OVERVIEW

These tutorials will cover core topics in normative ethics and metaethics, thereby preparing you to sit the Ethics 103 finals paper as well as further sharpening your philosophical skillset.

- Week 1 - Egoism
- Week 2 - Consequentialism
- Week 3 - Kantian Deontology I: Duty
- Week 4 - Kantian Deontology II: Universalizability
- Week 5 - Virtue Ethics
- Week 6 - The Open Question Argument
- Week 7 - Non-Cognitivism
- Week 8 - Error Theory

WORK TO BE UNDERTAKEN

You will produce 6 essays of a length between 1,500-2,500 words. **You are expected to write an essay for Week 1.** Most papers/chapters listed below are available online via SOLO. Do email me if you have difficulty getting hold of any.

POLICIES

- **Please ensure your essay is emailed to me in good time for your tutorial.**
  - For week 1, by 7.00am Wednesday is sufficient (obviously, you don’t have to send it to me that morning—any time before then is fine).
  - For Weeks 2-8:
    - if having a Weds morning tutorial, then please email your essay by 7.00am Weds (as per wk1), but
    - if having a Weds afternoon tutorial, then please email your essay by 2.00pm on Tuesday.
- There are no ‘silly questions’ and tutorials are not formally assessed. **Be bold. Be inquisitive.**
- If you miss a tutorial, or arrive late, no compensating tutorial can be arranged. It **may** be possible to reschedule a tutorial in advance, but such requests will not necessarily be granted.
READINGS

NOTE: Faculty lists are comprehensive. Below are readings that I think are useful and interesting; they are sufficient for writing your tutorial paper, but you should feel free to explore other papers/books. Almost all papers/books are accessible online. Don’t expect to be able to cover all readings or to get to grips with all issues in one week. I will provide advice on which papers are central.

General readings to dip into:

Anthologies and Collections of Survey Articles:
Week 1: Egoism

**Issues:** distinctness of ethical egoism (ee) and psychological egoism (pe); whether ee is coherent; whether ee is a moral system.

**Background:**

**Against Egoism:**

**For Egoism:**


**Essay questions (pick one):**
- ‘Psychological egoism is either false or trivial. Ethical egoism is simply false.’ Discuss.
- ‘Can an ethical egoist coherently universalize the principle(s) on which they act?’
Week 2: Consequentialism

**Issues:** agent-neutral vs agent-relative perspectives; satisficing vs maximizing vs scalar; criterion of evaluation (objective) vs decision procedure (subjective); difference between injustice, demandingness/integrity and separateness-of-persons objections.

**Background:**

**Recommended**

**Alternatives to Maximizing:**

**Consequentialism and Interpersonal Relationships:**

**Demandingness and Integrity:**

**Essay questions:**
- “Can one be a consequentialist and also a good friend?”
- “What does it mean to say that consequentialism is too demanding? How should a consequentialist respond to the objection?”
Week 3: Kantian Deontology I - Duty

Issues: how deontology contrasts with consequentialism; the good will; acts done in accordance with duty vs acts done from of duty; respect for the moral law.

We will be reading the 2nd edition Gregor and Timmermann's Cambridge version of Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, available online via solo:

- [http://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/OXVU1:LSCOP_OX:oxfaleph019406877](http://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/OXVU1:LSCOP_OX:oxfaleph019406877)

Background:


The Groundwork:

- **This week, read Preface and Section/Groundwork I**

On Acting from Duty:


Essay question:
- “What is it to act from a motive of duty? In what ways might this thesis be problematic?”
Week 4: Kantian Deontology II - Universalizability

**Issues:** hypothetical vs categorical imperatives; how to get not only permissibility, but duty from the categorical imperative (CI); how the different formulations of CI are related; the notion of autonomy and the kingdom of ends; the contradiction(s) that are generated by flouting the CI; what morality would look like without CI.

We will be reading the 2nd edition Gregor and Timmermann’s Cambridge version of Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, available online via solo:

- [http://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/OXVU1:LSCOP_OX:oxfaleph019406877](http://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/OXVU1:LSCOP_OX:oxfaleph019406877)

**Background:**


**The Groundwork:**

- **This week, read Groundwork II**

**The Categorical Imperative:**


**The Rejection of the Categorical Imperative:**


**Essay question:**
- “How are the differing formulations of the categorical imperative related?”
- “Which picture of morality is most desirable: Kant’s kingdom of self-legislatng ends or Foot’s band of volunteers?”
**Week 5: Virtue Ethics**

**Issues:**
- The nature of the virtues and their acquisition;
- Distinctive features of virtue ethics;
- The non-codifiability/non-theoreticality of ethics (McDowell) but must virtue ethics be thought of in this way (see Hursthouse’s ‘v-rules’) and is it a problem or a plus?; being vs doing characterisation;
- Non-impartiality; the nature/metaphysics of a disposition;
- Egoism objection; guidance/application objection; relativism objection.

**Background:**


Annas, J. (2011). *Intelligent Virtue*. OUP. Ch.2. **Short chapter - very good on the nature of a virtue.**


For:


- [http://kpfu.ru/docs/F780391867/Reading3.pdf](http://kpfu.ru/docs/F780391867/Reading3.pdf)

Against:


Further issues:


**Essay questions:**

- “Is virtue ethics insufficiently normative?”
- “What is distinctive about virtue ethics? Are its distinctive features flaws or merits?”
Week 6: The Open Question Argument

**Issues**: Moore’s naturalistic fallacy (is it really a fallacy?); ‘good’ as simple and indefinable; moral supervenience; the nature of natural and non-natural properties; naturalism and non-naturalism as forms of cognitivism (what is cognitivism and how does it differ from realism? - see wk8); properties vs concepts distinction; paradox of analysis reply.

Very important here is the distinction between concepts and properties. To avoid confusion in your essays (and for added philosophical sophistication) use caps for concepts, e.g., GOOD, and scare quotes for properties, e.g., ‘good.’

**Background:**

**The OQA:**

- [http://fae.org/g-e-moore/principia-ethica/chapter-i](http://fae.org/g-e-moore/principia-ethica/chapter-i)

**Objections:**

**Defences of the OQA:**

**Essay question:**
- “Does Moore’s open question argument refute naturalism?”
Week 7: Non-Cognitivism  

**Issues:** Humean theory of motivation; motivational internalism (external alternative?); world-to-mind vs mind-to-world direction of fit; non-cognitivism as metaphysical thesis; non-cognitivism as semantic thesis; the Frege-Geach or ‘embedding’ objection; Blackburn’s (1984) reply (higher-order attitudes, fractured sensibility, etc.); difficulties for Blackburn (1984).

**General:**

**Non-cognitivist views:**
Ayer, A. (1952). “Critique of Ethics and Theology.” In his Language, Truth and Logic. Dover. Ch6 read up to “This mention of God...” **Notice the appearance of the OQA.**


The Humean Argument for Non-Cognitivism:
Hume, D. *Treatise of Human Nature*. 2.3.3: “Of the Influencing Motives of the Will.”

The Frege-Geach Problem:
Geach, P. (1960). “Ascriptivism.” Philosophical Review 69: 221-225. **Short, but tricky – real action begins @ p.223**


For more on F-G, see also Miller and many chapters of Schroeder’s book.

**Essay questions:**
- “What is the Frege-Geach problem for non-cognitivism? Can it be overcome?”
- “Is there a good argument from facts about moral motivation to the truth of non-cognitivism?”
Week 8: Error Theory

**Issues:** argument from relativity; argument from queerness/strangeness (metaphysical and epistemic aspects); moral properties as intrinsically action-guiding (why do you think Mackie says naturalism must deny this?); problem of whether/how we should continue to use moral discourse if it is in error; fictionalism vs abolitionalism vs conservationism.

Error theory:

What to do, if our conception of morality is in error?
Joyce, R. (2001). *The Myth of Morality.* CUP. Ch.7 sections, 0-3 and Chapter 8, section 4 **Both chapters 7 and 8 can be read in their entirety, but they are lengthy.**


Non-Naturalistic replies:

Overviews, with Further Issues/Challenges Discussed:
Miller, A. (2003). *An Introduction to Contemporary Metaethics.* Polity. Ch.6 (skip 6.6)

Essay questions:
- “Can an error theorist engage wholeheartedly in moral discourse?”
- “Has Mackie refuted non-naturalism?”