Philosophy 22 – Introduction to Ethical Theory

Summer 2020, C Session
Lecture: Dodd 162, MWF 1-2:20 pm

Instructor: Amber Kavka-Warren (kavka2018@lawnet.ucla.edu)
Instructor Office: Dodd 363; Office Hours TBA

Course Description

What makes an action morally right or wrong? Why should anyone care? This course will survey four influential kinds of answers to these questions in the philosophical tradition. In each area, we will read selections from historically significant authors. Our readings will also include some secondary materials representing more contemporary debate in these areas and questioning the application of these theories across national borders and across species.

Unit 1: Utilitarianism. Morally right actions are those actions which will maximize happiness for the relevant population.
Unit 2: Duty-based ethics. Morally right actions are those actions motivated by duty.
Unit 3: Contractarianism. Morally right actions are those actions which follow a system of rules that self-interested, rational individuals would agree to follow.
Unit 4: Virtue ethics. Morally right actions are those actions which the person of perfect virtue would perform.

The course presupposes no background experience in philosophy. Students will be introduced to the kinds of questions that moral theorists ask and why those questions have no easy answers. Students will develop skills in reading difficult philosophical texts, identifying and criticizing philosophical arguments, and written expression.

The Effects of Covid-19
Possibility of Remote Teaching and Learning

As I post this syllabus, the state of California is on lockdown and UCLA has committed to remote teaching and learning through the end of the Spring Quarter. In the event that Summer Session C becomes remote as well, I will revise this syllabus to better fit a remote learning environment. Such revision will involve reaching out to enrolled students to better understand their circumstances, including time zone and access to technology.

Ongoing Effects of Covid-19

Whether this course proceeds remotely or in-person, every single one us will have been impacted by the pandemic in various ways. If you are facing special circumstances as a result of the novel coronavirus, please feel free to discuss them with me. I am more than happy to discuss possible accommodations for the course and to help point you to resources available through UCLA.
Course Materials

All required and supplementary materials (including readings and writing assignments) will be available through the CCLE course website. It is very important to check it regularly for updates.

Assignments and Grading

20%: 4 Quizzes (Mon. Aug 10, Fri. Aug 21, Fri Aug. 28, Wed. Sept. 9)
20%: First Short Paper (2-3 pages, due Mon. Aug. 17)
25%: Second Short Paper (2-3 pages, due Mon. Aug. 31)
35%: Final Paper (4-5 pages, due Fri. Sept. 11)
Grades may be adjusted upward for helpful (not necessarily frequent) participation in section.

You will take a short in-class quiz at the end of each of the four units. If you have been keeping up with the reading and paying attention in lecture, you should not need to study much to do well.

The Short Papers will be descriptive and explanatory, based on one of our historical readings. The Final Paper will consist of a revision of the First Short Paper, with an added evaluation and analysis of an applied issue. More information will be given out as we approach the assignments.

(Tentative) Course Schedule – subject to change

Week 1


Wed. August 5: Historical Utilitarianism; Reading: Selections from Jeremy Bentham & J.S. Mill; Short Utilitarianism Assignment handed out.

Fri. August 7: Utilitarianism continued; Reading: Selections from Mill; Peter Singer article; Short Utilitarianism Assignment due.

Week 2

Mon. August 10: Utilitarianism to Duty-Based Ethics; Reading: The Trolley Problem by Philippa Foot; Short in-class Utilitarianism Quiz.

Wed. August 12: Immanuel Kant’s Duty-Based Ethics; Reading: Selections from Kant’s *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*.

Fri. August 14: Kant’s Duty-Based Ethics continued; Reading: further selections from Kant’s *Groundwork*. 
Week 3

Mon. August 17: Contemporary Kantianism; Reading: “On the Value of Acting from the Motive of Duty” by Barbara Herman; First Short Paper due.

Wed. August 19: Comparison of Duty-Based Ethics and Utilitarianism: Non-Human Animals; Reading: Selections from articles by Tom Regan, Mary Midgley, and Singer.

Fri. August 21: Comparison of Duty-Based Ethics and Utilitarianism continued; Same reading as Wednesday; Short in-class Duty-Based Ethics Quiz.

Week 4:

Mon. August 24: Historical Contractarianism; Reading: Selections from Thomas Hobbes.

Wed. August 26: Contemporary Contractarianism; Reading: Selections from Morals by Agreement by David Gauthier.


Week 5:

Mon. August 31: Catch-up Day; Second short Paper due.

Wed. September 2: Historical Virtue Ethics; Reading: Selections from Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics.

Fri. Sept 4: Contemporary Virtue Ethics; Reading: Selections from Foot’s Natural Goodness.

Week 6

Mon. September 7: NO CLASS (Labor Day Holiday).


Fri: September 11: Catch-up Day/Overview Discussion; Final Paper due.
Additional Course Policies and UCLA Policies

Academic Misconduct
Students are expected to know and to follow the university’s guidelines for academic honesty. Academic misconduct can occur in a variety of ways, including (but not limited to) cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism. When in doubt about whether some academic practice is acceptable, ask your TA or the instructor for assistance. Always err on the side of avoiding misconduct. Any suspected violation of university policy regarding academic conduct will be reported directly to the Office of the Dean of Students. In other words, there are no exceptions.

Academic Accommodation
Students needing academic accommodations based on a disability should contact the Center for Accessible Education (CAE) [formerly the Office for Students with Disabilities or OSD] at (310)825-1501 or in person at Murphy Hall A255. When possible, students should contact the CAE within the first two weeks of the term as reasonable notice is needed to coordinate accommodations.

University Resources
For more information, check out the following resources:

• Office of the Dean of Students: [http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Academic-Integrity](http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Academic-Integrity)

• Student Conduct Code: [https://catalog.registrar.ucla.edu/ucla-catalog19-20-1424.html](https://catalog.registrar.ucla.edu/ucla-catalog19-20-1424.html)

• Student Guide to Academic Integrity: [https://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/portals/16/documents/studentguide.pdf](https://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/portals/16/documents/studentguide.pdf)

• UCLA Writing Programs: [http://wp.ucla.edu/](http://wp.ucla.edu/)

• Center for Accessible Education (CAE): [www.cae.ucla.edu](http://www.cae.ucla.edu)

• Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information for the UCLA Campus Community: [https://newsroom.ucla.edu/stories/coronavirus-information-for-the-ucla-campus-community](https://newsroom.ucla.edu/stories/coronavirus-information-for-the-ucla-campus-community)