



PHIL 225

Ethical Theory: moral selves and others

SEMESTER 1

2008

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY
DIVISION OF SOCIETY, CULTURE, MEDIA AND PHILOSOPHY
UNIT OUTLINE
PHIL 225 Ethical Theory: moral selves and others

Semester One, 2008

Unit convenor: Dr. Cynthia Townley

Prerequisites: 12 credit points *or* admission into GD-PHIL

Students should read this unit outline carefully at the start of semester. It contains important information about this unit, and we expect you to know this information. If anything in it is unclear, please consult one of the teaching staff in the unit: Dr Cynthia Townley and A/Prof. Catriona Mackenzie

ABOUT THIS UNIT

The ethical theories of Aristotle, John Stuart Mill and Immanuel Kant have had a major impact on contemporary ethical thought both within and outside philosophy. While providing an introduction to these theories, the unit also aims to show how they have influenced contemporary ways of thinking about moral agency and our moral relations with others. We focus on Aristotle's conceptions of voluntary and involuntary actions, excuses, justifications and culpability, which ground contemporary understandings of moral and legal responsibility. We also discuss Aristotle's views on friendship, which resonate with contemporary views about the good of friendship and underpin much current philosophical discussion of friendship. John Stuart Mill's text *On Liberty* provides the classic defense of individual liberty. We discuss Mill's views on the scope and limits of liberty, his defense of the importance of freedom of speech, and consider the application of his arguments to the issues of pornography and "hate speech". Kant's moral philosophy is premised on his famous claim that the only thing that is intrinsically good is a good will. We discuss Kant's conception of the good will in the light of recent philosophical debates about whether Kant's moral philosophy requires us to be 'moral saints'. We also discuss the Formula of Humanity version of Kant's categorical imperative, which underpins recent discussions of the moral and political importance of respect for others and self-respect.

TEACHING STAFF

- Convenor: Dr. Cynthia Townley. Office: W6A 7xx, ph. 9850 8812, email: ctownley@scmp.mq.edu.au; Office hours: by appointment.
(Cynthia teaches the sections on Aristotle and John Stuart Mill, weeks 1-9)
- Other staff: A/Prof. Catriona Mackenzie. Office W6A 726, ph. 9850 8865, email: cmackenzie@scmp.mq.edu.au; Office hours: by appointment.
(Catriona teaches the section on Kant, weeks 10-13)

CLASSES

- **Lectures:**

Wednesday	12-1	E5A 131
Thursday	12-1	W5C 232
- **Tutorials:**

Wednesday	1-2	E5A 109
Thursday	1-2	W5A 105

Students attend 2 lectures and 1 tutorial each week. Lectures start in the first week of semester, tutorials start in the second week.

REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED TEXTS AND/OR MATERIALS

All required readings are in the Phil 225: Ethical Theory course reader available from the bookstore. This contains the essential weekly readings for lectures and tutorials. All students are expected to purchase the reader. A list of additional readings is also provided for each topic. Most journal articles are available electronically; books and book chapters will be available through special reserve.

UNIT WEB PAGE

The unit web page can be found via <https://learn.mq.edu.au/>

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The learning outcomes of this unit are:

- A general understanding of aspects of the ethical thought of Aristotle, Mill and Kant, and of some contemporary ethical debates influenced by their ethical theories.
- An ability to understand and critically evaluate philosophical theories and arguments.
- The ability to develop one's own view or perspective, through consideration and analysis of the views and arguments presented in the unit, and the ability to present one's views with clarity and rigour.
- Clarity of thought; clarity of verbal expression; clarity of written expression and exposition.

In addition to the discipline-based learning objectives, all academic programs at Macquarie seek to develop students' generic skills in a range of areas. One of the aims of this unit is that students develop their skills in the following:

- *Comprehension skills:* in doing the reading for tutorials and assignments you will learn to *understand* the ideas and arguments presented in texts and discussions.
- *Critical thinking skills:* you will learn how to *analyse* arguments; and you will learn how to *evaluate* arguments.
- *Problem-solving skills:* you will learn how to *apply* theories and knowledge to the real world.

- *Communication skills*: you will learn how to *express* and *present* your ideas clearly and logically, both orally (in tutorial discussions and presentations) and in writing (in your assignments).
- *Research skills*: you will learn how to investigate a problem and research the relevant literature.
- *Creative-thinking skills*: you will learn how to develop new ideas and theories; and how to construct arguments for yourself.

TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY

PHIL 225 is taught through lectures and tutorials. Students are expected to read the essential readings for each week prior to classes and to attend tutorials prepared to discuss the topics covered in the readings and lectures. There will be some opportunities in lectures for questions and discussion. Guided questions, to assist your understanding of the material, will be provided for the readings and may form the basis for tutorial discussions. A list of weekly topics and readings is provided at the end of this unit outline.

Students are encouraged to consult the unit teachers for any assistance with reading, discussing and writing philosophy.

ASSESSMENT DETAILS

There are 5 assessment components:

(i) Two Short papers (500 words each)	30%	(15% each)
(ii) Two Essays (2000 words each)	60%	(30% each)
(iii) Tutorial participation	10%	

Your overall grade for this unit will be worked out by adding up all your marks (2 short papers, 2 essays, and tutorial participation mark), scaling according to the University guidelines for grading (see grading policy below), and translating these into a grade (High Distinction, Distinction, Credit, Pass etc.).

Short Paper Due Dates:

Short Paper # 1	due	Thursday March 20 th (week 4)
Short Paper # 2	due	Thursday April 3 rd (week 6)

Essay Due Dates:

Essay #1 (Mill)	due	Thursday May 1 st , 5pm (week 10)
Essay #2 (Kant)	due	Thursday June 12 th (week 14)

Please note that extensions must be requested **before** the due date, and you **MUST** get permission for an extension in writing from Dr Townley or Dr Mackenzie (email is OK). Essays that are submitted after the due date (or after the extension date) will lose 1 mark for each day late, including weekends. Please also note that work due

concurrently in other subjects is **not** an exceptional circumstance (it happens all the time) and is **not** a legitimate reason for an extension!

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ASSESSMENT AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

(i) **Short papers:** The assessment for the first section (on Aristotle) is two short papers (500 words each). These are designed to test your comprehension of the essential readings and to develop your ability to provide clear and precise exegetical analyses. They will also provide you with writing practice and feedback in preparation for the longer essays. Topics will be handed out 1 week prior to the due date and short papers will be returned 1 week after submission.

(ii) **Essays:** The two essays are designed to develop your ability to engage with a topic in depth. They develop your ability to express, analyse and organise key ideas clearly and systematically, and to provide a sustained argument. Topics will be handed out in class at least 3 weeks before the due date and will be returned with written comments in tutorials approximately 3 weeks after submission. Please submit your essay through the SCMP office on the first floor of W6A.

(iii) **Tutorial participation:** Effective participation means that you are prepared and able to contribute to the learning environment of the tutorial. This does not mean you must know all the answers before class – good participation includes asking questions that help you and others to understand better, identifying passages from assigned reading, or questions from lectures that can be explored in class, and so on. It means listening to your colleagues, and asking them questions, as well as contributing your own view. You may be asked for a written self-assessment of your participation in tutorials at the end of the course. Students must attend at least 75% of tutorials/seminars to be eligible for the participation mark and to pass the unit. It is your responsibility to ensure that your work and/or study commitments do not clash with your tutorial commitments for this unit of study.

PLAGIARISM

The University defines plagiarism in its rules: "Plagiarism involves using the work of another person and presenting it as one's own." Plagiarism is a serious breach of the University's rules and carries significant penalties. You must read the University's practices and procedures on plagiarism. These can be found in the *Handbook of Undergraduate Studies* or on the web at: <http://www.student.mq.edu.au/plagiarism/>

The policies and procedures explain what plagiarism is, how to avoid it, the procedures that will be taken in cases of suspected plagiarism, and the penalties if you are found guilty. Penalties may include a deduction of marks, failure in the unit, and/or referral to the University Discipline Committee.

Please ask Catriona or Cynthia if you have ANY questions about plagiarism and citation. We would prefer to help you get it right than to penalise you for getting it wrong.

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON GRADING

Academic Senate has a set of guidelines on the distribution of grades across the range from fail to high distinction. Your final result will include one of these grades plus a standardised numerical grade (SNG).

On occasion your raw mark for a unit (i.e., the total of your marks for each assessment item) may not be the same as the SNG that you receive. Under the Senate guidelines, results may be scaled to ensure that there is a degree of comparability across the university, so that units with the same past performances of their students should achieve similar results.

It is important that you realise that the policy does not require that a minimum number of students are to be failed in any unit. In fact it does something like the opposite, in requiring examiners to explain their actions if more than 20% of students fail in a unit.

The process of scaling does not change the order of marks among students. A student who receives a higher raw mark than another will also receive a higher final scaled mark.

For an explanation of the policy see

<http://www.mq.edu.au/senate/MQUonly/Issues/Guidelines2003.doc> or

<http://www.mq.edu.au/senate/MQUonly/Issues/detailedguidelines.doc>

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Macquarie University provides a range of Academic Student Support Services.

Details of these services can be accessed at <http://www.student.mq.edu.au>

UNIT SCHEDULE AND ESSENTIAL READINGS

The following is an outline of the topics and the readings that will be covered week by week. The listed essential readings are all in the Phil 225 course readers. These are the minimum required reading for the unit. The further readings will assist you to develop an expanded understanding of the issues discussed in lectures, and may be used for essay preparation. More detailed reading lists will also be provided with the essay topics.

SECTION 1: ARISTOTLE (Lecturer: Cynthia Townley)

Week 1 (27-8 Feb): Unit Introduction; Aristotle background

Week 2 (5-6 March): Aristotle on voluntary and involuntary actions

Essential Reading:

- i) Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book III

Further Reading:

- ii) T. Irwin, 'Reason and Responsibility in Aristotle' in Amelie Rorty (ed), *Essays On Aristotle's Ethics*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980, pp. 117-157

Week 3 (12-13 March): Consent and Responsibility

Essential Reading:

- i) Joel Feinberg, 'Failures of Consent', extracts from Chs. 23 & 26 of *Harm to Self*, (New York & Oxford: OUP)

Further readings:

- ii) Austin, J., "A Plea for Excuses". Published in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1956-7. Transcribed into hypertext by Andrew Chrucky, August 23, 2004. Available at:
<http://www.ditext.com/austin/plea.html>

- iii) Smith, H. "Culpable Ignorance," *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. XCII (October, 1983), pp. 543-571.

Week 4 (19-20 March): Aristotle on friendship

Essential Reading:

- i) Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Books VIII, IX

Further Reading:

- ii) John Cooper, 'Aristotle on Friendship', in Amelie Rorty (ed), *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, pp. 301-340

Week 5 (26-27 March): Friendship

Essential Reading:

- i) Dean Cocking and Jeanette Kennett, 'Friendship and the Self', *Ethics* 108, 1998: 502-27

Further reading:

- ii) Badhwar, N.K., (ed.), 1993, *Friendship: A Philosophical Reader*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

- iii) Friedman, M.A., 1993, *What Are Friends For? Feminist Perspectives on Personal Relationships and Moral Theory*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP

SECTION 2: J.S. MILL (Lecturer: Cynthia Townley)

Week 6 (2-3 April): Mill on Liberty

Essential Reading:

- i) J. S. Mill: "Introductory" p, 126-140. (Note the famous passage on p. 135) Chapter III "Of Individuality" pp. 184-204.

Week 7 (9-10 April): Mill on Freedom of Thought and Expression

Essential Reading:

- i) J. S. Mill Chapter II "Of the Liberty of Thought and Discussion pp. 141-183 (The last few pages are a good although brief summary.)

Further Reading for weeks 6 & 7:

- ii) Riley, J. *Routledge Philosophy guidebook to Mill on Liberty* London and New York: Routledge, 1988

iii) David Brink, 'Mill's Moral and Political Philosophy', esp. Section 3, (2007) *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*,
url: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mill-moral-political/>

Semester Break

Week 8 (30 April, 1 May): Contemporary Liberal Autonomy

Essential Reading:

i) Alan E. Fuchs, 'Autonomy, Slavery, and Mill's Critique of Paternalism', *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 4, 2001: 231-251

Further Reading:

ii) John Christman, 'Autonomy in Moral and Political Philosophy', (2003), *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, url:
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/autonomy-moral/>

Week 9 (7-8 May): Pornography and Freedom of Expression

Essential Readings:

i) David Dyzenhaus, 'John Stuart Mill and the Harm of Pornography', *Ethics*, 102 (3), 1992: 534-551

ii) Rae Langton, 'Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 22(4), 1993: 293-330

Further Reading:

iii) Mackinnon, C. "Not a Moral Issue" and "Francis Biddle's Sister: Pornography, Civil Rights and Speech", in *Feminism Unmodified*, Harvard University Press 1987: 146-162, 163-197.

iv) Jacobson, D. "Mill on Liberty, Speech, and the Free Society", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 29(3), 2000, pp. 276-309

SECTION 3: KANT (Lecturer: Catriona Mackenzie)

Week 10 (14-15 May): Kant on Duty and the Good Will

Essential Reading:

i) Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. Mary Gregor (CUP, 1997), Section I ('Transition from Common Rational to Philosophic moral cognition'), [4:393-405]

Further Reading:

ii) Barbara Herman, 'On the Value of Acting from the Motive of Duty', in *The Practice of Moral Judgment*, (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1993)

Week 11 (21-22 May): The Problem of Moral Motivation

Essential Reading:

i) Susan Wolf, 'Moral Saints', *The Journal of Philosophy* 79(8), 1982: 419-439

ii) Bernard Williams, 'Persons, Character and Morality', in *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: CUP, 1982), pp. 1-19

iii) Michael Stocker, 'The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories', *Journal of Philosophy*, 73, 1976: 453-466

Further Reading:

iv) Marcia Baron, 'Is Acting from Duty Morally Repugnant?', Ch. 4 of *Kantian Ethics Almost Without Apology*, (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995)

v) Thomas Hill, 'Is a Good Will Overrated?', Ch.2 of *Human Welfare and Moral Worth*, (New York: OUP, 2002)

Week 12 (28-29 May): Kant on respect and dignity

Essential Reading:

i) Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Section II, 4:421-440

ii) Immanuel Kant, *The Doctrine of Virtue*: Introduction, Sections XI & XII [398- 403], Part 1, Ch. II ('Man's Duty to Himself Merely as a Moral Being') [429- 437]; Part II, Ch. 1. Section II ('On Duties of Virtue Towards Other Men Arising from the Respect Due to Them'), [462-468]; Ch. II 'On Ethical Duties of Men Toward One Another with Regard to their Condition' [469- 473]

Further Reading:

iii) Robin Dillon, 'Kant on Arrogance and Self-Respect', in Cheshire Calhoun (ed). *Setting the Moral Compass: Essays by Women Philosophers*, (New York: OUP, 2004), pp. 191-216

iv) Thomas Hill, 'Servility and Self-Respect' & 'Self-Respect Reconsidered', Chs. 1 & 2 of *Autonomy and Self-Respect*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991)

v) Christine Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*, (New York: CUP, 1996), Chs. 4 & 5

Week 13 (4-5 June): Respect and Self-Respect

Essential Reading:

i) Stephen Darwall, 'Two Kinds of Respect', *Ethics* 88, 1977: 36-49

ii) Robin Dillon, 'Self-Respect: Moral, Emotional, Political', *Ethics* 107, 1997: 226-249

Further Reading:

iii) Robin Dillon, 'Self-Forgiveness and Self-Respect', *Ethics* 112, 2001: 53-83

*We hope you enjoy this unit,
Cynthia Townley and Catriona Mackenzie*