

Philosophy 4: Introduction to Ethics Spring 2020

Professor: Aaron Z. Zimmerman

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Office Hours: On Zoom by Appointment

I. Required Reading: (1) J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, (2) Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, (3) Other readings available on the course website:

www.aaron-zimmerman.com

II. Topics: This course is designed, primarily, as an introduction to “normative ethics” and we will spend most of our time discussing two of the three major traditions in ethical theory – Consequentialist and Kantian Ethics. But we will also spend some time discussing “applied” ethical questions concerning the morality of abortion, war, global economic inequality and our duties to future generations of humans and non-human animals; and questions about moral motivation and the kinds of reasons ethical theories can provide us for acting in one way rather than another. An effort will be made to read primary (historical) texts, and to criticize the views of some authors in light of the views of others.

III. Course Requirements: Students must (1) write two short papers (4-5 pages each; each worth 30% of the final grade), (2) complete a substantive final exam on the theories and positions discussed in class (30% of the final grade), and (3) attend and participate in sections (10% of grade).

DO NOT PLAGIARIZE. Do not use anything from the web when you are writing your papers. If you choose to do so (and I urge you not to) you **MUST** quote and cite everything you use. **IF YOU USE SOMETHING FROM THE WEB AND DO NOT CITE IT, THAT IS PLAGIARISM.** And if you plagiarize, you **will fail** the class and you may also be expelled from the university.

IV. Tentative Schedule

Handouts will be made available on all of the topics we will discuss. You should print out or at least download the relevant handout *before* listening to each lecture. Handouts can be downloaded by clicking on the link to the Phil 4 website from:

<http://www.aaron-zimmerman.com>

Topic 1: Abortion

Reading: J. J. Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion” on the website.

1st Paper Assigned: 4/7/21

Topic 2: Mill’s Utilitarianism, Part I

Reading: Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chs.1-3.

1st Paper Due: 4/21/21

Topic 3: Mill’s Utilitarianism, Part II

Reading: Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chs. 4-5.

Topic 4: Critiques of Utilitarianism

Readings: (1) Bernard Williams, "Consequentialism and Integrity," (2) Robert Nozick, "The Experience Machine," (3) Derek Parfit, "What Makes Someone's Life Go Best," and Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence and Morality." All are on the website.

2nd Paper Assigned: 5/3/21

Topic 5: Kantian Ethics, Part I

Reading: Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Preface and First Section.

Topic 6: Kantian Ethics, Part II

Reading: Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Second Section.

2nd Paper Due: 5/17/21

Topic 7: Critiques of Kantian Ethics

Reading: Philippa Foot, "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives." It's on the website.

Topic 8: Moral Progress

Reading: Anderson, "Social Movements, Experiments in Living, and Moral Progress: Case Studies from Britain's Abolition of Slavery." It's on the website.

Final Exam: Take-home final must be submitted to Gauchospace by 9PM on Tuesday June 8th.