

## PHILOSOPHY 202: CORE COURSE IN ETHICS<sup>1</sup>

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### *Course Description*

This is a survey course covering (very incompletely) the history of (western, mostly British) ethics in the eighteenth century. The major ethical debates in the eighteenth century focus on the nature of human virtue (morality), the motive or reason to act virtuously (morally), and the relation between virtue (morality) and happiness. The protagonists occupy various positions related to the divide between sentimentalism and rationalism, where sentimentalism is (roughly) the view that the virtues consist in those mental qualities that produce a sentiment of approbation in a (disinterested) observer, and rationalism is (roughly) the view that the virtues are dispositions to do what reason judges to be the right thing to do because it is right. They also occupy various positions related to the question whether virtue is sufficient for happiness and whether virtue is intrinsically or extrinsically valuable. We will be looking at the strengths and weaknesses of the views defended by Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713), Samuel Clarke (1675-1729), Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746), Joseph Butler (1692-1752), David Hume (1711-1776), Thomas Reid (1710-1796), and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804).

### *Course Materials*

All course materials that are not already online (Hume, Kant) will be made available electronically on TED or in the philosophy department library.

All the Kant translations must be from the series: Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy.

Companion Reading: Relevant chapters of Terence Irwin, *The Development of Ethics*, Volumes 2 and 3.

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<sup>1</sup> Also satisfies the distribution requirement for the history of modern philosophy.

## Course Schedule

September 27: Introduction

October 4: Shaftesbury

Reading: *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit*  
[http://files.libertyfund.org/files/812/0096-02\\_LFeBk.pdf](http://files.libertyfund.org/files/812/0096-02_LFeBk.pdf) (pp. 3-100)

October 11: Clarke

Reading: *A Discourse Concerning the Unalterable Obligations of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation* (Propositions I-V)  
[http://www.ccel.org/ccel/clarke\\_s/being.toc.html](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/clarke_s/being.toc.html)

October 18: Hutcheson

Reading: *An Inquiry Concerning the Original of our Ideas of Virtue or Moral Good*  
[http://files.libertyfund.org/files/858/0449\\_LFeBk.pdf](http://files.libertyfund.org/files/858/0449_LFeBk.pdf) (pp. 83-197)  
*Illustrations on the Moral Sense* (Sections I, II, IV)  
[http://files.libertyfund.org/files/885/0150\\_LFeBk.pdf](http://files.libertyfund.org/files/885/0150_LFeBk.pdf) (pp. 133-160, 173-178)

Further Reading (not required, but potentially relevant to a long paper on this topic):

John Balguy, *The Foundation of Moral Goodness, Part I*  
[http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com\\_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=2077&chapter=157681&layout=html&Itemid=27](http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=2077&chapter=157681&layout=html&Itemid=27)

October 25: Butler

Reading: *Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel* (Preface, I, II, III, XI, XII)  
*Dissertation II: Of the Nature of Virtue*  
[http://files.libertyfund.org/files/2075/SelbyBigge\\_1368-01\\_EBk\\_v6.0.pdf](http://files.libertyfund.org/files/2075/SelbyBigge_1368-01_EBk_v6.0.pdf)  
(pp. 146-188)

November 1: Hume (Passion and Reason)

Reading: *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1.1.1-7, 2.1.1, 2.3.3, 2.3.4.1, 2.3.8.13, 3.1.1-2)

November 8: Hume (Virtue)

Reading: *A Treatise of Human Nature* (3.2.1-2, 3.2.5-6, 3.3.1-6)  
*An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (Section 9, Appendix 1)

November 15: Reid

Reading: *Essays on the Active Powers of the Human Mind* (II.2, III.2.6, III.3.1-8, V.1, V.4-7)  
[http://books.google.com/books?id=OWQAAAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_g\\_e\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=OWQAAAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_g_e_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false) (pp. 119-126, 190-198, 206-245, 312-319, 329-392)

November 29: Kant (The Moral Law)

Reading: *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Preface, Sections I-II)

December 6: Kant (Virtue and the Highest Good)

Reading: *Critique of Practical Reason*

Part I: Doctrine of the Elements of Pure Practical Reason

Book I: The Analytic of Pure Practical Reason

Chapter I, Sections 1-8

Chapter II, On the Concept of an Object of Pure Practical Reason

Chapter III, On the Incentives of Pure Practical Reason

Part I: Doctrine of the Elements of Pure Practical Reason

Book II: Dialectic of Pure Practical Reason

Chapters I, II, IV, V

Part II: Doctrine of the Method of Pure Practical Reason

*The Metaphysics of Morals*

Introduction to the Metaphysics of Morals

Introduction to the Doctrine of Virtue

### *Course Requirements and Grading*

- One short (2-3 page) paper per week, starting at our second meeting (October 4) and ending at our eighth meeting (November 15). Each paper should be posted on the discussion section of the TED website for this course by 5pm on the day before the seminar in which the relevant issues will be discussed. Your paper should, if at all possible, do one (or more) of the following: (i) state clearly and precisely what the author's main views on the relevant issues are, (ii) provide a logical reconstruction of a difficult argument to be found in a relevant text, (iii) criticize the validity or soundness of a (reconstructed) argument in a relevant text, (iv) compare/contrast (with a view to analyzing and getting a deeper appreciation of the nature of, or strengths and weaknesses of) relevant positions/arguments proposed by two (or more) authors. If you can't find a way to do one of (i)-(iv), discuss your plans for the paper with me beforehand. Late papers will be read and marked, but will receive a grade of F (unless you have a valid excuse).
- One long (around 15 pages) term paper, hardcopy due in my mailbox on or before 9am on Thursday, December 13. The long paper must address positions and/or arguments to be found in the course readings or in readings previously approved by me.
- You need to make an appointment to see me to discuss your proposed long paper topic before Thanksgiving. At this meeting, you should have compiled a bibliography for your paper. (If there are any readings in your bibliography that do not appear on the syllabus, you need to place one copy of each of them in my mailbox, or point me to the relevant

journal website(s), a few days before the meeting.) The bibliography should (at least as a default matter) include relatively recent secondary source material (articles and/or book chapters) that you have tracked down through the *Philosopher's Index*, the *Arts and Humanities Citation Index*, or some other equally useful index. You should be prepared to articulate your paper's main thesis, the paper's rough structure, along with some of the arguments you will be planning to use in support of the main thesis. All of this material should take the form of a short (2-3 page) paper prospectus and posted on the TED discussion section before the meeting. I will not give out an incomplete grade unless you have a valid excuse for not being able to complete your paper by the deadline. Valid excuses include such things as serious illness or incapacitation, or death in the family. They do not include the strong desire to make the paper the best that it can be.

- One 15 minute in-class presentation (possibly two). The purpose of the presentation is to introduce the main issues/problems/arguments in the text to be discussed in seminar that day, raising some of your own questions/comments/criticisms along the way or at the end. The presentation may be related to the short paper, though the short paper (given its length) should be less introductory and more focused. You should not simply read your presentation, though you may speak your way through a handout. A handout is recommended, though not mandatory.
- Attendance is required at every meeting, unless a valid excuse is communicated to me in a timely manner (if possible, ahead of time).
- Your grade will be based on the quality of your papers (85%), your presentation (10%), and your participation in seminar (5%). The grade given to your worst short paper (assuming there is a worst paper) will be discarded in computing the final course grade.