

Ethical Theory (Phil. 330)

Fall 2007 (TR 11:00-12:20), Ross 029

Instructor: Hull

Course Objectives and Description: Ethics is a form of practical reason, that is, reason about what to do. More specifically, it is practical reasoning about morality. This course will explore select major normative ethical theories with a view to understanding both how they think about morality, and how those theories reflect metaethical commitments about the nature of practical reasoning more generally. This is primarily a course in ethical theory, and so our work will focus on theory, and not its applications.

Warning: Philosophy is hard! Be patient!

Required Texts and Materials: There's three books; the other readings are available on WebCT as PDF files, generally scanned from books (I've included the citations if you have access to the books). You should do the reading for a class *before* that class meets. That way, you'll be able to follow discussion and lecture. You'll also be able to pass the reading quizzes.

Books to Get (at the bookstore or elsewhere):

Immanuel Kant, *Ethical Philosophy*, 2nd ed., Trans James W. Ellington. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995, ISBN: (0-87220-320-4)/(978-0-87220-320-4)

David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning The Principles Of Morals*, Ed. J. B. Schneewind. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983, ISBN: (0-915145-45-6)/(978-0-915145-45-4)

John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 2nd ed., Ed. George Sher. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002, ISBN: (0-87220-605-X)/(978-0-87220-605-2)

Articles on WebCT:

Butler, Judith. "Precarious Life," in *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London: Verso, 2004, 128-51.

Habermas, Jürgen. "Discourse Ethics," in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholson. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990, 43-115.

Jagger, Allison M. "Caring as a Feminist Practice of Moral Reason," *Justice and Care: Essential Readings in Feminist Ethics*, ed. Virginia Held. Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995, 179-202.

Kant, Immanuel, "A Renewed Attempt to Answer the Question: 'Is the Human Race Continually Improving?'" in *Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss. Cambridge: CUP, 1991, 176-90.

Kant, Immanuel, "On the Incentives of Pure Practical Reason," from *Critique of Practical Reason*, in *Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge: CUP, 1996, 198-211.

Noddings, Nel. "Caring," in *Justice and Care: Essential Readings in Feminist Ethics*, ed. Virginia Held. Boulder, CO: Westview, 1995, 7-30.

Parfit, Derek. "The Non-Identity Problem," in *Reasons and Persons*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984, 351-80.

Parfit, Derek. "The Repugnant Conclusion," *Reasons and Persons*, 381-90.

Grading/Requirements:

Reading Quizzes: 30% total

Test 1: 25%

Test 2: 25%

Final Paper: 20%

Reading Quizzes: These will be short quizzes, given at the start of class, to ensure that you have done and gotten something out of the reading for that day. They do not require that you have a perfect understanding of the material – after all, some of it is difficult. But they do require that you have read it attentively. There are no makeup quizzes: if you're not there, it's a zero. However, I will drop the two lowest of your quiz scores.

Tests: There are two of these, multiple choice and/or short answer, to make sure that you've been doing the reading and following the discussion. They are on the days noted.

Final Paper: This is a 5-6 page paper due on the last day of class. Topics will be assigned; the grading standards are similar to the short paper (see below), except that you will need to specifically reference/cite and discuss at least *two* of the readings from the semester. By "specifically reference/cite," I mean quote. For the sake of your grade, you should have a clear thesis and an "In this paper I will argue that x" sentence, somewhere in the first paragraph. I'll have more details for you closer to the due date.

Attendance/Participation: You can't learn very much in philosophy by just sitting there. You learn even less if you're not there at all. However, I am not going to be monitoring your attendance separately. Reading quizzes will serve as an informal check on attendance; in any case, historically, in my classes there has been a strong correlation between attendance and class grade. This probably means that if you're the sort of student who cares enough to come to class, you're also likely to be the sort of student who will work enough to do well in the course. So I view the question of attendance as self-correcting. If you don't show up to class, you can't ask

questions about material that you don't yet understand. I am under no obligation to repeat course materials that you missed.

Contact Information/Getting Assistance: It is important that you not fall behind. I want to help you avoid doing so. To get help from me:

1. Speak to me before or after class; we can set an appointment to meet at a later time if need be.
2. Office hours: T 1:30-3:00 and by appointment
3. Email me at ghull@iastate.edu. This is probably the best way to get in touch outside of class.
4. Call my office: 294-5400 and leave a voicemail. This is less effective than email because I'm bad about checking my messages.

Disabilities: I share ISU's commitment to provide reasonable accommodations to enable students with disabilities to access course material. Please address any special needs or special accommodations with me at the beginning of the semester or as soon as you become aware of your needs. Those seeking accommodations based on disabilities should obtain a Student Academic Accommodation Request (SAAR) form from the Disability Resources (DR) office (515-294-6624). DR is located on the main floor of the Student Services Building, Room 1076.

Detailed Course Outline (not a contract)

Week	Date	Topic/Reading
1	8/21	First class
	8/23	Introduction, Hume §1 (Of the General Principles of Morals)
2	8/28	Hume §§2-3 (Benevolence, Justice)
	8/30	Hume, §5 (Why Utility Pleases)
3	9/4	Hume §§7-8 (Qualities Immediately Agreeable to Ourselves/Others)
	9/6	Hume, §9 (Conclusion)
4	9/11	Hume, Appendix I, "Concerning Moral Sentiment"
	9/13	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , ch. 2
5	9/18	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , ch. 2 (cot'd)
	9/20	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , ch. 3
6	9/25	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , ch. 4
	9/27	Parfit, "The Non-Identity Problem"
7	10/2	Parfit, "The Repugnant Conclusion"
	10/4	Test 1
8	10/9	Kant: Ethics as Reason – <i>Grounding</i> section I; <i>Virtue</i> Preface and <i>Virtue</i> Introduction, §1; Autonomy (from handout)
	10/11	Kant: Ends that are Duties – <i>Virtue</i> Introduction §§ II, III, VI (Maxims) and formulae for the CI from <i>Grounding</i> (use handout)

9	10/16	Kant: Perfect Duties to Oneself as an Animal Being – <i>Virtue</i> §§5-7
	10/18	Kant: Perfect Duties to Oneself as a Moral Being – <i>Virtue</i> §9, “On a Supposed Right to Lie,” and the setup in the <i>Grounding</i> (use handout)
10	10/23	Kant: Imperfect Duties to Self – <i>Virtue</i> §§19-22
	10/25	Kant: Imperfect Duties to Others – <i>Virtue</i> §§23-45.
11	10/30	Kant: “Incentives to Pure Practical Reason” (pdf online)
	11/1	Kant: “Is the Human Race Continually Improving?” (pdf online)
12	11/6	Habermas, “Discourse Ethics”
	11/8	No class – professor at conference
13	11/13	Habermas, “Discourse Ethics,” cot’d.
	11/15	Test 2
	11/19-11/23	Thanksgiving Break
14	11/27	Noddings, “Caring”
	11/29	Jagger, “Caring as a Feminist Practice”
15	12/4	Butler, “Precarious Life”
	12/6	Last Class, final papers due