

Philosophy 105: Current Moral & Social Issues
Spring 2019

Section 01: Tue and Thu 1:10-2:30 pm
Academic Building (AB) 2150

Instructor: Ting-An Lin, Department of Philosophy

Office Hours: Tuesday 3-4 pm and by appointment

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A. Course Overview

Course Description

This course will be an examination of some central topics in moral and social-political philosophy. We will consider several particular moral issues, including: Is abortion morally permissible? Is there a moral difference between killing someone and letting her die? How is it permissible to treat animals? We will also consider several general issues about morality, including: What makes an action right or wrong, and to what extent is this a matter of the action's consequences? When is an agent morally responsible for her actions? Is there a single true morality, or is moral truth relative to cultures or individuals?

Learning Objectives

The course has two goals. First, to develop and sharpen your ability to analyze and assess arguments. This is an important skill for the study of philosophy, but it is also important for any intellectual pursuit whatsoever. Second, to equip you with knowledge of many of the central questions and views in ethical philosophy and learn to apply these theories on some current moral and social issues.

Recommended Background

There are no prerequisites for this course.

Course format

Lecture, in-class discussion, group exercise,

Course Materials

There is no one single official textbook; all the readings will be distributed in the form of digital files (PDF) via the course website at Sakai, drawn from both classical and contemporary sources

Course website: Sakai Site, titled: "CURR MORAL&SOC ISSUE 01 Sp19"

Evaluation tools/ Grading Structure

1. Attendance and participation (30%)
2. Weekly forum (30%)
3. Assignments/papers (40%)

B. Course policies (*more to be updated)

Classroom civility & Technology usage

Inclusiveness

Integrity

Responsibility: Email checking, Sakai announcement, etc.

Attendance: Assigned seats, absence notice

Assignment submission & Late policy

Email-writing courtesy [[Please read the email-writing principles before emailing](#)]

Recommended for academic success?

University Resources

Other online resources?? [put on Sakai]

Evaluation: mid-semester & end of semester

C. Detailed Schedule (*subject to change)

Unit 1: Introduction to Ethics and Moral theories

Week 1 (Jan. 22, 24): Introduction: What is ethics? Why learning ethics?

- ✧ *Main Questions:* What is ethics? Why should we study ethics? Why should we believe that there are some objective moral principles?
- ✧ *Potential Readings:*
 - Lewis Vaughn, Chapter 1: Moral Reasoning: Ethics and the Moral Domain (pp. 1-6; up to "Moral Relativism")
 - Lewis Vaughn, Chapter 1: Moral Reasoning: Moral Relativism (pp. 6-9; up to "Moral Arguments")
 - James Rachels, "Egoism"
 - Simon Blackburn, "Subjectivism"

Week 2 (Jan. 29, 31): Utilitarianism

- ✧ *Main Questions:* What is Utilitarianism? Who are the key features of utilitarianism? What is attractive about utilitarianism? What are the concerns about utilitarianism?
- ✧ *Potential Readings:*
 - Excerpt from John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*
 - Bernard Williams, "A Critique of Utilitarianism"

Week 3 (Feb. 05, 07): Kantianism

- ✧ *Main Questions:* What is Kantianism? What is attractive about Kantianism? What are Kantianism's criticisms on utilitarianism? What are the problems about Kantianism?
- ✧ *Potential Readings:*
 - Excerpt from Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*

Week 4 (Feb. 12, 14): Applying the principles to ethical issues (1) Global Poverty

- ✧ *Main Questions:* Do we have moral responsibility to people in distant places?
- ✧ *Related issues:* Global Poverty, Refugee
- ✧ *Potential Readings:*
 - Garret Hardin, "Living on a Lifeboat" (pp. 662-673)
 - William W. Murdoch and Allan Oaten" (pp. 673-681)
 - Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" (pp. 683-690)
 - Louis P. Pojman, "World Hunger and Population" (pp. 690-699)
 - Onora O'Neil, "The Moral perplexity of failing of Wold Hunger"

Week 5 (Feb. 19, 21): Applying the principles to ethical issues (2): Animal rights & veganism

- ✧ *Main Questions:* Do we have moral responsibility to other species?

- ✧ *Related issues:* veganism, animal experiments
- ✧ *Potential Readings:*
 - Peter Singer, "All Animals are Equal" (pp. 578-588)
 - James Rachels, "The Moral Argument for Vegetarianism" (pp. 617-622)
 - Dave Yount, "Three Arguments Against Eating Meat" -- under "Course Materials" on the PHI 212 page, [here](#).
 - Dave Yount, "Eight Arguments in Favor of Eating Meat and Objections Thereto" -- under "Course Materials" on the PHI 212 page, [here](#).
 - R. G. Frey, "Moral Vegetarianism and the Argument from Pain and Suffering" (pp. 622-627)
 - David Schmidtz, "Are All Species Equal?" (pp. 641-647)

[Review, debate, assignment 1 due]

Unit 2: Markets and Morals

Week 6 (Feb. 26, 28): Libertarianism and argument for market [Quiz]

- ✧ *Main Questions:* What is libertarianism? What is attractive about libertarianism? How does libertarianism support the idea of free market?
- ✧ *Related issues:*
- ✧ *Potential Readings:*
 - James Q. Wilson, "Against the Legalization of Drugs" (pp. 224-233)
 - Douglas N Husak, "A Moral Right to Use Drugs" (pp. 233-240)

Week 7 (Mar. 05, 07): Constrains on Market: Paternalism

- ✧ *Main Questions:* What is Mill's harm principle? What is paternalism? How does paternalism respond to Mill's harm principle? Is governmental intervention based on paternalistic ground justified?
- ✧ *Related issues:* Food policy, drug regulations, working condition
- ✧ *Potential Readings:*

Week 8 (Mar. 12, 14): Constrains on Market: Something money shouldn't buy?

- ✧ *Main Questions:* Is there anything that shouldn't be exchanged in market?
- ✧ *Related issues:* organ sale, surrogate motherhood, sex work
- ✧ *Potential Readings:*
 - Excerpt from Sandel, *What Money can't buy?*

Week 9 (Mar. 26, 28): Constrains on Market: Distributive Justice [Quiz]

- ✧ *Main Questions:* How should we distribute resources? Is the income distribution based on market mechanism a just distribution? Why does Rawls' argue that market mechanism is insufficient for a just distribution? What are Nozick's criticisms on Rawls' view?
- ✧ *Related issues:* taxation
- ✧ *Potential Readings:*
 - Excerpt from Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*
 - Excerpt from Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*

[Review, debate, assignment 2 due]

Unit 3: Structural Inequality and Morals

Week 10 (Apr. 2, 4): Two concepts of Freedom

- ✧ *Potential Readings:* Isaiah Berlin

Week 11: (Apr. 9, 11) Gender Justice

- ✧ *Main Questions:*
- ✧ *Related issues:* Sexual violence, pornography
- ✧ *Potential Readings:*
 - John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty" (pp. 474-479)
 - Nadine Strossen, "Hate Speech and Pornography: Do We Have to Choose Between of Freedom of Speech and Equality?" (pp. 479-490)
 - Catharine A. Mackinnon, "Pornography, Civil Rights, and Speech" (pp. 511-522)
 - Ronald Dworkin, "Women and Pornography" (pp. 522-529)
 - Catharine A. Mackinnon, Ch. 8 The Liberal State (Toward Feminist Theory of the State) (p.164-)

Week 12: (Apr. 16, 18) Preference and Discrimination

- ✧ *Main Questions:*
- ✧ *Related issues:* Sexual preference & dating discrimination, comparing with other discrimination?
- ✧ *Potential Readings:*

Samantha Allen (2015) "No Blacks' Is Not a Sexual Preference. It's Racism" *The Daily Beast*

Erin Tatum (2013) "Why Exclusionary Racial Preferences Are Racist" *Everyday Feminism*

Week 13: (Apr. 23, 25) Racial Justice & Reparations

- ✧ *Main Questions:* Do we have moral responsibility to the past injustice? What need to be repaired?
- ✧ *Related issues:* Reparations and Affirmative Action
- ✧ *Potential Readings:* TBA

Week 14: (April 30, May 02) Disability? Epistemic injustice? Review

- Main Questions:*
- Related issues:* Excerpt from Barnes, *The Minority Body*
- Potential Readings:* TBA

[Review, debate, assignment 3 due]