

Department of Philosophy Winter Session 2010
PHLA11H3S Introduction to Ethics TR11-12 + 1 tutorial
SYLLABUS

Instructor: Ronald de Sousa

Tutors: Diana Heney, Doil Kim, Sareh Pouryousefi,
.....Charles Repp, Cam Woloshyn

Office Hour: Tuesdays 10-11, Thurs 12-1pm or by appointment

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What should I do? How should I live? What is it to lead a good life? Why should I bother to try? What's the difference between good and evil? Should we trust our conscience? How should we reason about such things? We'll first look at five major approaches that philosophers have taken to such questions: first, the idea that what is right is whatever God commands; second, an answer based on a consideration of happiness and virtue (questions on which the Greek philosopher Aristotle still has much to say to us); third, "Utilitarianism" (in the form propounded by John Stuart Mill: the view that an act is justified by its consequences for the happiness of the greatest number); fourth, "Deontology" (the view associated with Immanuel Kant that being moral is to be understood as a requirement of Reason); and fifth, "Evolutionary Ethics", the view that morality can be explained and justified in terms of the facts about human nature uncovered by evolutionary biology. Finally we shall consider the role of the emotions in morality. After these theoretical issues, we will turn, with Peter Singer's book *Practical Ethics*, to the real-life problems about abortion, euthanasia, the treatment of animals, and poverty.

BLACKBOARD SITE: All communication about the course, including changes or additions to the reading as well as online discussion, etc. will take place on the BLACKBOARD course site.

REQUIRED READINGS are designated **(W)**, **(RP)** or **(PS)**: **(W)**: copyright-free texts will be made available directly on the Blackboard site. **(RP): a COURSE READING PACKAGE** to be made available by Alicos in the first week; **(PS) Peter Singer's *Practical Ethics*. 2nd ed.**

Requirements and Grading:

Two (800-word) critical summaries of readings (15% each) =	(20%)
Tutorial participation including oral presentations as required	(20%)
One (2500-word) analytical essay (Topics will be distributed in early March)	(30%)
A final examination	(30%)

The critical summary assignments must be sent by email BOTH to the instructor AND to your tutor, with the subject line PHLA11. They must reach us BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF THE TUESDAY CLASS OR YOUR TUTORIAL, whichever comes first, in the week they are due. No late summaries will be accepted; in special cases, however, alternative summaries can be submitted by agreement if you have had some inevitable impediment that prevented you from submitting the summary at the time due. Your tutor may ALSO require a paper copy. In the case of the final essay, you will submit your work through TURNITIN.COM.

Revision: Jan 5

If you have a problem with that, please let me know before the end of the second week of class in order that we can discuss making alternative arrangements.

READINGS, TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

WEEK DATE: Readings and Topics:

1. Jan 5-7 What philosophy is; arguments and their rules; fact and value. Some problems: the trolley dilemma. Ethical intuitions and ethical reasoning. No readings.
 2. Jan 12-14: Virtues and the good life. Aristotle passages from *Ethics* I, II, X (W) + Hursthouse, "Virtue Ethics", from Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (W)
 3. Jan 19-21 Divine Command Theory. Read Plato's *Euthyphro* (W) and Arthur (RP)
First Summary Due Jan 19: on Arthur's argument.
 4. Jan 26-28 Psychological and Ethical Altruism: Plato Republic II 357a-366d. (W) Feinberg (RP).
 5. Feb 2-4 Utilitarianism : J.S. Mill, *Utilitarianism* (W)
Second Summary Due Feb 2 : on ch4, "What proof the principle is capable of".
 6. Feb 9-11 Deontology. Kant passage (RP); Nagel (RP)
 7. Feb 16-18 READING WEEK No Classes
 8. Feb 23-25 Conscience, intuition and the five domains of morality. Bennett (RP) Haidt and Bjorklund (RP);
 9. Mar 2-4 Practical Ethics: Equality; our treatment of animals. (Singer ch 1, ch 2, ch 3)
 10. Mar 9-11 Abortion (Singer ch 4 and ch 6)
 11. Mar 16-18 The ethics of death: Euthanasia (Singer ch 7)
 12. Mar 23-25 Poverty; our obligations to others (Singer ch 8, ch 9.)
 13. Mar 30-Apr 1 Tuesday: review and questions. Thursday: no class.
- EXAM: schedule will be made available by the Faculty later in the term.