**PHIL 230:** **Introduction to Moral Philosophy**

Instructor: Joseph Van Weelden

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Hours of Instruction: MW 12:35-1:25 + weekly conference **except** Sep.4 and Sep. 11 when there will be lectures on Friday (Conferences will begin during the third week of term. You must sign up for one of the conference sessions on Minerva.)

Office and Office Hours: TBD (will post on MyCourses ASAP)

This course is an introduction to the central themes of moral philosophy. We will approach the subject through the study of classic texts by Aristotle, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and John Stuart Mill, as well as contemporary readings from Julia Annas, Annette Baier, Marcia Baron, and Shelly Kagan. Some of the fundamental questions we will investigate in this class are the following: What makes an action right or wrong? What makes a person good or bad? What things are worth pursuing? What constitutes a good life? What constitutes a moral life? What is the relation between the two? How do we reason about what to do? Can reason determine how one ought to live, or how one ought to treat others? Can reason motivate us to act in accordance with those determinations? What are moral judgments, and why are we influenced by them? Throughout the term we will take note of the ways in which our authors differ, not just in the answers they give to these questions, but in the questions they take to be most central.

Required Texts

* Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* [selections]
* Julia Annas “Ancient Ethics and Modern Morality” and “Being Virtuous and Doing the Right Thing”
* Annette Baier, “Hume, the Women’s Moral Theorist?” and “Moralism and Cruelty: Reflections on Hume and Kant”
* Marcia Baron, “Kantian Ethics”
* David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* [selections]
* Shelly Kagan, *The Limits of Morality* (selections)
* Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* [through Second Section]
* John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*

The texts by Aristotle, Hume, Kant and Mill will all be available for purchase at Paragraphe Bookstore. Other texts, as well as supplementary material, will be made available on MyCourses throughout the term.

Course Requirements and Method of Assessment

The course requirements will consist of one short paper (1000 wds), one long paper (2000 wds), and a three-hour final exam. The two papers are together worth 2/3 of the final course mark (i.e., approximately 22% for the short paper, 44 % for the long paper); the final exam is worth the remaining 1/3 of the mark. A choice of topics for each paper will be handed out 2 weeks before the due date. The final exam will consist entirely of essay questions. The questions will range over all course readings; these will be drawn from a list of review questions handed out in advance. Paper topics and review questions will be posted on *my*Courses after having been given out in class. In order to pass the course, you must hand in both papers by the last day of class (Dec. 7) and take the final exam.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Discussion is an important part of philosophical endeavour. Students are therefore expected to attend conference each week and to contribute to conference discussions. Students are also expected to bring the relevant texts with them to each conference, as close reading of texts is another crucial aspect of philosophical practice. Note that if your final mark in the class is borderline, your conference attendance and participation may be used as the deciding factor.

As this is a moral philosophy class, we will throughout be discussing controversial issues, some of which may be disturbing, and which in general may elicit strong reactions from students. It is of the utmost importance that all students feel that they can express themselves, in the knowledge that their persons and contributions will be respected by their peers. Kindness and civility are not only compatible with healthy, spirited intellectual debate, but essential to it. Please do not hesitate to come to me or your TAs if you have concerns about the climate of either the lectures or the conferences.

Extensions on papers will be granted only in exceptional circumstances like serious illness or family emergency and documentation will be required. To apply for an extension, see me or contact me by email, or submit a letter with your documentation to the Philosophy Office – Leacock Building Room 414. Note that your TAs cannot grant extensions. Extensions will be granted in writing (including by email) and must be attached to your paper when it is submitted. The deadline for requesting an extension is one business day before the paper is due. Papers turned in late without an extension will be penalized at the rate of 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g., from a B to a B-) per calendar day of lateness.

Please note that all formal final examinations at McGill are *centrally scheduled and administered*. This means that I as instructor have no control over the date of the exam for this course, which will be set by the Examination Office. All students must plan to be in Montreal and available to write final exams during the *entire* exam period (December 9-22 this year).

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. **Please inform me if you wish to submit your work in French.**

Students, per McGill policy, have the right to request that their work be re-graded by the instructor. However, concerns about grading must always be brought to your TA first. I will under no circumstances consider requests from students who have not done this.

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest)/ for more information).

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

Schedule

F, Sep.4: Syllabus, Introduction to Philosophical Argument. Readings: None

M, Sep.7: Labour Day (no lecture)

W, Sep.9: What is Moral Philosophy?, Intro to Virtue Ethics. Reading: Annas “Ancient Ethics and Modern Morality”

F, Sep.11: Aristotle. Readings: *Nicomachean Ethics* Introduction, book I, chs. 1-5, 7-11 (pp. 1-5, 7-15)

M, Sep.14: Aristotle cont’d. Readings: *Nicomachean Ethics* book I, ch. 13; book II, chs. 1-9; book X, ch..9 (pp. 16-30, 167-171)

W, Sep. 16: Aristotle cont’d. Readings: *Nicomachean Ethics* book III, chs. 1-5, 10-12; book VI ch.s 1-2 (pp. 30-40, 45-9, 86-7)

M, Sep. 21: Aristotle cont’d. Readings: *Nicomachean Ethics* book V1 chs. 5-13; book X, chs. 6-8 (pp. 89-99, 162-7)

W, Sep.23: Contemporary Virtue Ethics. Reading: Annas “Being Virtuous and Doing the Right Thing”

M. Sep.28: Intro to Consequentialism, Mill. Readings: *Utilitarianism* Ch.1

W, Sep.30: Mill cont’d. Readings: *Utilitarianism* Ch.2

M, Oct. 5: Mill cont’d. Readings: *Utilitarianism* Chs.3 & 4

W, Oct. 7: Mill cont’d Readings: *Utilitarianism* Ch. 5 **First Paper Due**

M, Oct.12: Thanksgiving (no lecture)

W, Oct. 14: Contemporary Consequentialism, Kagan. Readings: *The Limits of Morality* pp. 1-24

M, Oct.19: Kagan cont’d. Readings: *The Limits of Morality* pp. 24-46

W, Oct.21: Intro to Kantian Ethics, Kant. Readings: *Groundwork* Preface

M, Oct. 26: Kant Cont’d. Readings: *Groundwork* First Section

W, Oct.28: Kant Cont’d. Readings: *Groundwork* Second Section through Ak. 425

M, Nov.2: Kant cont’d. Readings: *Groundwork* Second Section, Ak. 425 to end

W, Nov.4: Contemporary Kantian Ethics. Readings: Baron “Kantian Ethics” Sections 1-3 pp. 3-32

M, Nov.9: Contemporary Kantian Ethics (cont’d). Readings: Baron “Kantian Ethics” Section 3 up until the heading “Acting From Duty” (pp.32-56)

W, Nov.11: Contemporary Kantian Ethics (cont’d). Readings: Baron “Kantian Ethics” pp.56-76 **Second Paper Due**

M, Nov.16: Humean Approaches, Hume. Readings: *Treatise* title page, Advertisement, Introduction; Book I, Part I, Secs. I, II; Book II, Part I, Sec. 1(pp.1-6, 7-11, 181-2)

W, Nov.18: Hume cont’d. Readings: *Treatise* Book II, Part III, Sec. III; Book III, Part I, Secs. I and 2(265-8, 293-306)

M, Nov. 23: Hume cont’d. Readings: Book III, Part II, Secs. I, II, VI (pp. 307-322, 337-342)

W, Nov. 25: Hume cont’d. Readings: *Treatise* Book III, Part III, Secs. I, III, VI (pp. 367-78, 384-7, 393-6)

M, Nov.30: Contemporary Humean Approaches, Baier. Readings: “Moralism and Cruelty: Reflections On Hume and Kant”

W, Dec.2: Baier cont’d. Readings: “Hume, The Women’s Moral Theorist?”

M, Dec.7: Baier cont’d, Review of Course Themes, Where Do We Go From Here? Readings: None