

**Ethical Theory
PHIL 160
Winter Term 2019**

Instructor

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Brief Course Description

In this course, we will examine various theories in normative ethics, with an emphasis on virtue ethical approaches. In other words, we will consider how theorists have answered questions concerning what we morally ought to do and how we, as moral agents, ought to be. We will begin by critically analyzing John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism, a *consequentialist* view that understands right/wrong action in terms of the action's consequences. We will then juxtapose this view with Immanuel Kant's variety of *deontological* theory, a theory that understands right/wrong action in terms of the action's correspondence to duties or rules that are not reducible to consequentialist explanations. Our primary focus will be on virtue ethics, a third branch of normative ethical theory that centers on the character of moral agents (or how we ought to be) and the assessment of actions in terms of their relations to virtue. We will delve into historical works by figures such as Aristotle and Confucius and conclude by briefly exploring some contemporary constructions (and critiques) of virtue ethical approaches.

General Information

Students are expected to come to class having done the readings. Regular attendance and preparedness for class are important. Attendance can impact your grade. You may miss one class with no penalty. Each unexcused absence after the first will result in your attendance grade being lowered by 10 points. The remaining portion of your grade will be determined by papers and if applicable, an optional final exam as indicated on page 3 of this document. Students are required both to hand in hard copies of their papers in class and to submit them electronically (papers will be checked for plagiarism).

Readings

All required readings will be available to you online on the TritonEd course site. You may find it helpful to have the following complete texts available to you, so the following texts are recommended for purchase through your preferred book seller.

Aristotle. 2004. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Roger Crisp (ed., trans.).
Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press [from Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy Series]

John Stuart Mill. 2003. *Utilitarianism and On Liberty* Second Edition. Mary Warnock (Ed).
Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell)

Immanuel Kant. 1997. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Mary Gregor (ed., trans.).
Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press [from Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy Series]
(NOTE: A more recent Gregor translation by Cambridge University Press would also be suitable)

Schedule of Readings

(Tentative list – readings may be removed or added)

Unit 1. Consequentialism and Deontology: Mill and Kant

- 1/8: Selections from John Stuart Mill’s *Utilitarianism* (1)
- 1/10: Selections from John Stuart Mill’s *Utilitarianism* (2)
Selections from “Utilitarianism: For & Against” (start with act/rule-utilitarianism, p. 203)
- 1/15: Russ Shafer-Landau’s “Consequentialism: Its Difficulties” (required: only pp. 137-152)
- 1/17: Selections from Immanuel Kant’s *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1)
- 1/22: Selections from Immanuel Kant’s *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (2)
Onora O’Neill’s “Simplified Account of Kantian Ethics”
- 1/24: Russ Shafer-Landau’s “The Kantian Perspective” (required: only pp. 176-185)

Unit 2. Virtue Ethics in Ancient Thought: Aristotle and Confucius

- 1/29: Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*: Book I [**Paper 1 Due**]
- 1/31: Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*: Book II
- 2/5: Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*: Book III, Chps. 6-12
- 2/7: Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*: Book IV, Chps. 1, 3, & 5-9
- 2/12: Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*: Book VIII, Chps. 1-8 & 13-14
- 2/14: Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*: Book IX, Chps 3-4 & 8-9 | Book X, Chapters 6-8
- 2/19: Selections from *The Analects of Confucius*: Books 1-5
- 2/21: Selections from *The Analects of Confucius*: Books 6-12
- 2/26: Selections from *The Analects of Confucius*: Books 13-20

Unit 3. Virtue Ethics in Contemporary Thought: Modern Approaches

- 2/28: Rosalind Hursthouse’s “Normative Virtue Ethics” [**Paper 2 Due**]
- 3/5: Michael Slote’s “Agent-Based Virtue Ethics”
- 3/7: Christine Swanton’s “Pluralistic Virtue Ethics”
- 3/12: Lorraine Besser-Jones’s “The Situationist Critique”
- 3/14: Review

Other Info

Course Grade

The following factors will determine final grades:

Paper 1: ~2-3 pages (due 1/29)	20%
Paper 2: ~4-5 pages (due 2/28)	30%
Final Exam (3/21) OR optional ~8-10 page final paper (due 3/21)	40%
Attendance:	10%

93-100= A	86-88= B+	79-82=B-	73-75= C	66-68=D+	59-62=D-
89-92= A-	83-85= B	76-78=C+	69-72= C-	63-65=D	Below 59=F

Final Exam: Thursday, March 21 at 11:30 am – 2:30 pm

Technology policy

You may use laptops/tablets for note-taking only. No other electronic devices, including cell phones, may be used in class except by permission of the instructor.

Late Work Policy

Unless you have made prior arrangements with me for an extension or you have medical documentation of illness preventing you from completing the paper on time, late papers submitted up to three days past the deadline will receive a five point per day late penalty. Papers beyond three days late will only be accepted in exceptional cases.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to conduct themselves with academic integrity. For more information, go to: <https://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/>

Student Accommodations

Students requesting accommodations for this course due to a disability must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) which is located in University Center 202 behind Center Hall. Students are required to present their AFA letters to Faculty (please make arrangements to contact me privately) and to the OSD Liaison in the department in advance so that accommodations may be arranged.

[858.534.4382](tel:858.534.4382) (phone) | osd@ucsd.edu (email) | <http://disabilities.ucsd.edu> (website)