

PHILOSOPHY 13: INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS

Per-Erik Milam

Fall 2013

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to some of the main questions in ethics, as well as to the methods used to answer them. The course has three main units, each of which addresses one of these topics, and a fourth unit on applied ethics.

Moral Status. In this unit, we ask: Who are the members of our moral community? Toward which beings do we have moral obligations? We consider whether we have obligations to beings other than adult humans (e.g., nonhuman animals, fetuses, and ecosystems). We also consider which properties give a being moral status (e.g., rationality, sentience, or self-consciousness). Having considered different answers to these questions and arguments for these answers, we end with a more difficult question: Do some beings have different levels of moral status? Do some beings matter more than others?

Good and Bad. In this unit, we ask: What makes a life go well for a person? And we consider different views of what contributes to the goodness of a life (e.g., enjoyable experiences, being free, living truly). We then ask: Why, if at all, is death bad for a person? And we consider puzzles surrounding some of the common answers.

Right and Wrong. In this unit, we ask: What makes an action right or wrong—morally permissible, impermissible, or required? And we consider the arguments made for competing theories: an action is wrong in virtue of its bad consequences; in virtue of violating another's rights; in virtue of the evil intention behind it; in virtue of the fact that reasonable people would agree to prohibit it.

Applied Ethics. In this final unit, we apply the skills we have learned and the theories we have discussed to answering an important moral problem. What, if any, obligations do we have to help the hundreds of millions of people living in extreme poverty?

The aim of this course is to provide the philosophical skills and knowledge necessary to identify and think critically about ethical questions, whether abstract (e.g., what makes an action wrong) or concrete (e.g., is it wrong to do X?). My hope is that students will leave this course prepared to address ethical issues in whatever way they wish, whether in another philosophy class, in another discipline, or in their daily life.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Classroom Conduct: Everyone is expected to be respectful of one another in the classroom. Basic respect entails, among other things, being on time, not leaving early, not disrupting or interrupting class, turning off cell phones, not talking when others are speaking, and demonstrating respect for others' viewpoints during discussion.

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. (Students with athletic, religious, or critical personal obligations should inform me as far in advance as possible of missing class so that necessary arrangements can be made.) The final exam will cover material both from lecture and readings. Lectures will often introduce material not in the readings. Students are expected to come to class with an adequate understanding of the arguments made in the readings. Students should also be prepared to discuss and assess the assigned readings and are encouraged to present arguments of their own. *Learning philosophy is inseparable from doing philosophy.* This means that in order to understand philosophical theories, including your own, you must ask questions about them, raise objections to them, and revise and refine them in response to problems.

Written Work: Final grades will be calculated from participation, three short papers, one longer paper, and a final exam. The short papers will be 600 words and will be due throughout the quarter. The longer paper will be 1200 words and will be due in the middle of the quarter.

1. Participation	10%	100 points
2. Short Papers	40% (10% each)	400 points (100 each)
3. Longer Paper	25%	250 points
4. Final Exam	25%	250 points

Translating total points into final letter grades

A+	at my discretion	B	833-865	C-	700-732	F	0-599
A	933-1000	B-	800-832	D+	666-699		
A-	900-932	C+	766-799	D	633-665		
B+	866-899	C	733-765	D-	600-632		

Participation: Participation can be gained in three ways. First, you can get full participation credit by visiting my office hours once and talking about ethics for half an hour. You should come with a question about ethics; you should have a tentative answer to it; and your question and answer should demonstrate that you have thought carefully about the topic. Second, you can get full participation credit by submitting one question about the reading once every week. Your question should demonstrate that you've thought carefully about the topic. (You must submit your question to me by email the night before class by 8pm.) Finally, you can get participation credit by asking questions and participating in discussion during lecture and sections.

Computer Policy: Use of computers and other electronic devices is *not allowed* in class, except with written permission from, for example, the Office for Students with Disabilities.

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Fall 2013

Instructor: Per Milam
Office: HSS 7093

pmilam@ucsd.edu
Office hours: Tues 5-7

Required Texts:

- Course reader, available at Cal Copy on Villa La Jolla Dr. (R)
- Internet sources, linked or available as a PDF on the course website (I)

Course website: <http://www.pererikmilam.com/current.shtml>

WEEK 0:

Thursday 9/26
Course introduction

UNIT 1: MORAL STATUS

WEEK 1:

Tuesday 10/1
Mary Anne Warren - "The Concept of Moral Status" in *Moral Status* (R)
Thursday 10/3
Andrew Jacobs - "Folk Remedy Extracted from Captive Bears" in *New York Times* (I)
David DeGrazia - "Animals' Moral Status and the Issue of Equal Consideration" in *Taking Animals Seriously* (R)

WEEK 2:

Tuesday 10/8
Aldo Leopold - "The Land Ethic" in *A Sand County Almanac* (R)
Thursday 10/10
Jeff McMahan - "Cognitive Disability and Cognitive Enhancement" (I)
Movie Night! 6-9PM at HSS 7077 (optional)

UNIT 2: GOOD & BAD

WEEK 3:

Tuesday 10/15
Epicurus - "Letter to Menoeceus" (R)
Fred Feldman - "Classic Objections to Hedonism" in *Pleasure and the Good Life* (R)
Thursday 10/17
Roger Crisp - "Hedonism Reconsidered" (I)

WEEK 4:

Tuesday 10/22
Thomas Nagel - "Death" (I)
Frances Kamm - "Why is Death Bad and Worse than Pre-natal Nonexistence?" (R)
Thursday 10/24
Shelly Kagan - "The Badness of Death" (R)

UNIT 3: RIGHT & WRONG

WEEK 5:

Tuesday 10/29

Mary Midgley - "Trying Out One's New Sword" (R)

James Rachels - "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism" (R)

Thursday 10/31

J.J.C. Smart - "Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism" (I)

Ursula Le Guin - "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" (R)

WEEK 6:

Tuesday 11/5

Shelly Kagan - "Do I Make a Difference?" (I)

Thursday 11/7

Julia Driver - "Consequentialism and Feminist Ethics" (I)

WEEK 7:

Tuesday 11/12

Phillipa Foot - "Killing and Letting Die" (R)

Thursday 11/14

Thomas Nagel - "Ethics" in *The View from Nowhere* (R)

WEEK 8:

Tuesday 11/19

Immanuel Kant - *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (R)

Thursday 11/21

Russ Shafer Landau - *Fundamentals of Ethics* chapters 13 & 14 (R)

WEEK 9:

Tuesday 11/26

Susan Moller Okin - "Justice as Fairness: For Whom?" in *Justice, Gender, and the Family* [only pp.101-109] (R)

Ann E. Cudd and Leslie E. Jones - "Sexism" (R)

Peggy McIntosh - "Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" (I)

Thursday 11/28

THANKSGIVING (no class)

UNIT 4: APPLIED ETHICS

WEEK 10:

Tuesday 12/3

Handout - "Extreme Poverty"

Giving What We Can - "Myths About Aid" (I)

Thursday 12/5

Peter Singer - "Rich and Poor" (R)

FINAL: Friday, December 13th from 10:30am to 2:30pm