

THE ANATOMY OF MORAL GOODNESS: A HISTORY OF ETHICS FROM PLATO TO RAWLS

PHIL XXX-XX · Semester Year · Meeting Time · Meeting Place

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Required Text: Cahn, Steven M. and Peter Markie eds. (2006). *Ethics: History, Theory, and Contemporary Issues*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN 0195178408

Suggested Text: Hegel, Georg Friedrich Wilhelm (1991/1821). *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Edited by Allen W. Wood. Translated by H.B. Nisbet. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0521348889

Course Description: The aim of this course will be to gain a deeper understanding of a few highly influential ideas in the history of ethical theory. Readings will include work by Plato, Hobbes, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Mill, and Rawls. Apart from thinking about various conceptions of morality as a whole, we will also be concerned with differing views about the nature of justice. Some of the questions we will consider in this class include:

- What is the relationship between the demands of justice and the demands of morality?
- What is the relationship between being just and doing what is in one's best interest?
- What is the relationship between the dictates of morality and the dictates of reason?

Requirements: Actually doing philosophy involves class discussion, in which students dialogue back and forth with the instructor and with each other. This class will be a seminar style course that places a premium on class discussion. Since this is the case, attendance is vital for success in the course.

Presentation. The student will complete a one-page summary of a reading designated by the instructor. The student should outline at least one argument in the reading and demonstrate that s/he has a command of the argument. If too confused by the argument, then summarize what you think the main argument of the reading is and present a few questions or criticisms of the main argument.

Examinations. There will be one take home mid-term examination, and one in-class final examination. The final exam will be comprehensive. The instructor also reserves the right to give an unannounced quiz at any time, though this is uncommon.

Final Paper. The student will be expected to complete one 10-12 page paper on a topic of the student's choice. More information, i.e., suggested topics, will be distributed sometime toward the middle of the semester. The student must submit a brief prospectus of the paper by DUE DATE, a bibliography by DUE DATE, and a detailed outline by DUE DATE.

Failure to complete any of these requirements will severely effect the your grade.

Policies:

Cheating. Cheating on any course requirement shall not be tolerated. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, copying from one's own clandestine notes, from someone else's paper, or quoting or paraphrasing an author without crediting the source (plagiarism). If the student is caught cheating, then s/he will receive a 0 on the work and will be subject to disciplinary action.

Students with Disabilities Act. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, cognitive, systemic, learning, and psychiatric impairments. Please contact the instructor at the beginning of the course to discuss any such accommodations that you may require for this course. For more information, the student should contact the Center for Disability Services.

Notice. The student is advised. All material contained herein, including course design, content, lectures, correspondence, Internet content, and written material, is the intellectual property of the instructor. In addition, the instructor reserves the right to change, revise, or alter any portion of this syllabus at any time, at his sole discretion, for any reason, without further notification to the student. This syllabus is in accordance with the [university of college handbook].

Grading:

There are no averages in this class, so put your calculators away. Grades will be determined according to a linear point scale. The more points you accumulate the higher your grade. In-class participation is worth a total of 100 points, each presentation is worth 50 points (100 total points available), each one-page summary of the major argument in an assigned paper is worth 25 points (250 total points available), and the final paper is worth a total of 200 points. The total number of points available equals 650.

The grading scale is as follows: 585 for an A-, 520 for a B-, 455 for a C-, 390 for a D-. Anyone who fails to earn 390 points fails the class.

**Course
Schedule &
Assignments:**

The table below outlines the approximate dates on which each topic will be discussed. Some topics will require additional time, particularly more discussion time, so this is not a schedule set in stone. This fact emphasizes the importance of attending class regularly as well as the importance of participating in class discussion.

Title of Lecture & Readings for the Week	Week of:
Why Be Moral? Plato, excerpts from the <i>Euthyphro</i> , <i>Apology</i> , <i>Crito</i> , <i>Phaedo</i> , and <i>Republic</i> (Cahn and Markie, pp. 5-124). We will have an extended discussion of whether it is rational for Gyges to act against his own self-interest.	Week 1
Carry-over from Week 1.	Week 2
The Nature of Virtue(s). Aristotle, selections from <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (Cahn and Markie, pp. 124-177. What does Aristotle mean by “excellence?” How does one live the virtuous life? Finally, could one be mistaken about the virtuous life even if that person had carefully observed how a virtuous person had lived?	Week 3
Carry-over from Week 3.	Week 4
What are Christian Virtues? Augustine, selections from <i>Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love</i> (Cahn and Markie, pp. 195-201) How do we distinguish between Christian virtues and the virtues of Aristotle? Are Christian virtues merely an extension of Aristotle’s virtues? How do they differ?	Week 5
What are Christian Virtues? Aquinas, selections from <i>Summa Contra Gentiles</i> (Cahn and Markie, pp. 202-217.) How does Aquinas’s account differ from Augustine’s? What role does ‘intention’ play in Aquinas’s moral theory?	Week 6
“Poor, Nasty, Brutish, and Short.” Hobbes, selections from <i>Leviathan</i> (Cahn and Markie, pp. 218-228.) What is the social contract? What is a state of nature? Can we imagine a world in which the social contract is not met?	Week 7
Carry-over from Week 7.	Week 8
Humean Rationality and Humean Moral Theory. Hume, selections from <i>An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals</i> (Cahn and Markie, pp. 244-269) What is the role of rationality in Hume’s system of morality? Ought we think that the dictates of morality depend on reason?	Week 9

Carry-over from Week 9.	Week 10
Duty, Morality, and Justice in Kant's <i>Groundwork</i>. Kant, selections from <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> (Cahn and Markie, pp. 270-308) What does it mean to act from duty alone? Does reason and morality overlap for Kant? How can we distinguish Kant from Hume?	Week 11
Living in Kant's Shadow. Hegel, selections from <i>Elements in the Philosophy of Right</i> (Sections 105-128, 142-157, and other sections if we have time; TBA) What is Hegel's moral psychology? How does intention fit into Hegel's moral system?	Week 12
The Rise of Utilitarianism. Mill, selections from <i>Utilitarianism</i> (Cahn and Markie, pp. 317-351; read selection from Bentham's <i>An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation</i> , Cahn and Markie pp. 309-317 if you have time) What is the role of intention in Mill's utilitarianism? Ought we think that reason plays any role in Mill's moral theory?	Week 13
Carry-over from Weeks 11-13.	Week 14
Contemporary Remarks on the State of Moral Philosophy, from the View of Reason. Rawls, selections from <i>A Theory of Justice</i> (Cahn and Markie, pp. 493-515) What is the role of reason in Rawls's moral theory? What is the original position? Is the original position conceptually possible? What is the future of moral theory from the view of reason?	Week 15