

# Ethics 103

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## 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 1500-2500 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:

- Bennett, C. (2010). *What is This Thing Called Ethics?* Blackwell. **\*\*Good for weeks 1-3.**
- Brink, D. (1989). *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics*. CUP.
- Fisher, A. (2014). *Metaethics: An Introduction*. Routledge.
- Kirchin, S. (2012). *Metaethics*. Palgrave.
- McNaughton, D. (1988). *Moral Vision: An Introduction to Ethics*. Blackwell.
- Mackie, J. (1977). *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. Penguin.
- Miller, A. (2003). *Contemporary Metaethics: An Introduction*. Polity.
- Rachels, J. & Rachels, S. (2006). *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*. **\*\*6<sup>th</sup> edition or later.**
- Schroeder, M. (2010). *Noncognitivism in Ethics*. Routledge.
- Smith, M. (1994). *The Moral Problem*. Blackwell.

### Anthologies and Collections of Survey Articles:

- Dreier, J. (ed.) (2006). *Contemporary Debates in Moral Theory*. Blackwell.
- Shafer-Landau, R. (2012). *Ethical Theory: An Anthology*. Wiley. **\*\*Several papers listed below are anthologised here.**
- Singer, P. (ed.) (1993). *A Companion to Ethics*. Blackwell.
- Singer, P. (ed.) (1994). *Ethics* (Oxford Readers). OUP.
- Skorupski, J. (ed.) (2013). *Routledge Companion to Ethics*. Routledge.

## Week 1: Egoism

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

### Background:

Rachels, J. *Elements of Moral Philosophy*. McGraw-Hill. Many years/editions. Chs.5-6. **\*\*Very accessible introduction.**

### Against Egoism:

Baier, J. (1990). "Egoism." In P. Singer (ed.) *A Companion to Ethics*. Blackwell.

Medlin, B. (1954). "Ultimate Principles and Ethical Egoism." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 35: 111-118.

### For Egoism:

Kalin, J. (1970). "In Defense of Egoism." In Gauthier (ed.) *Morality and Rational Self-Interest*. Prentice-Hall. **\*\*Response to Medlin (1954).**

- [https://www.uta.edu/philosophy/faculty/burgess-jackson/Kalin,%20In%20Defense%20of%20Egoism%20\(1970\).pdf](https://www.uta.edu/philosophy/faculty/burgess-jackson/Kalin,%20In%20Defense%20of%20Egoism%20(1970).pdf)

Kalin, J. (1971). "Baier's Refutation of Ethical Egoism." *Philosophical Studies* 22: 74-78.

Mackie, J. (1977). *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. Penguin. Ch.5.

### 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:

Hooker, B. (2013). "Consequentialism." In Skorupski (ed.), *Routledge Companion to Ethics*. Routledge.

**\*\*Recommended**

Shaw, W. (2006). "The Consequentialist Perspective." In Dreier (ed.) (2006). *Contemporary Debates in Moral Theory*.

### Alternatives to Maximizing:

Vallentyne, P. (2006). "Against Maximizing Act Consequentialism." **\*\*Satisficing**

Norcorss, A. (2006). "Reasons Without Demands." **\*\*Scalar**

- Both in Dreier, J. (ed.) (2006). *Contemporary Debates in Moral Theory*. Blackwell. **\*\*Highly recommended papers - tricky in places, but worth reading if answering the question on demandingness. The views are briefly discussed in Hooker (2013).**

### Consequentialism and Interpersonal Relationships:

Jackson, F. (1991). "Decision-Theoretic Consequentialism and the Nearest and Dearest Objection." *Ethics* 101: 461-482.

Railton, P. (1984). "Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 13: 134-171. **\*\*Sections VIII and IX relevant for demandingness too.**

### Demandingness and Integrity:

Williams, B. (1973). "A Critique of Utilitarianism." In Smart and Williams (eds.), *Utilitarianism: For and Against*. **\*\*Classic statement of integrity/demandingness objection.**

- <http://homepage.westmont.edu/hoecklev/PHI006SP12/documents/Williams.pdf>

Scheffler, S. (1984/1994). *The Rejection of Consequentialism*. OUP. **\*\*pp.14-22 and pp.56-67 only. Note that Scheffler's use of the term 'Sophisticated Consequentialism' differs from Railton's.**

Kagan, S. (1984). "Does Consequentialism Demand too Much?" *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 13: 239-254. **\*\*Sections III and IV only - a response to Scheffler.**

### 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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:

Korsgaard, C. (2012). "Introduction." In M. Gregor and J. Timmermann (eds.) *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Revised/2nd Edition. CUP. \*\*pp.vii-xv only.

Korsgaard, C. (1996). *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*. CUP. Ch.2, sect.III.

### The Groundwork:

Kant, I. (2012). *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. M. Gregor and J. Timmermann (eds.) Revised/2nd Edition. CUP.

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

### On Acting from Duty:

Stocker, M. (1976). "The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories." *Journal of Philosophy* 73: 453-466. \*\*Although Stocker frames his complaints as against utilitarian theories, notice how, on p.459, he says his points hold against deontology as well.

Wolf, S. (1982). "Moral Saints." *Journal of Philosophy* 79: 419-439.

Baron, M. (1984). "On the Alleged Repugnance of Acting from Duty." *Journal of Philosophy* 8: 197-220. \*\*A reply to Stocker and Wolf.

### 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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:

Korsgaard, C. (2012). "Introduction." In M. Gregor and J. Timmermann (eds.) *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Revised/2nd Edition. CUP. \*\*pp.xv-xxv only.

Hill, T. (2007). "Kantian Normative Ethics." In Copp (ed.) *Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory*. OUP. \*\*Very thorough discussion of the different formulations of the categorical imperative.

### The Groundwork:

Kant, I. (2012). *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. M. Gregor and J. Timmermann (eds.) Revised/2nd Edition. CUP.

- **This week, read Groundwork II**

### The Categorical Imperative:

O'Neill, O. (1989). *Constructions of Reason*. CUP. Ch.7

Geiger, I. (2015). "How Are the Different Formulas of the Categorical Imperative Related?" *Kantian Review* 20: 395-419.

### The Rejection of the Categorical Imperative:

Foot, P. (1972). "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives." *Philosophical Review* 81: 305-316.

Anscombe, G.E.M. (1958). "Modern Moral Philosophy." *Philosophy* 33: 1-19.

### Essay question:

- "How are the differing formulations of the categorical imperative related?"
- "Which picture of morality is most desirable: Kant's kingdom of self-legislating 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:

Slote, M. (2013). "Virtue Ethics." In J. Skorupski (ed.), *Routledge Companion to Ethics*. Routledge.  
Annas, J. (2011). *Intelligent Virtue*. OUP. Ch.2. **\*\*Short chapter - very good on the nature of a virtue.**  
Foot, P. (1978/2002). "Virtues and Vices." Chapter 1 of her *Virtues and Vices*. OUP.

### For:

McDowell, J. (1979). "Virtue and Reason." *The Monist* 62: 331-350. **\*\*Challenging, but rewarding**  
Hursthouse, R. (2006). "Are Virtues the Proper Starting Point for Morality?" In Dreier, J. (ed.) (2006). *Contemporary Debates in Moral Theory*. Blackwell.  
Hursthouse, R. (1996). "Normative Virtue Ethics." Reprinted in Shafer-Landau's *Ethical Theory and Anthology*. Wiley.  
• <http://kpfu.ru/docs/F780391867/Reading3.pdf>

### Against:

Louden, R. (1984). "Some Vices of Virtue Ethics." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 21: 227-236.  
**\*\*Recommended. A classic attack on virtue ethics. The Hursthouse papers give some replies.**  
Driver, J. (2006). "Virtue Theory." In Dreier, J. (ed.) (2006). *Contemporary Debates in Moral Theory*. Blackwell.

### Further issues:

Hursthouse, R. (1991). "Virtue Theory and Abortion." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 20: 223-246.  
**\*\*Many responses to key objections and a discussion of what virtue theory says about a practical moral issue.**  
Nussbaum, M. (1988). "Non-Relative Virtues." Reprinted in Shafer-Landau's *Ethical Theory and Anthology*. Wiley.

### 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:

Ridge, M. (2014). "Moral Non-Naturalism." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Skip sections 3-5.

Baldwin, T. (2013). "The Open Question Argument." In J. Skorupski (ed.), *Routledge Companion to Ethics*. Routledge.

### The OQA:

Moore, G. (1903). *Principia Ethica*. CUP. Sections 5-13 of Ch.1, "The Subject Matter of Ethics."  
Reprinted in Shafer-Landau's *Ethical Theory an Anthology*. Wiley.

- <http://fair-use.org/g-e-moore/principia-ethica/chapter-i>

### Objections:

Putnam, H. (1981). *Reason, Truth and History*. CUP. pp.205-208

Frankena, W. (1939). "The Naturalistic Fallacy." *Mind* 48: 464-477.

Smith, M. (1994). *The Moral Problem*. Wiley. pp.35-39.

Lenman, J. (2006). "Moral Naturalism." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Section 2 on OQA.

### Defences of the OQA:

Altman, A. (2004). "Breathing Life Into a Dead Argument: G.E. Moore and the Open Question." *Philosophical Studies* 117: 395-408.

### 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 semantic thesis; non-cognitivism as metaphysical thesis; the Frege-Geach or 'embedding' objection; Blackburn's (1984) reply (higher-order attitudes, fractured sensibility, etc.); difficulties for Blackburn (1984).

### General:

Miller, A. (2013). "Non-Cognitivism." In J. Skorupski (ed.), *Routledge Companion to Ethics*. Routledge.  
**\*\*Read up to "A priori objections..."**

### 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.**

- <http://people.stfx.ca/wsweet/Ayer-emoivism.pdf>

Stevenson, C. (1937). "The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms." *Mind* 46: 14-31.

### The Humean Argument for Non-Cognitivism:

Hume, D. *Treatise of Human Nature*. 2.3.3: "Of the Influencing Motives of the Will."

Schroeder, M. (2010). *Noncognitivism in Ethics*. Routledge. Ch.1 sec.5

Van Roojen, M. (2013). "Moral Cognitivism vs. Non-Cognitivism." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Section 3.3

Zangwill, N. (2009). "Non-Cognitivism and Motivation." Sandis (ed.) *New Essays on the Explanation of Action*. Palgrave.

Shafer-Landau, R. (2003). *Moral Realism: A Defence*. OUP. Chs.5-6 (skip 6.1) **\*\*Very thorough cognitivist criticism of the Humean argument.**

### The Frege-Geach Problem:

Geach, P. (1960). "Ascriptivism." *Philosophical Review* 69: 221-225. **\*\*Short, but tricky - real action begins @ p.223**

Blackburn, S. (1984). *Spreading the World*. CUP. pp.190-195. **\*\*Recommended**

- <http://static1.squarespace.com/static/5224f8d1e4b02f25c1dde748/t/53a88fb0e4b08d033961a9b7/1403555760827/Evaluations%2C+Projections%2C+and+Quasi-Realism+--+Blackburn.pdf>

Schueler, G. (1988). "Modus Ponens and Moral Realism." *Ethics* 98: 492-500.

Schroeder, M. (2008). "What is the Frege-Geach Problem?" *Philosophy Compass* 3: 703-720 **\*\*Very thorough, but difficult, overview.**

**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 abolitionism vs conservatism.

### Error theory:

Mackie, J. (1977). *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. Penguin. Ch.1 excerpts in Schafer-Landau (ed.), *Ethics: An Anthology*. **\*\*Required – read first before anything else**

### 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.**

Olson, J. (2011). “Getting Real about Moral Fictionalism.” *Oxford Studies in Metaethics* 6: 183-204.

Lutz, M. (2014). “The ‘Now What’ Problem for Error Theory.” *Philosophical Studies* 171: 351-371.

### Non-Naturalistic replies:

Enoch, D. (2007). “An Outline of an Argument for Robust Metanormative Realism.” In Shafer-Landau (ed.) *Oxford Studies in Metaethics, Volume 2*. OUP.

Huemer, M. (2005). *Ethical Intuitionism*. Palgrave. Ch.5 sects 4-5.

### Overviews, with Further Issues/Challenges Discussed:

Miller, A. (2003). *An Introduction to Contemporary Metaethics*. Polity. Ch.6 (skip 6.6)

Hussain, N. (2013). In J. Skorupski (ed.), *Routledge Companion to Ethics*. Routledge. Read up to “Hermeneutic Fictionalism.”

### Essay questions:

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