/23 – 11/27: No Class - Thanksgiving Break

**Week 15:**

- Mon. 11/30: Korsgaard, *TSN* pp. 90-100
- Wed. 12/02: Korsgaard, *TSN* pp. 100-113
- Fri. 12/04: Korsgaard, *TSN*, pp. 113-130

**Final Week:**

- Mon. 12/07: TBA
- Tues. 12/08: Review for Final Exam

**Final Exam: Monday, December 14<sup>th</sup> 12:00 - 3:00 pm**

*The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.*