Philosophy Faculty Reading List and Course Outline 2018-2019

PART IA PAPER 02:
ETHICS AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Course Outline

The course introduces students to a selection of the main problems in moral and political philosophy. The topics studied are divided into five main subject areas:

Introduction to Metaethics: This part of the course introduces students to some of the central questions in metaethics. One topic centres on the so called ‘fact/value distinction’. Is there, indeed, such a distinction? If so, what is it? Is it possible to make inferences from descriptive or non-moral claims to evaluative, normative, or moral claims? Can moral properties be identified with natural properties? A second topic is concerned with whether moral judgments are objective or subjective. Can we know what is morally right and wrong? Or is there nothing to be known because moral judgements merely express emotions or preferences? Are there facts about what is good or valuable, and if there are do they obtain independently of human thought or feeling?

Moral Psychology: The second area of the syllabus is focused on questions concerning moral decision-making and moral motivation. Can people act altruistically or is there always a selfish element in motivation? What sorts of motivation does morality require? What sorts of justification can be given in favour of moral motivation? What roles do affective and cognitive attitudes play in moral judgment and moral motivation?

Introduction to Normative Ethics: This part of the course is concerned with the question what the right thing to do is. Does morality require us to maximise pleasure and minimise pain? Must we act only in ways that are universalizable? Is it permissible to kill one so that five others may live? What is virtue? Students will be introduced to three central approaches to normative ethics: consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics.

SYLLABUS

- Metaethics: fact and value; objectivity and subjectivity.
- Normative ethics: consequentialism; deontology; virtue ethics.
- Moral psychology: egoism and altruism; empathy; cognitive and affective attitudes.
- Political obligation and authority: classical social contract theory; natural duty and fair play theory; anarchism.
- Equality of opportunity: varieties of equality of opportunity; justifications and controversy; positive discrimination.

Political Obligation: A central, if not the central problem for political philosophy is that of how to justify the authority of the state. Should we obey the law just because it is the law? When, if ever, is it justified to break the law or to overthrow the state? How should we respond to the anarchist claim that no actual, or even possible, political authority is legitimate?

Equality of Opportunity: It is intuitive to think that our society is just only if we each have an equal opportunity to receive key benefits available in our society. But what does equality of opportunity mean in this context? And which benefits should we be concerned with? Is equality of opportunity compatible with private education? With affirmative action? With financial reward for natural talents? With family life?

As well as looking forward to topics covered in the IB and Part II Ethics papers, the study of IA Ethics and Political Philosophy looks forward to some of the themes studied in the Political Philosophy papers in Parts IB and II.

Prerequisites

None

Objectives

Students taking this paper will be expected to:

1. Acquire a detailed knowledge of some of the central arguments in the chosen readings.
2. Acquire an understanding of how the different topics studied relate to each other.
3. Engage in close criticism with the arguments studied.
4. Develop their own powers of philosophical analysis and argument, through study of the chosen topics.

Preliminary Reading

READING LIST

Material marked with an asterisk* is important

METAETHICS

Fact and Value


ANDERSON, Elizabeth, The Imperative of Integration (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), ch. 8 'The folly and incoherence of color blindness'. Also available on Moodle


HUEMER, Michael, Ethical Intuitionism (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), ch. 4 'Reductionism'. Also available online at: www.dawsonera.com


SOBER, Elliott, From a Biological Point of View (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), ch. 5 'Prospects for an evolutionary ethics'. Also available online at: http://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511624940.006

Objectivity and Subjectivity


*MACKIE, J.L., Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong (London: Penguin, 1977), ch. 1 'The Subjectivity of Values'. Also available on Moodle

*SCHROEDER, Mark, Noncognitivism in Ethics (London: Routledge, 2010), chs. 1-3.

AYER, A.J., Language, Truth and Logic (London: Gollancz, 1936), ch. 6 'Critique of Ethics and Theology'. Also available on Moodle

BLACKBURN, Simon, Ruling Passions (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), ch. 3 'Naturalizing norms'.

BRINK, David, Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), ch. 2 'Moral realism and moral inquiry'. Also available online at: http://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511624612.003

FOOT, Philippa, Natural Goodness (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). Also available online at: http://doi.org/10.1093/198235089.001.0001


LILLEHAMMER, Hallvard, Companions in Guilt: Arguments for Ethical Objectivity (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), ch. 5 'Values and secondary qualities'. Also available online at: www.dawsonera.com


NORMATIVE ETHICS

Consequentialism

*RAWLS, John, A Theory of Justice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), ch. 1.5 'Classical utilitarianism'. Also available online at: www.dawsonera.com.


MILL, John Stuart, *Utilitarianism*, ch. 5 'On the connection between justice and utility'. The CUP edition is available online at: http://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139239277.005


Deontology

*KAGAN, Shelly, *The Limits of Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), ch. 1 'Against ordinary morality'. Also available online at: http://doi.org/10.1093/0198239165.001.0001


NAGEL, Thomas, *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), ch. 9 'Ethics'.


Virtue Ethics


MORAL PSYCHOLOGY

Egoism and altruism

*BLACKBURN, Simon, *Ruling Passions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), ch. 5 'Looking out for yourself'. Also available on Moodle

*WILLIAMS, Bernard, *Problems of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), ch. 15 'Egoism and altruism'. Also available online at: http://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511612530.017

BUTLER, Joseph, *Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel and a Dissertation Upon the Nature of Virtue*, Sermons I, II, III & XI. Also available online at: [http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/3150. [Classic text]


Cognitive and Affective Attitudes


### POLITICAL OBLIGATION AND AUTHORITY

#### General

KNOWLES, Dudley, *Political Obligation: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2010), chs. 1, 2, 6 & 7. Also available online at: [www.dawsonera.com


#### Classical Social Contract Theory


THOMAS, D.A. Lloyd, Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Locke on Government (London: Routledge, 1995), ch. 2 'Social contract and the state'. Also available online at: www.dawsonera.com

Natural Duty and Fair Play Theory


KLOSKO, George, Political Obligations (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), chs. 4 & 5. Also available online at: http://doi.org/10.1093/0199256209.001.0001

KLOSKO, George, The Principle of Fairness and Political Obligation. 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), ch. 2 'The principle of fairness'.


RAWLS, John, A Theory of Justice. Rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), ch. 6, secs. 51 & 52. Also available online at: www.dawsonera.com


Anarchism


SCHWARZ, John, 'Philosophical Anarchism', in Justification and Legitimacy: Essays on Rights and Obligations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 102-21. Also available online at: http://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511625152.007


EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

Varieties of Equality of Opportunity: Justification and Controversy


FREEMAN, Samuel, Rawls (London: Routledge, 2007), ch. 3, sect. 'Fair equality of opportunity'.


Discrimination and Affirmative Action

*YOUNG, Iris Marion, Justice and the Politics of Difference (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), ch. 7 'Affirmative action and the myth of merit'. Also available on Moodle


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We welcome your suggestions for further readings that will improve and diversify our reading lists, to reflect the best recent research, and important work by members of under-represented groups. Please email your suggestions to [phillib@hermes.cam.ac.uk](mailto:phillib@hermes.cam.ac.uk) including the relevant part and paper number. For information on how we handle your personal data when you submit a suggestion please see [https://www.information-compliance.admin.cam.ac.uk/data-protection/general-data](https://www.information-compliance.admin.cam.ac.uk/data-protection/general-data).