

Introduction to Ethics

Dale Tuggy

This course is an introduction to the main types of ethical theories, through a critical reading of recent and classic primary sources. The goals of the course are (i) to familiarize you with features, motivations for, advantages, and disadvantages of the main kinds of moral theories, (ii) to develop your critical reading and writing skills, and (iii) to develop and enrich your own thinking on moral subjects. While the course is focused on the central *theoretical* issues we have to face, rather than the details of current moral issues, these will be considered along the way as well, as we test out various moral theories. Our judgments about particular issues are important, but will be determined by our theoretical views on the nature of morality; our focus in this course is the quest for coherent and plausible theoretical views.

Texts:

Kane, Robert. *Through the Moral Maze: Searching for Absolute Values in a Pluralistic World* [K]
Martinich, A.P. *Philosophical Writing*, 2nd. ed. [W]
Pojman, L. ed. *Ethical Theory: Classical & Contemporary Readings* [P]

Class, Subject

Required Reading

1. Introduction: the aims of ethics

I. Ethical Relativism

2. relativism espoused: Herodotus & Sumner
3. Pojman's case against relativism
4. Harman: relativism defended,
Kane on the roots of relativism

P 1-29
P 29-37, W 18-51
P 38-47, K ch. 1

II. Ethical Egoism and Evolutionary Biology

5. Kalin on ethical egoism
6. the project of evolutionary ethics: for & against

P 78-91, W 52-66
P 91-122

III. Utilitarianism

7. J.S. Mill's utilitarian theory, *paper 1 due*
8. Williams' objections to utilitarianism
9. Railton: utilitarianism defended

P 167-91
P 200-9
P 209-26

IV. Kantian and Deontological Systems

10. Kant's *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*
11. Kane's "Ends Principle", objective worth
12. Feldman: objections to Kantian ethics
13. Ross: What makes right acts right?

P 251-80
K ch. 2-4
P 288-300
P 280-8, W 97-142

V. Virtue Ethics

- 14. Aristotle and Mayo on virtue P 317-334
- 15. Frankena's critique of virtue-based ethics P 334-45
- 16. Wolf vs. Pojman: Are "Moral Saints" desirable?,
paper 2 due P 371-89

VI. Ethics with or without Religion?

- 17. Kane: religion and meaning K ch. 7
- 18. Mavrodes on religion and morality P 581-9, W 143-68
- 19. Nielson & Russell: ethics without religion P 576-81, 589-94

VII. Justice

- 20. Kane on public and private morality K ch. 5-6
- 21. Kane on moral education K ch. 9, W 169-82
- 22. Aristotle vs. Hume on justice P 597-609
- 23. Rescher: distributive justice P 609-14
- 24. Nozick: a libertarian theory P 614-29
- 25. Rawls' liberal theory of justice P 629-43
- 26. Matson: criticism of Rawls P 643-56
- 27. Nagel on the justice of equality P 656-66
- 28. Kane: Environment, Gender and Culture K ch. 8
- 29. last day of class, *paper 3 due*

Final Exam

Requirements and Grading

There are 400 possible points for the course, which break down as follows:

Required Reading	40
Discussion Section	30
Paper 1 (3 pgs)	50
Paper 2 (5 pgs)	80
Paper 3 (8-10 pgs)	100
<u>Final exam</u>	<u>100</u>
Total	400

Reading 10%

It is important that you keep up with the reading. Lectures will presuppose that you have read the material beforehand. You will be asked at the start of each class to sign a sheet indicating that you have done the required reading for that day. Everyone will be granted three free absences/failures to read without any grade penalty. If you come in late it is your responsibility to find the sheet and sign it. Skipping class equals losing reading points.

Discussion Section 8%

Required discussion sections will meet weekly eleven times, starting the second week of class. The discussion group grade covers attendance only, and everyone gets one free skip.

Exam 25%

There will be a comprehensive final exam. We will observe the reading period, during which there will be an optional review session.

Papers 58%

There will be three papers - 3 pages, 5 pages, 8-10 pages.