

**PHIL 202: Normativity, Prudence, and the Personal Good**  
**Spring 2025; UCSD**  
**Professor David O. Brink**  
**Syllabus**

There are many potential topics and readings on the cluster of issues involving prudence, the personal good, and normativity, and most of them could be discussed in considerable depth. We're going to try to do a selective survey. It's a survey, so we are aiming for some breath of coverage and won't be aspiring to do deep dives on most topics. Even so, it must be selective, if only because we don't have time to cover all the interesting issues and readings in this area. Our agenda will be guided by topics and readings that I like and know best. In their written work, students can range more widely, if they wish, addressing other related topics and readings.

I describe the Syllabus first. It sets out what I hope is an ambitious but feasible agenda. After that, I list some additional topics and readings, which I don't think we can fit in, but which students might want to pursue on their own. If the Syllabus itself proves too ambitious, we may need to prioritize some topics and readings over others.

Within a topic, do the readings in the order in which they are listed. Readings are either (A) required or (B) recommended. The recommended readings are just suggestions for further reading for those with time and the relevant interests. I won't assume that students are doing the recommended readings, though I might encourage students to explore recommended readings on topics on which they want to write. I will post PDFs of the required readings and perhaps some recommended ones on the course website on Canvas.

## THE SYLLABUS

### 0. GENERAL

- (B) Terence Irwin, *The Development of Ethics*, 3 vols.; Stephen Darwall, *Welfare and Rational Care*; Dale Dorsey, *A Theory of Prudence*; Fred Feldman, *Pleasure and the Good Life*; Guy Fletcher, *Dear Prudence*; Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity*; Richard Kraut, *What is Good and Why: the Ethics of Well-Being, Against Absolute Goodness, and The Quality of Life: Aristotle Revised*; and Mark Schroeder, *Slaves of the Passions*.

### 1. SOURCES OF NORMATIVITY I: INTERNALISM

- (A) Bernard Williams, "Internal and External Reasons;" Peter Railton, "Facts and Values;" and David Brink, "The Significance of Desire."
- (B) Dennis Stampe, "The Authority of Desire;" Mark Schroeder, *Slaves of the Passions*; and Christine Korsgaard, "Skepticism about Practical Reason."

### 2. SOURCES OF NORMATIVITY II: EXTERNALISM/REALISM

- (A) W.D. Ross, *The Right and the Good*, chs. II, IV-V.
- (B) Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity*, ch. 1.

### 3. SOURCES OF NORMATIVITY III: PURE AND HYBRID VOLUNTARISM

- (A) Plato, *Euthyphro*; Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity*, ch. 3; Ruth Chang, "Voluntarist Reasons and the Sources of Normativity."
- (B) G.A. Cohen, "Reason, Humanity, and the Moral Law;" Christine Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution*; Ruth Chang, "Grounding Practical Normativity: Going Hybrid;" and Cory Davia, *The Hybrid Sources of Normativity* (PhD thesis).

### 4. THE PERSONAL GOOD: CONCEPT AND COMPLETENESS

- (A) Plato, *Philebus* 20d-22d and Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book I.

- (B) Richard Kraut, *Against Absolute Goodness*; Connie Rosati, "Objectivism and the Relational Good;" Fred Feldman, *Pleasure and the Good Life*, ch. 1; Stephen Darwall, *Welfare and Rational Care*; and Dale Dorsey, *A Theory of Prudence*, chs. 9-10.

#### 5. THE INTRAPERSONAL REPUGNANT CONCLUSION

- (A) Plato, *Philebus* 20b5-22e5 and J.M.E. McTaggart, *The Nature of Existence*, II.vii.7 §§868-70.
- (B) Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, ch. 17 and Richard Kraut, *The Quality of Life*, ch. 4.

#### 6. EXPERIENTIALISM AND DESIRE-SATISFACTION

- (A) Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, pp. 42-45 and Peter Railton, "Facts and Values."
- (B) Fred Feldman, *Pleasure and the Good Life*; Richard Kraut, "Two Conceptions of Happiness" and *The Quality of Life*, ch. 3; John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, §§60-66; Connie Rosati, "Persons, Perspectives, and the Full Information Accounts of the Good" and "Internalism and the Good for a Person;" Richard Arneson, "Human Flourishing Versus Desire Satisfaction;" and Dale Dorsey, *A Theory of Prudence*, chs. 4-8.

#### 7. MILL'S HIGHER PLEASURES DOCTRINE

- (A) John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ch. 2 and David Brink, *Mill's Progressive Principles*, ch. 3.
- (B) Fred Feldman, *Pleasure and the Good Life*, ch 4.

#### 8. PERFECTIONISM, OBJECTIVE LISTS, AND MIXED CONCEPTIONS

- (A) Guy Fletcher, "A Fresh Start for the Objective-List Theory of Well-Being" and David Brink, "Normative Perfectionism and the Kantian Tradition."
- (B) Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, Appendix I; Richard Arneson, "Does Fairness Require a Multidimensional Approach?;" Thomas Hurka, *Perfectionism*.

#### 9. THE VALUE OF NARRATIVITY AND REDEMPTION

- (A) David Velleman, "Well-Being and Time;" Doug Portmore, "Welfare, Achievement, and Self-Sacrifice;" and Ying Liu, "The Nature and Significance of Prudential Redemption."
- (B) Connie Rosati, "The Story of a Life."

#### 10. PRUDENCE, TEMPORAL NEUTRALITY, AND TIME BIASES

- (A) David Brink, "The Prospects for Temporal Neutrality;" Tom Dougherty, "Future Bias;" Preston Greene and Meghan Sullivan, "Against Time Biases."
- (B) Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, §§53-70, 110; Chris Suhler and Craig Callender, "Thanks Goodness that Argument is Over: Explaining the Temporal Value Asymmetry;" Meghan Sullivan, *Time Biases*; Preston Greene, "Pure Time Preferences are Irrelevant to the Debate over Time Bias," "Hedonic and Non-Hedonic Bias Toward the Future," "On Preferring that Overall, Things are Worse: Future-Bias and Unequal Payoffs," and "How Much Do We Discount Past Pleasures?" and Dale Dorsey, *A Theory of Prudence*, chs. 11-12.

## ADDITIONAL TOPICS AND READINGS

### 1. RELATIONAL AND ABSOLUTE GOODNESS

- (A) G.E. Moore, *Principia Ethics*, pp. 97-105; Connie Rosati, "Objectivism and Relational Goodness;" and Richard Kraut, *Against Absolute Goodness*.
- (B) Connie Rosati, "Internalism and the Personal Good" and "Relational Good and the Multiplicity Problem."

### 2. CONTEXTUAL VALUE

- (A) Guy Fletcher, *Dear Prudence*, chs. 3-4.
- (B) Anna Alexandrova, *A Philosophy for the Science of Well-Being*.

### 3. ORGANIC UNITIES

- (A) G.E. Moore, *Principia Ethica*, ch. VI and W.D. Ross, *The Right and the Good*, ch. III.
- (B) Thomas Hurka, "Two Kinds of Organic Unity."

### 4. IS PRUDENCE A CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE?

- (A) Terence Irwin, *The Development of Ethics*, vol. III, Ch. 66, esp. §§902-911.
- (B) Immanuel Kant *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Moral* 4: 432-33, 442-44; *The Critique of Practical Reason* 5: 20-28, 35-36, 39-41, 111-12 and *The Metaphysics of Morals* 6: 386-87; Guy Fletcher, *Dear Prudence*, ch. 1.

### 5. A DUALISM OF PRACTICAL REASON?

- (A) Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, esp Preface to the 6<sup>th</sup> edition; II.i-v; IV.i-ii; and Concluding Chapter.
- (B) David Brink, "Eudaimonism and Cosmopolitan Concern" and "Three Dualisms: Sidgwick, Green, and Bradley."

### 6. PRUDENCE, CONFLICTS OF VALUES, AND TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCES

- (A) Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, §110 and Laurie Paul, *Transformative Experience*, chs. 1-2.
- (B) David Brink, "Prudence and Authenticity: Intrapersonal Conflicts of Value."

### 7. HARD CHOICE, CONSTRUCTIVE INTERPRETATION, AND INTEGRITY

- (A) Ronald Dworkin, *Law's Empire*, chs. 2 and 6.