#### PHI 120 Introduction to Ethical Theory: Virtues, Vices and Values

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| Faculty Name(s) | Joseph Van Weelden | Contact | joseph.vanweelden@ahduni.edu.in |
| School | School of Arts and Sciences | | |
| Credits | 3 | | |
| Prerequisite | None | | |
| Antirequisite | None | | |
| Course Description | This course introduces students to some of the main themes of philosophical ethics. Students will approach the subject through a close study of classical readings by Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, and John Stuart Mill, as well as contemporary work by such authors as Julia Driver, Amartya Sen, and Margaret Urban Walker. Among the fundamental questions to be discussed are 'what makes a life go well or poorly?', 'what makes a person good or bad?', and 'what makes an action right or wrong?'.  This is a school of arts and sciences course, designed primarily as an elective for students majoring in PHL or minoring in philosophy. Other students may take the course to fulfill their GER requirements. | | |
| Course Objectives | To familiarise students with the aims and methods of ethical theory.  To introduce students to the central topics, theories, and traditions within philosophical ethics.  To help students to reflect with enhanced clarity, care, and rigor on issues of fundamental human importance.  To equip students to identify and evaluate an author's argument (s), and to construct their own philosophical arguments. | | |
| Learning Outcomes | Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:  1. Identify and describe the fundamental questions of ethical theory, and some of the major (historical and contemporary) answers to these questions that have been proposed.  2. Distinguish among the leading theories in philosophical ethics, and offer an informed characterisation of their respective strengths and weakness.  3. Apply these ethical frameworks to a variety of real-world problems.  4. Clearly and accurately reconstruct the main argument (s) being put forward in a philosophical text.  5. Critically engage with a selected text by assessing the soundness of the author's argument (s).  6. Present their own well-reasoned argument (s) for a philosophical position. | | |
| Pedagogy | Lectures  Student Presentations  Class Discussion | | |
| Expectations From Students | Maintain an inclusive and respectful classroom environment, where no student is made to feel unwelcome or uncomfortable.  Complete all course readings in advance of the session (s) in which we are to discuss them.  Be an active participant in the course (through contribution to class discussion etc.).  Note on Academic Integrity: Under no circumstances may students submit another's words as their own work, whether their source is another student, the internet, or the instructor's own lecture notes. This is plagiarism, and will result in a grade of 0 for the assignment. | | |

Assessment/Evaluation

* End Semester Examination: Written [35%]
* Assignments [35%]
* Class participation (Including attendance) [10%]
* Quizzes [20%]

Attendance Policy

As per Ahmedabad University Policy

Project / Assignment Details

5 Pair Presentations (each worth 7%)-  Working in pairs, students will present a summary of one of the pre-readings to the rest of the class. They will together submit a write-up of their presentation to the instructor.

4 Quizzes (each worth 5 %)- Quizzes will consist of a series of basic comprehension questions.

Take-Home Final (worth 35 %)- The final will consist of 5 essay questions (made available to the students in advance) from which each student may select any 3 to answer.

Participation in Class Discussion (worth 10%)

Course Material

Coursepacks:

• 1 PHI 120 Introduction to Ethical Theory: Virtues, Vices and Values

Reading List (a coursepack with all these readings will be provided):

Annas, Julia. 2004. “Being Virtuous and Doing the Right Thing,” Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association, 78(2): 61-75.

Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics* (trans W.D Ross). Accessed  from <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.html>

Dillon, Robin. 2012. "Critical Character Theory" in Out From the Shadows: Analytical Feminist Contributions to Traditional Philosophy eds. Sharon L. Crasnow and Anita M. Superson. Oxford University Press. pp.83-114

Doris, John. 1998. "Persons, Situations, and Virtue Ethics," Nous, 32(4): 504-530.

Driver, Julia. 2007. *Ethics: The Fundamentals*. Blackwell.

Fletcher, Guy. 2016. "Knowing What's Good For You". Accessed from <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/theforum/knowing-whats-good-for-you/>

Kant, Immanuel. 2017.  *Groundwork for the Metaphysic of Morals* (trans Jonathan Bennett). Accessed from <https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/kant1785.pdf>

Kant, Immanuel. 2012. “On The Supposed Right to Lie from Benevolent Motives" (trans T.K Abbott). Accessed from <http://www.sophia-project.org/uploads/1/3/9/5/13955288/kant_lying.pdf>

Keller, Simon. 2009. "Welfarism", Philosophy Compass 4(1): 82-95.

Mill, John Stuart. 1861. *Utilitarianism.* Accessed from <https://www.utilitarianism.com/mill1.htm>

Nozick, Robert. 1974. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia.* Basic Books.

O'Neill, Onora. 2014. "Kantian Approaches to Some Famine Problems" in Ethical Theory: An Anthology(2nd edition) ed. Russ Shafer-Landau. Wiley-Blackwell. pp.510-520.

Rawls, John. 1971. *A Theory of Justice*. Belknap Press.

Ross, W.D.  1930. *The Right and the Good.* Oxford University Press.

Swanton, Christine. 2003. *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralist View*. Oxford University Press.

Urban Walker, Margaret. 1992. "Feminism, Ethics, and the Question of Theory," Hypatia 7(3), 23-38.

Williams, Bernard. 1981. "Persons, Character, and Morality" in James Rachels ed. *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers 1973-1980*. Cambridge University Press, pp.1-19.

Zack, Naomi. 2011. *The Ethics and Mores of Race: Equality After the History of Philosophy*. Rowman & Littlefield.

#### Session Plan

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| **Session No.** | **Topic Title** | **Topic & Subtopic Details** | **Readings,Cases,etc.** | **Activities** |  |
| 1 | Intro-What is Ethical Theory? | Overview of Course Outline. What is ethical theory? | Post-Reading: Julia Driver. Ethics-The Fundamentals (Introduction) | Lecture. Icebreaker |  |
| 2 | Why do ethical theory? | Countering Knee-jerk Relativism and Skepticism | Driver. Ethics (Ch.1) | Lecture, Group Discussion, Student Presentations. |  |
| 3 | The Right and The Good | The subject matter of ethics: Evaluative and Deontic Concepts | John Rawls. A Theory of Justice (excerpt) | Lecture, Group Discussion |  |
| 4 | Well-Being as the Good | Is well-being all that matters morally? What makes someone's life go best? | Simon Keller. 'Welfarism', Guy Fletcher 'Knowing What's Good For You' | Lecture. Group Discussion. Student Presentations. |  |
| 5 | Classical Utilitarianism | What is classical utilitarianism? The Principle of Utility. Ingredients: Consequentialism + welfarism+ hedonism+impartiality | John Stuart Mill. Utilitarianism Chs.1 and 2 (excerpts) | Lecture. Group Discussion. Student Presentations. |  |
| 6 | Classical Utilitarianism Continued | Mill on the 'philosophy of swine' objection, Nozick's argument against hedonism | Mill. Utilitarianism Ch.2 (excerpt), Robert Nozick 'The Experience Machine' | Lecture. Group Discussion. Student Presentations. |  |
| 7 | Classical Utilitarianism Continued | Mill's Proof of the Principle of Utility | Mill. Utilitarianism Ch.4. | Lecture. Group Discussion. Student presentations.  1st Quiz. |  |
| 8 | Classical Utilitarianism Concluded | Mill on Secondary Rules | Mill. Utilitarianism Ch.2 (excerpt) | Lecture. Group Discussion. Student Presentations. |  |
| 9 | Criticism of Classical Utilitarianism I | The 'separateness of persons' objection: Utilitarianism insensitive to distributive justice. | Rawls 'Classical Utilitarianism' | Lecture. Group Discussion. Student Presentations. |  |
| 10 | Criticism of Classical Utilitarianism II | Utilitarianism permits violations of rights/sacrificing some to benefit others. | Nozick. 'Side Constraints' | Lecture. Group Discussion. Student Presentations. |  |
| 11 | New Waves in Consequentialism | Must a consequentialist be a welfarist? Must consequentialism be agent-neutral/impartial? Can a consequentialist incorporate individual rights? | Amartya Sen. 'Consequential Evaluation and Practical Reason' | Lecture. Group Discussion. Student Presentations. |  |
| 12 | Kantian Ethics | What is deontology? What is distinctive of Kant's deontological approach? What are Kant's aims? | Immanuel Kant. Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals, Preface. | Lecture. Group Discussion. Student Presentations. |  |
| 13 | Kantian Ethics continued | The good will and moral worth. | Kant. Groundwork (excerpt) | Lecture. Group Discussion. Student Presentations. 2nd Quiz |  |
| 14 | Midterm Review and Reflection |  |  |  |  |
| 15 | Midterm Exam |  |  |  |  |
| 16 | Kantian Ethics: 1st Formulation of The Categorical Imperative | The Formula of Universal Law. Illustrations of perfect and imperfect duties. | Kant. Groundwork (excerpt) | Lecture. Group Discussion. Student Presentations. |  |
| 17 | Kantian Ethics: 2nd Formulation of the Categorical Imperative | The Formula of Humanity, with illustrations | Kant. Groundwork (excerpt), Onora O'Neill 'Kantian Approaches to Some Famine Problems'. | Lecture. Group Discussion. Student Presentations. |  |
| 18 | Criticism of Kantian Ethics I | The rule-worshipping objection. Is Kant's theory too rigid/inflexible? | Kant. 'On A Supposed Right to Lie from Benevolent Motives' | Lecture. Group Discussion. Student Presentations. |  |
| 19 | Criticism of Kantian Ethics II | The motive of duty and the 'one thought too many' objection. | Bernard Williams 'Persons, Character, and Morality'. | Lecture. Group Discussion. Student Presentations. |  |
| 20 | Ross's Pluralist Deontology | Is morality more complicated than Kant or the utilitarians realised? Are there a variety of irreducible moral duties, as opposed to one supreme duty? | W.D. Ross 'What Makes Right Acts Right' | Lecture. Group Discussion. Student Presentations. |  |
| 21 | Aristotelian Virtue Ethics | What is virtue ethics? Aristotle on the human good. | Aristotle. Nicomachean Ethics Book 1 (excerpts) | Lecture. Group Discussion. Student Presentations. |  |
| 22 | Aristotelian Virtue Ethics Continued | What are the virtues? How do we acquire them? | Aristotle. Nicomachean Ethics (excerpts) | Lecture. Group Discussion. Student Presentations. 3rd Quiz |  |
| 23 | Virtue and Right Action | Can virtue ethics actually help to guide our actions? | Julia Annas 'Being Virtuous and Doing the Right Thing' | Lecture. Group Discussion. Student Presentations. |  |
| 24 | New Waves in Virtue Ethics | Swanton's Pluralist Virtue Ethics | Christine Swanton. Virtue Ethics: A Pluralist View (p.90-95) | Lecture. Group Discussion. Student Presentations. |  |
| 25 | Criticism of Virtue Ethics I | Non-ideal moral theory as a challenge to virtue ethics. | Robin Dillon. 'Critical Character Theory' | Lecture. Group Discussion. Student Presentations. |  |
| 26 | Criticism of Virtue Ethics II | The situationist challenge. Doris against stable character traits. | John Doris. 'Persons, Situations, and Virtue Ethics' | Lecture. Group Discussion. Student Presentations. |  |
| 27 | Feminist Ethics | What must a feminist ethical theory look like? What have traditional moral theories left out? | Margaret Urban Walker. 'Feminism, Ethics, and the Question of Theory' | Lecture. Group Discussion. Student Presentations. |  |
| 28 | An Ethics of Race | What must an anti-racist ethical theory look like? What have traditional moral theories left out? | Naomi Zack. The Ethics and Mores of Race: Equality after the History of Philosophy pp.161-171 | Lecture. Group Discussion. Student Presentations. 4th Quiz |  |
| 29 | Review and Reflection | Go over final exam questions. |  |  |  |
| 30 | Final Exam |  |  |  |  |