

Syllabus and Course Outline - 2019

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I. Course details

Description

In this course, we look at concepts and theories in normative ethics and metaethics. Normative ethics deals with the foundations of moral theory. What determines whether an action is right or wrong, good or bad? What principles should we live by? Utilitarianism, deontology and virtue ethics provide three influential answers. Part I of the course studies these theories in detail, considering the ideas of Aristotle, Mill, Kant and Sartre along the way. Metaethics deals with second-order questions *about* ethical thought and talk. Are there moral facts and moral truths? Could moral judgements be objectively true? What is the relation between moral facts and scientific or natural facts? How, if at all, can we acquire moral knowledge? What role do the emotions play in moral judgement? Part II of the course focuses on these and similar questions.

Learning outcomes

1. Understand and evaluate central ideas in normative ethics and metaethics as developed in different times and places.
2. Reflect critically on first-order and second-order ethical questions.
3. An ability to use analytical and interpretative skills in the context of ethical theory.
4. Defend a position rigorously by means of logical argument, and anticipate and rebut objections
5. Assess the evidence for competing and conflicting theories, and come to a reasoned conclusion
6. Demonstrate the ability to think independently, to question assumptions, and to search for different approaches
7. Produce cogent written expositions and analyses.
8. An ability to develop independent research interests and goals.
9. Critical and interpretative skills of value in the academy, workplace and everyday life.

Course credit 15 points, 0.1250 EFTS

Contact hours Twelve two-hour lectures and twelve one-hour lectures.

Lecturer (Term 1) and Course Coordinator:

Dr. Michael-John Turp,
Karl Popper Building, Room 603,
Phone: (03) 369 4396 ext. 94396
Email: michael-john.turp@canterbury.ac.nz
Office hours: Friday, 11-12

Lecturer (Term 2):

Associate Professor Karen Green (visiting Erskine Fellow)
Karl Popper Building, Room 621
Email: karen.green@unimelb.edu.au

Lectures are designed:

- i. To introduce central issues in normative ethics and metaethics.
- ii. To provide a framework for independent reading, thought and investigation.
- iii. To provide a forum for deeper exploration and discussion of material encountered in lectures and during independent study.

Times and locations for lectures are set by UC timetabling and are available on the Course Information System.

Recommended texts:

The recommended text for part I of the course is John Deigh's (2010) *An Introduction to Ethics*. Shafer-Landau (ed.) 2013. *Ethical Theory: An Anthology*, 2nd edition is a useful collection of readings available online through the UC library.

A range of further readings is listed for each week.

Online resources:

- *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* is an excellent resource written by experts in the field: <http://plato.stanford.edu/index.html>
- *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* is also a good, reliable, peer-reviewed resource: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/>
- *PhilPapers* is a very useful online database of philosophy papers and a good place to extend your research beyond the reading list given in the course outline: <http://philpapers.org/>
- JSTOR is a large archive of academic papers including philosophy, which you have free access to through the UC library website: <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.canterbury.ac.nz>

Other online resources vary enormously in quality and should mostly be avoided.

Learn:

There is a website for this course on Learn. The course outline, lecture handouts and other materials are posted on the site: <http://learn.canterbury.ac.nz>

Majoring in Philosophy:

BA or BSc students who major in philosophy must normally take at least **two** 100-level PHIL courses, plus at least **three** 200-level PHIL courses (including PHIL233 Epistemology and Metaphysics), plus at least 60 points from 300-level PHIL courses (including at least one course from this list: PHIL305 Paradoxes; PHIL310 History of Philosophy; PHIL311 Meaning, Mind, and the Nature of Philosophy; and PHIL317 Contemporary Political Philosophy).

For more information see the BA regulations

< <https://www.canterbury.ac.nz/regulations/academic-regulations/ba-200/>>

and/or the BSc regulations

< <https://www.canterbury.ac.nz/regulations/academic-regulations/bsc-229/>>.

Note that you can combine a major in philosophy with a major in another subject.

Assessment:

Item	Length/Time	Weight	Due Date
Essay 1	2000 words	30%	Last Friday of Term 1, 11.55 pm
Essay 2	2000 words	30%	Last Friday of Term 2, 11.55 pm
Exam	3 hours	40%	TBC

For further details see section IV below.

II. Topics and Reading List

See section III for full reading list and references. Further readings are generally more demanding.

All readings are available from the University library.

TERM ONE**1: Ethics: descriptive and normative**

Recommended Reading: Deigh (2011, Ch. 1). Reader (2007, Ch. 2) offers an opinionated survey of approaches to defining ethics. Williams (1985, Ch. 1) is an interesting discussion of the scope of ethics as distinguished from morality. Gert and Gert (2016) is also helpful.

Greene (2013, Ch. 1–2) is a readable discussion of the ‘moral machinery’ we evolved to solve social cooperation problems. Churchland (2011) is an interesting introduction to the neuroscience of morality.

2: Morality and self-interest

Primary Reading: Plato’s ‘The Immoralist’s Challenge’ from *The Republic*. Reprinted in Shafer-Landau (ed.) (2013, Ch. 15).

Deigh (2011, Ch. 2). For more on the problem of immoralism raised in Plato’s *Republic* see Annas (1981, 34–71), Foot (2001, Ch. 7), Wiggins (2006, Ch. 1) and Williams (2006, Ch. 6).

Further Reading: Bloomfield (ed.) (2008) is a relatively advanced collection of essays by contemporary philosophers on the relationship between morality and self-interest. See also Bloomfield (2017). Prichard (1912) is a classic discussion of egoism.

3: Aristotle, Virtue and Flourishing

Primary Reading: Aristotle’s ‘The Nature of Virtue’ from *Nicomachean Ethics*. Reprinted in Shafer-Landau (ed.) (2012: Ch. 66).

Recommended Reading: Deigh (2011: Ch. 3). Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* is available in numerous editions. Recommended are Irwin, Ross, and Rowe and Broadie translations.

Good introductions to Aristotle’s ethics include Urmson (1988), Kraut (2017) and Charles (2017). Rorty (ed.) 1980 is an excellent collection of essays.

See Sommers (2016, Pt. 1, Ch. 2) for an interesting interview with Philip Zimbardo on the ‘power of the situation’.

Hursthouse (1999) is an important book-length introduction to, and defence of contemporary virtue ethics. Hursthouse and Pettigrove (2016) is a briefer overview. See also van Zyl (2019) for a good up-to-date introduction.

Further Reading: Foot (1978) is an important collection of essays. MacIntyre (1981) is another important neo-Aristotelian work. See especially Ch. 12 on Aristotelian virtues and Ch. 14 on the relationship between virtues and practices. See Prinz (2009) for more on recent empirical challenges to virtue ethics.

4: J. S. Mill and Utilitarianism

Primary Reading: Mill's 'Utilitarianism' from *Utilitarianism*. Reprinted in Shafer-Landau (ed.) (2013, Ch. 48).

Recommended Reading: Deigh (2011, Ch. 4). Mill's *Utilitarianism* is easily available in numerous editions.

Good introductory overviews include Scarre (1996), Mulgan (2007) and Bykvist (2010). Sinnott-Armstrong (2015) is the Stanford Encyclopedia entry on consequentialism. Lazari-Radek and Singer (2017) is a short, up-to-date introduction.

Further Reading: Smart and Williams (1973) is a classic exchange between two leading philosophers. Very highly recommended. Wiggins (2006: Ch. 6–8) offers a subtle discussion of utilitarianism and its possibilities.

5: Kant and the moral law

Primary Reading: Kant's 'Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals' from *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Reprinted in Shafer-Landau (ed.) (2013, Ch. 55).

Recommended Reading: Deigh (2011, Ch. 5-6). Kant's *Groundwork* (or *Grounding*) is available in numerous editions, including Ellington's translation available online through the UC library.

Uleman (2010) and Johnson and Cureton (2016) are helpful introductions to Kant's moral philosophy. Schneewind (2009, Ch. 13) addresses the question "Why study Kant's *Groundwork*?"

Further Reading: Korsgaard (1996) is one of the most important works of Kantian moral philosophy in recent(-ish) years. Allison (2011) is an advanced survey of the *Groundwork*. O'Neill (2013) is a clear, detailed and influential reconstruction of the Categorical Imperative (but quite hard going!).

6: Particularism

Primary Reading: Dancy 'An Unprincipled Morality'. Reprinted in Shafer-Landau (ed.) (2013, Ch. 80).

Recommended Reading: Dancy (2017) and Ridge and McKeever (2016) are useful overviews of moral particularism. Dancy (2004) is his own book-length defence and the modern *locus classicus* for particularism. Shafer-Landau (2012, Ch. 16) is a very clear overview of *prima facie* duties and particularism.

Further Reading: See the readings in Hooker and Little (eds.) (2000) and section XII of Shafer-Landau and Cuneo (eds.) (2007). See also papers in Lance, Potrč and Strahovnik (eds.) (2008).

TERM TWO

7: The rise of empiricism and its consequences for moral epistemology

Primary Reading: John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, (1690) I.i, I.ii.1–14, and IV.iii.18.
George Watson (ed.) *Remarks on John Locke by Thomas Burnet with Locke's Replies*, pp. 23–35.

Recommended Reading: Sheridan (2010, Ch. 5) offers a clear account of the background to Locke's moral theory, and of some of the controversies over the interpretation of it.

8: Catharine Cockburn's moral philosophy and defense of Locke

Primary Reading: Catharine Trotter Cockburn, *A Vindication of an Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1702) in *Catharine Trotter Cockburn's Philosophical Writings*, ed. Patricia Sheridan, pp. 39–52.

Recommended Reading: Sheridan (2007) and Green (2019) both deal with the interpretation of Trotter Cockburn's moral theory and disagree on the issue of whether Trotter Cockburn offers a good account of Locke's moral epistemology. Sheridan (2018) discusses the influence of Trotter Cockburn's ideas later in the eighteenth century.

9: David Hume's empiricist ethics

Primary Reading: David Hume, "Of the Influencing motives of the will" and "Moral Distinctions not Derived from Reason" from *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1737). Reprinted in Shafer-Landau (ed.) 2013, Ch. 1, pp. 7–15.

Recommended Reading: Mackie (1977, Ch. 1) (extracts reprinted in Shafer-Landau (ed.) 2013, Ch. 3) is a more modern discussion of the subjectivity of value, influenced by some of the same concerns as Hume.

10: Sartre and Beauvoir: an ethics of authenticity and ambiguity

Primary Reading: Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1962) available at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/de-beauvoir/ambiguity/index.htm>

Recommended Reading: Sartre (1948) sketches some of the ideas developed in greater detail by Beauvoir. Anderson (1993) is a useful introduction of their existentialist ethics which raises various problems for it.

11: Ethics from an environmental point of view

Primary Reading: Peter Singer, “All animals are equal” from *Animal Liberation* reprinted in Shafer-Landau (2013) Ch. 43.
Immanuel Kant, “We Have no Duties to Animals” from *Lectures on Ethics*, reprinted in Shafer-Landau (2013) Ch. 42.

Recommended Reading: O’Neill, Holland and Light (2008, Ch. 7) and Singer (1981) both deal with the meta-ethical issues that arise from the claim that animals and humans are not fundamentally different and with what follows from the claim that if humans have intrinsic value so too do animals.

III. Reading List

- Allison, H. 2011. *Kant’s Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals: A Commentary*. Oxford: OUP.
- Anderson, Thomas. 1993. *Sartre’s Two Ethics*. Chicago: Open Court.
- Annas, J. 1981. *An Introduction to Plato’s Republic*. Oxford: OUP.
- Ayer, A. J. 1936. *Language, Truth and Logic*. London: Penguin.
- Bloomfield, P. (ed.) 2008. *Morality and Self-Interest*. Oxford: OUP.
- Bloomfield, P. 2017. Morality is necessary for happiness. *Philosophical Studies* 174: 2613–2628.
- Bykvist, K. 2010. *Utilitarianism: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: Continuum.
- Charles, D. 2017. Aristotle on Virtue and Happiness. In C. Bobonich (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Ethics* (Cambridge Companions to Philosophy, pp. 105-123). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
doi:10.1017/9781107284258.007
- Churchland, P. 2011. *Braintrust: What Neuroscience Tells us About Morality*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Dancy, J. 2004. *Ethics Without Principles*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Dancy, J. 2017. Moral Particularism. In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), forthcoming URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/moral-particularism/>>.
- Deigh, J. 2010. *An Introduction to Ethics*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Foot, P. 1978. *Virtues and Vices*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Foot, P. 2001. *Natural Goodness*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Gert, B. and Gert, J. 2016. The Definition of Morality. In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/morality-definition/>>.

- Green, Karen. 2019. On some footnotes to Catharine Trotter Cockburn's *Defence of the Essay of Human Understanding*. *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*.
- Greene, J. 2013. *Moral Tribes*. New York: Penguin.
- Hooker, R. and M. Little. (eds.) 2000. *Moral Particularism*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Hursthouse, R. 1999. *On Virtue Ethics*. Oxford: OUP.
- Hursthouse, R., and Pettigrove, G. 2016. Virtue Ethics. In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/ethics-virtue/>>.
- Johnson, R., and Cureton, A. 2016. Kant's Moral Philosophy. In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/kant-moral/>>.
- Korsgaard, C. 1996. *The Sources of Normativity*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Kraut, R. 2017. Aristotle's Ethics. In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2017/entries/aristotle-ethics/>>.
- Lance, M., Potrč, M. and Strahovnik, V. (eds.). 2008. *Challenging Moral Particularism*. London: Routledge.
- Lazari-Radek, K and P. Singer. 2017. *Utilitarianism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: OUP.
- MacIntyre, A. 1981. *After Virtue*. London: Duckworth.
- Mackie, J. L. 1977. *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. London: Penguin.
- Mulgan, T. 2007. *Understanding Utilitarianism*. Stocksfield: Acumen.
- O'Neill, O. 2013. *Acting on Principle*, 2nd edn. Cambridge: CUP.
- Prichard, H. A. 1912. Does moral philosophy rest on a mistake? *Mind* 21: 21–37.
- Prinz, J. 2009. The normativity challenge. *The Journal of Ethics* 13: 117-44.
- Reader, S. 2007. *Needs and Moral Necessity*. New York: Routledge.
- Ridge, M. and McKeever, S. 2016. Moral Particularism and Moral Generalism. In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/moral-particularism-generalism/>>.
- Rorty, A. O. (ed). 1980. *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sartre, J.P. 1948. *Existentialism and Humanism*. London: Methuen.
- Scarre, G. 1996. *Utilitarianism*. London: Routledge.
- Schneewind, J. B. 2009. *Essays in the History of Moral Philosophy*. Oxford: OUP.
- Shafer-Landau, R. and T. Cuneo (eds). 2007. *Foundations of Ethics: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Shafer-Landau, R. 2012. *The Fundamentals of Ethics*. 2nd edition. Oxford: OUP.
- Shafer-Landau, R. (ed). 2013. *Ethical Theory: An Anthology*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Sheridan, Patricia. 2007. Reflection, Nature, and Moral Law: The Extent of Catharine Cockburn's Lockeanism in her *Defence of Mr. Locke's Essay*. *Hypatia* 22:133-51.
- Sheridan, Patricia. 2010. *Locke, A Guide for the Perplexed*. London: Continuum.

Sheridan, Patricia. 2018. Virtue, affection, and the social good: The moral philosophy of Catharine Trotter Cockburn and the Bluestockings. *Philosophy Compass* no. 13 (2). doi: DOI: 10.1111/phc3.12478.

Singer, Peter. 1981. *The Expanding Circle: Ethics and Sociobiology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sinnott-Armstrong, W. 2015. Consequentialism. In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2015/entries/consequentialism/>>.

Smart, J. J. C and B. Williams. 1973. *Utilitarianism, For and Against*. Cambridge: CUP.

Sommers, T. (ed.). 2016. *A Very Bad Wizard: Morality Behind the Curtain*. London: Routledge.

Uleman, J. 2010. *An Introduction to Kant's Moral Philosophy*. Cambridge: CUP.

Urmson, J. O. 1988. *Aristotle's Ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell.

van Zyl, L. 2019. *Virtue Ethics: A Contemporary Introduction*. New York: Routledge.

Wiggins, D. 2006. *Ethics: Twelve Lectures on the Philosophy of Morality*. London: Penguin.

Williams, B. 1985. *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*. London: Fontana.

Williams, B. 2006. *The Sense of the Past*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.

IV. Assessment

A. Assessment details

Item	Length/Time	Weight	Due Date
Essay 1	2000 words	30%	Last Friday of Term 1, 11.55 pm
Essay 2	2000 words	30%	Last Friday of Term 2, 11.55 pm
Exam	3 hours	40%	TBC

B. Essays

Alternative essay titles can be agreed **in advance**.

Essay 1:

In an essay of no more than 2000 words, answer one of the following questions:

1. In Plato's *Republic* Glaucon claims that the ring of Gyges is "a strong argument ... for the claim that no one is just voluntarily, but only under compulsion ... Every man believes injustice to be much more profitable for the individual than justice." (Bk. II, 360c-d). Is Glaucon right? Explain and justify your answer?
2. "The human good proves to be activity of the soul in accord with virtue" (Aristotle, *NE* 1098a16-17). Explain and discuss.
3. "Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain*, and *pleasure*. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to

determine what we shall do” (Jeremy Bentham). Critically evaluate the claim that pleasure is the human good.

4. What do you see as the single most significant problem for Utilitarianism? How, if at all, can it be resolved?
5. Explain and discuss any one formulation of Kant’s Categorical Imperative.
6. Does morality require us to act on principles? Answer with reference to moral particularism.

Essay 2:

In an essay of no more than 2000 words, answer one of the following questions:

1. Explain and critically discuss John Locke’s account of the nature of moral truth and our capacity to come to know moral principles.
2. Catharine Trotter Cockburn defends Locke’s account of our knowledge of moral truth against the criticisms of the Remarker. How successful is her defence of Locke?
3. Empiricism is the only viable theory of our knowledge of the external world, but it cannot account for our knowledge of moral truth. Discuss.
4. According to Hume moral distinctions are not derived from reason. What are his reasons for saying this? How good are they?
5. Dostoevsky asserted, “If God does not exist, everything is permitted.” Sartre and Beauvoir disagree. Can their atheist existentialism offer a satisfactory theory of moral obligation?
6. Do we have moral obligations towards animals and the environment? If so, what is the source of these moral obligations?

C. Essay Submission

Essays must be submitted electronically via the PHIL321 Learn. Essays must be 1.5 spaced or double-spaced. No pdfs.

All the essays will be submitted to Turnitin, an electronic tool that measures the originality of text. Turnitin generates an Originality Report to which you have access. Turnitin advises as follows: “Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Terms and Conditions of Use posted on the Turnitin.com site.”

See also plagiarism section below.

D. Extensions

Essays submitted after the due date without an official extension will be penalised. Extensions will be granted only on medical or compassionate grounds. Other than in exceptional circumstances, the extension must be sought before the due date.

E. Penalties for Late Essays

Essays submitted after the due date and without an extension will attract a penalty of two percentage points per day or part thereof. Other than in exceptional circumstances, no essays submitted more than 14 days after the due date will be marked.

F. Exam

The exam is three hours long and requires you to answer three essay questions from a range of alternatives. The examination date and time will be announced by the university. All students will be contacted and given their exam schedule.

Exam papers from previous years can be accessed through the Library website: <http://library.canterbury.ac.nz/exams/index.php?course=PHIL321&year>

G. Marks and Grades

The University of Canterbury uses the following scale to relate grades to marks and GPAs:

Grade	A +	A	A -	B +	B	B -	C +	C	C-	D	E
Marks	90-100	85-89	80-84	75-79	70-74	65-69	60-64	55-59	50-54	40-49	0-39
GPA	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	-1

Any grade over 50 is a pass.

H. Plagiarism and Other Forms of Dishonest Practice

Plagiarism is a form of cheating in which other people's work is passed off as your own, for example, when passages of text are copied into an essay without being included in quotation marks and without acknowledgement of the source for the quotation. Minor variations to the wording of the original are not sufficient to avoid the charge of plagiarism. Plagiarism is regarded very seriously in the university, and may result in disciplinary action. The Philosophy Department's policy is as follows:

Under no circumstances may you copy the words of an article or book without acknowledging it as a quotation. Nor may you copy or borrow extensively from the essays of other students, or have any other person write an essay for you. Be aware that we view these forms of cheating very seriously, and that we regularly take steps to detect plagiarism in work submitted by students. If we find that that you have engaged in dishonest practice, you may be subject to disciplinary action.

Penalties range from a failing grade on the specific item of assessment or the course as a whole to expulsion from the university.

If you have any doubts about whether you are appropriately referencing sources and material, the onus is on you to check your approach with a tutor, lecturer, or the Learning Skills Centre.

I. Special Considerations

If you feel that illness, injury, bereavement or other critical circumstances has prevented you from completing an item of assessment or affected your performance, you should complete a special considerations application form.

Further information is available here: <https://www.canterbury.ac.nz/study/special-consideration/>

V. Further Support

Student Representative

Your class will appoint a student representative at the start of the semester. Please feel free to talk to the student rep about any general problems or concerns that you might have about the course, but not about individual issues such as aegrotats, lost notes or personal problems.

Further information is available here: <https://ucsa.org.nz/student-support/advocacy-welfare/class-representatives/>

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities should speak with someone at the Disability Support Service.

Webpage: <http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/disability/index.shtml>

Email: disabilities@canterbury.ac.nz, Ext. 93334

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