

Introduction to Moral Philosophy

Syllabus (March 6, 2023)*

Course Code:	HUMA1920 / CORE1576 (L2)
Course Title:	Introduction to Moral Philosophy
Course Offered:	Spring Semester 2023, February 6 to May 8
Course Schedule:	Monday 10:30 – 11:50pm; Wednesday 10:30 – 11:50pm
Course Location:	Room 2504, Lift 25-26
Course Instructor:	Dennis PROOI (Lecturer, Philosophy, HUMA); hmdprooi@ust.hk
Office Hours:	Thursday, 13:30 – 14:45 pm (Room 3348)
Teaching Assistant:	LEUNG Hiu Ching (hmhcleung@ust.hk) Office hours: Tuesday, 15:00 – 16:50 (room 3416)

Course Outline

Moral philosophy and ethics are two closely-related areas within philosophy. Whereas the former asks what we ought to do, the latter pursues the question of how we ought to live. This course introduces the most important moral and ethical theories and examines their application to a number of complicated moral issues. In the first part, we survey the ethics of the ancient world, concentrating on classical Greek, Buddhist, Confucian, and Daoist ethics. They each propose their own set of ideas on how one should live to lead a virtuous life. In the second part, we move on to consider modern moral theories. While our focus here will be on J. S. Mill's utilitarianism and Immanuel Kant's deontology, we shall also consider David Hume's sentimentalism, Ayn Rand's rational egoism, and Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach. Finally, in the third part, we consider how ethical and moral theories are applied to such diverse issues as animal welfare, nudging, euthanasia, abortion, and organ markets.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

1	Recall and paraphrase various moral theories and their relative merits in helping to resolve moral issues.
2	Articulate common moral ideas and issues.

3	Formulate their assumptions and assess the logical cogency of arguments pertaining to these ideas and issues.
4	Critically interpret the significance of the values that are espoused.

Course Outline	
<u>Introduction</u>	
1. February 13 (Mo)	An overview of moral theories James Rachels, <i>The Right Thing to Do</i> , chapter 1
2. February 15 (We)	Philosophical reasoning James Rachels, <i>The Right Thing to Do</i> , chapter 2
<u>Part One: Ethical Theories of the Ancient World</u>	
3. February 20 (Mo)	Relativism Plato, <i>Protagoras</i> (selection)
4. February 22 (We)	Virtue ethics Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , book I sections 1-7
5. February 27 (Mo)	Confucian ethics Confucius, <i>The Analects</i> (selection)
6. March 1 (We)	Buddhist ethics The Buddha, <i>Dhammapada</i> (selection)
7. March 6 (Mo)	Daoist ethics Laozi, <i>Dao De Jing</i> (selection)
<u>Part Two: Modern Moral Theories</u>	
8. March 8 (We)	Sentimentalism and the is-ought fallacy David Hume, <i>A Treatise of Human Nature</i> , book III part 1 section 1

9. March 13 (Mo)	Act utilitarianism Jeremy Bentham, <i>An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation</i> , chapters 1, 3 & 4
10. March 15 (We)	Rule utilitarianism J.S. Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , chapter 2
11. March 20 (Mo)	Deontology Immanuel Kant, <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , section 1
12. March 22 (We)	Deontology continued Immanuel Kant, <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , section 2 (selection)
13. March 27 (Mo)	Egoism Ayn Rand, <i>The Virtue of Selfishness</i> , introduction & chapter 1
14. March 29 (We)	Capabilities approach Martha Nussbaum, <i>Creating Capabilities</i> , chapter 2
15. April 3 (Mo)	Writing workshop
16. April 12 (We)	Midterm Exam
<u>Part Three: Applied Ethics</u>	
17. April 17 (Mo)	Animals Peter Singer, <i>Animal Liberation</i> , chapter 1 Christine Korsgaard, "A Kantian Case for Animal Rights"
18. April 19 (We)	Nudging Richard Thaler & Cass Sunstein, <i>Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness</i> , Introduction & chapter 17
19. April 24 (Mo)	Nudging continued Luc Bovens, "The Ethics of Nudge"
20. April 26 (We)	Euthanasia J. Gay-Williams, "The Wrongfulness of Euthanasia" Philippa Foot, "Euthanasia"
21. May 3 (We)	Abortion Mary Anne Warren, "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion"
22. May 8 (Mo)	Abortion Continued Don Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral"

Assessment		
1	<p>Midterm exam</p> <p>Exam questions are based on the readings and lectures of the first two parts of the course. Students have 80 minutes to answer four out of five questions.</p>	30%
2	<p>Essay</p> <p>Students write a 1000-word essay in which they formulate their own argument about a moral issue by applying one of the theories from the first two parts of the course to a topic treated in the third part, minimally citing two of the course readings. A writing workshop will be provided on March 29. Deadline for the essay: TBA (most likely one week after the last class). Students are allowed and encouraged to hand in a draft version of their essay before the last class on May 8 in order to receive feedback for improvement. Students who wish to treat a topic other than those introduced in the third part of the course must obtain approval from the instructor.</p>	50%
3	<p>Participation</p> <p>Participation takes the form of the online discussion of moral dilemmas introduced in the lectures (mandatory for all students) and in-class structured debate (optional). Students write a minimum of eight 200-word posts or replies on the Canvas discussion board over the course of the semester, in which they reflect on moral dilemmas. Optionally, every week up to four students may participate in in-class structured debate, in which one team supports and another team opposes a motion. Participants receive a separate bonus. Details will be announced in class.</p>	20%

Additional notes:

- All readings will be available on Canvas.
- No marks are awarded for attendance. Failure to attend class on a regular basis will result in a penalty. Further details regarding attendance requirements will be announced in class.
- HKUST upholds academic integrity and has a no plagiarism policy (see: <https://registry.hkust.edu.hk/resource-library/academic-integrity>). Plagiarism will result in failure of the course.

* Be prepared for changes in the schedule. Regularly check Canvas for updates.