

## Module Syllabus Ethics

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<b>Instructor</b>	Emma Bullock <a href="mailto:bullocke@ceu.edu">bullocke@ceu.edu</a>
<b>Number of Credits</b>	2
<b>Semester</b>	Fall term, 2016-17
<b>Time and Location</b>	Friday 11.00-12.40
<b>Office</b>	Nador u. 13, R. 206
<b>Office Hours</b>	TBC

### **Description**

Ethics is broadly concerned with questions of how one ought to live. In this introductory course we will reflect on the moral and prudential aspects of ethics. First, we will look at some of the main theories of morally right conduct, including theories of utilitarianism, deontology, virtue ethics and feminist ethics. In the second part of the course we will consider the sorts of things that constitute a life well lived, such as moral perfection, desire-satisfaction, pleasure, and objective well-being.

### **Course Goals**

The aims of this module are twofold: first, that students understand the differences between some of the main approaches to ethics, and second, to develop the philosophical skills required to critically analyse them.

### **Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the course, students will gain:

- an understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of some of the problems that arise in ethics
- the ability to deploy the philosophical techniques and argumentative strategies that can be used to discuss those problems
- the ability to explain the strengths and weaknesses of different positions in ethics
- the transferable skill of formulating and evaluating arguments for and against various positions in ethics, both orally and in writing

**Weekly Schedule and Indicative Reading List**

<b>Wk</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings (M= Mandatory, R= Recommended)</b>
1	Introduction	M: Rachels, James (2003) Chapter 1: 'What is morality?' in <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</i> [EMP] (4 <sup>th</sup> ed.), New York: McGraw-Hill
	<b>The Right</b>	
2	Egoism	M: Hills, Alison (2010) Chapter 1: 'The Holy Grail of Moral Philosophy' & Chapter 1: 'Standard Egoism', in <i>The Beloved Self: Morality and the Challenge from Egoism</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press  R: Rachels, James (2003) Chapter 5: 'Psychological Egoism' and Chapter 6: 'Ethical Egoism', in <i>EMP</i> .
3	Utilitarianism	M: Bentham, Jeremy (1996 [1789]). <i>Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation</i> . Oxford: Clarendon Press: chapters 1–4.  R: Williams, Bernard (1981). 'Utilitarianism and Moral Self-Indulgence', in <i>Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers, 1973-1980</i> . Cambridge University Press.
4	Kantian Duties	M: Kant, Immanuel (1998 [1785]). <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> (trans. Mary Gregor). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: section 1.  R: Korsgaard, Christine M. (1989). "Kant's Analysis of Obligation." <i>The Monist</i> 72 (3): 311–340.
5	Prima facie Duties	M: Ross, W. D. (2002). "What Makes Right Acts Right?" in <i>The Right and the Good</i> . Oxford: Clarendon Press: 16–48.  R: Rachels, James (2003) Chapter 9: 'Are there absolute moral rules?' in <i>EMP</i>
6	Virtue Ethics	M: Hursthouse, Rosalind (1991). Virtue theory and abortion. <i>Philosophy and Public Affairs</i> 20 (3):223-246.  R: Anscombe, G. E. M. (1958). "Modern Moral Philosophy." <i>Philosophy</i> 33 (124): 1–19.
7	The Ethics of Care	M: Held, Virginia (2006). Chapter 3: 'The Caring Person' <i>The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global</i> . Oxford University Press: 44-57  R: Gilligan, Carol (1982). <i>In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development</i> . Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (especially chapter 3.)
	<b>The Good</b>	
8	Hedonism	M: Feldman, Fred (2002). "The Good Life: A Defence of Attitudinal Hedonism." <i>Philosophy and Phenomenological Research</i> 65 (3): 604–628.  R: Nozick, Robert (1974). "The Experience Machine." in <i>Anarchy, State and Utopia</i> . New York: Basic Books: 42–45.
9	Desire-Satisfaction Theory	M: Griffin, James (1986). Chapters 1: 'Utilitarian Accounts: State of Mind or State of the World?' in <i>Well-Being: Its Meaning, Measurement, and Moral Importance</i> . Oxford: Clarendon Press  R: Parfit, Derek (1984). "What Makes Someone's Life Go Best?" in <i>Reasons and Persons</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press: 493–502.

10	Objective List Theory	M: Rice, Christopher M. (2013). Defending the Objective List Theory of Well-Being. <i>Ratio</i> 26 (2):196-211.  R: Hooker, B (2015) 'The Elements of Well-being' <i>Journal of Practical Ethics</i> 3 (1): 15-35
11	Moral Sainthood	M: Wolf, Susan (1982). "Moral Saints." <i>The Journal of Philosophy</i> 79 (8): 419–439.  R: Nagel, Thomas (1986). "Living Right and Living Well." in <i>The View From Nowhere</i> . New York: Oxford University Press: 189–207.
12	Revision & Debate	<i>No set reading</i>

All compulsory reading material will be made available online.

### **Additional resources**

Guy Fletcher, *The Philosophy of Well-Being* (Routledge, 2016).

Peter Singer, *A Companion to Ethics* (Blackwell, 1991).

The online *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* is a useful and up-to-date reference work:  
<http://plato.stanford.edu/>

For advice on how to write a philosophy paper: <http://bit.ly/SFp7sO>

For advice on how to read a philosophy paper: <http://bit.ly/29TAMm2>

### **Format of the classes**

Classes will begin with a short lecture followed by a group discussion of the reading. At the beginning of each discussion one student will be randomly selected to provide a brief summary of the reading. Every student will be expected to provide a discussion question (this should be prepared before class) and participation will influence the student's overall assessment (see below).

### **Assessment**

Two-year Philosophy MA students will be assessed with an in-class written final exam, taken as part of the Theoretical and Practical Philosophy exam scheduled for the end of Spring term. Exam questions will be provided to students at the end of the Fall term.

All other students taking the class for credit must submit a 2,500 word final paper on a topic agreed to in advance with the instructor.

Though the class grade is based on the final paper or exam, all course requirements (see below) must be completed in a satisfactory manner in order to earn a grade for the class. A student's final grade may be adjusted by half a grade depending on their in overall performance.

## **Requirements**

Regular attendance, carefully completing the assigned readings before class, and active participation in discussions will be expected from all students, whether registered for audit or taking the class for credit.

For students taking the class for credit there will be the following written assignments, for which questions will be provided:

- 1) Two position papers, 500-800 words each (word count including footnotes but not including bibliography), on:
  - a. Egoism OR Utilitarianism OR Kantian Duties, due **Week 4: 16th October 2017**
  - b. Virtue Ethics OR Ethics of Care OR Hedonism, due **Week 8: 13<sup>th</sup> November 2017**

These will be graded pass/fail, and written feedback will be given.

- 2) Either a final exam (required for two-year Philosophy MA students), or a 2,500 word final paper (everyone else taking the class for credit). Those students writing a final paper are required to submit their essay plan by **Week 10: 27<sup>th</sup> November 2017**

The use of laptops or electronic devices during class is a privilege. If it emerges that students are becoming distracted then the use of laptops or electronic devices will not be permitted (barring exceptional circumstances).

## **Grading criteria for final papers**

### Quantity:

Avoid going 10% over or under the required length. Writing clearly and succinctly within a word limit is an important philosophical skill. Grades will thus be partly determined in light of the student's ability to stick closely to the word limit. The word count should include all references and footnotes (if any), but exclude the bibliography.

### Quality:

To earn a B+, the paper must clearly and concisely address the question and must be written in good academic English. Insofar as these are relevant, the paper must demonstrate a solid understanding of the arguments from readings in the course as well as in-class presentations and discussions. Important principles and concepts should be clearly explained. The views of others should, where necessary, be accurately, charitably, clearly and succinctly reconstructed, and properly cited with a bibliography. The paper must show that you have analyzed and independently organized the material yourself in response to the question, rather than simply following the organization of in-class presentations or parts of the literature.

To earn an A-, the assignment must demonstrate all the above plus evidence of genuine progress as a result of your own independent thinking, such as your own substantive evaluation and critique of the validity and soundness of the arguments of others, or your own original positive argument. If there are any problems with the exposition or arguments in the paper, these will be minor. Any obvious objections to your argument will have been anticipated and answered.

Papers that earn an A will demonstrate all the above virtues to the extent that they are nearly flawless in writing style, organization, exposition and soundness of arguments. While remaining entirely

relevant to the question, such a paper will be relatively ambitious in scope and will demonstrate an exceptional degree of understanding and of the topic.

***Grading criteria for final exam essays***

In-class exam essays are not expected to be as flawless in writing style as final papers, nor accompanied by a bibliography. However, exam answers must meet the following grading criteria to an only slightly lesser extent than a final paper on the same question in order to earn grades as above: giving a relevant, clear and concise answer to the question; accurate exposition of relevant principles, concepts and the arguments of others; independent organization; independent thinking and clarity and soundness of your own argument; anticipation of objections.