

aPHL 440: Central Issues In Ethics
Spring Semester 2021
MW 10:20-11:40am
Online

Instructor	
Matt Ferkany	ferkany@msu.edu
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Zoom Meeting Link

<https://msu.zoom.us/j/92790268429>
Meeting ID: 927 9026 8429
Passcode: 814287

Course Description

Why be moral? How is being moral related to self-interest, well-being, or living a meaningful life? And what is expected of us as moral persons in a complex, interconnected world? Many of the most important ethical crises of our day result not from our individual behavior, but from our collective behavior. What responsibility does any of us have for such problems? These questions seem especially pressing for contractualist and consequentialist approaches to ethics, in which what we must do depends on what we collectively agree to do and the consequences of our actions. This course will explore these questions with a special focus on climate change, personal identity, and the work of Derek Parfit.

Required Texts

- Readings posted to D2L.

Course Requirements and Grading

In-class exercises 10%
 Text annotations 30%
 Reflection papers and peer commenting 45%
 Final paper 15%

Attendance

This is a seminar type discussion course and attendance is required and expected. In-class exercises cannot be made up or submitted outside of lectures. Lectures and discussions will NOT be recorded or posted for later viewing.

Schedule

Subject to change depending upon the pace of lectures and discussions.
 NOTE: All readings except those from Parfit and Scanlon are posted to D2L

	Date	Topic/activity	Literature/media	Tasks due
0	1.11		Syllabus	
1	1.20	Individual responsibility for collective wrongs	Sinnott-Armstrong, "It's Not My Fault", sections 1-3 Recommended: Heath, "Climate change and the grim logic of collective action"	

2	1.25	Why be moral?	Plato, "The Immoralist's Challenge" The Buddhist Core Values	Have listened to <i>This American Life</i> , Episode 178: Superpowers – Invisible Man Vs. Hawkman
	1.27	Contractarianism	Gauthier, "Why Contractarianism?"	
3	2.1		Harman, "Moral Relativism Defended"	First reflection paper deadline
	2.3		Mills, <i>The Racial Contract</i> , "Overview"	
4	2.8	Rationalism	Prichard, "Does moral philosophy rest on a mistake?" Recommended: Kant, "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals"	
	2.10	Nonnaturalism (realism)	Shafer-Landau, "Ethics as Philosophy"	
5	2.15	Contractualism	Shafer-Landau continued	
	2.17		Kumar, "Contractualism"	
6	2.22		Kumar continued	
	2.24	Responsibility again	Sinnott-Armstrong, "It's Not My Fault", sections 4-7	
7	3.1	Well-being and being good	Movie: Groundhog Day	Second reflection paper deadline
	3.3	CLASS DOES NOT MEET	CLASS DOES NOT MEET	
8	3.8		Nozick, "The Experience Machine" Parfit, <i>Reasons and Persons</i> , "What makes someone's life go best?"	
	3.10		Wolf, "The Meanings of Lives"	
9	3.15	Virtue ethics	Nussbaum, "Non-Relative Virtues"	
	3.17	Buddhist ethics	Garfield, "What is it Like to be a Bodhisattva?" Recommended:	

			Santideva, "A GUIDE TO THE BODHISATTVA'S WAY OF LIFE"	
10	3.22	TBA	Student selected	Fourth reflection paper draft notes
	3.24	TBA	Student selected	
	3.26		NA	Third reflection paper deadline
11	3.29	Self-interest and doing the right thing	Parfit, <i>Reasons and Persons</i> , pp. 9-29 [NOTE: Page numbers refer to pages of the PDF file, not the original text of the book]	
	3.31		Parfit, <i>Reasons and Persons</i> , pp. 30-38	
12	4.5		Parfit, <i>Reasons and Persons</i> , pp. 38-49	
	4.7		Parfit, <i>Reasons and Persons</i> , pp. 51-61	
13	4.12		Parfit, <i>Reasons and Persons</i> , pp. 61-69	
	4.14		Parfit, <i>Reasons and Persons</i> , pp. 70-78	
14	4.19		Parfit, <i>Reasons and Persons</i> , pp. 78-86	
	4.21		Parfit, <i>Reasons and Persons</i> , pp. 87-105	Fourth reflection paper deadline
15	4.29 7:45- 9:45am		NA	Revised reflection paper