INTRODUCTORY HANDOUT PHILOSOPHY 13 SPRING, 2011 INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY---ETHICS revised 4/12

Professor: Richard Arneson. TAs: Michael Mullins and Matthew Denaci..

For further information about the course, which will change week by week, consult the Philosophy 13 course WebCT page. Required and recommended readings (other than the course texts available in the Bookstore), occasional class notes, this course syllabus, and eventually advance information handouts on the final exam will be made available at this WebCT page.

Lectures MWF 12:00 noon to 12:50 in Cognitive Science Bldg. 002

The final exam for this course will take place on June 8 from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. If you enroll in this class, you must be free to take a regular final exam for this course at this time.

People disagree about moral issues. Are some opinions about what is morally right correct and others incorrect, or do notions of correctness and incorrectness fail to apply to moral claims? This course for the most part examines two types of proposal that hold that reason can determine what actions individuals ought morally to choose and what social policies and laws societies ought morally to uphold.

One family of proposals is consequentialist: the point of morality is to promote good outcomes. In the nineteenth century, J. S. Mill argued for a utilitarian version of consequentialism. According to Mill, individual actions and social policies are morally better or worse, depending on the extent to which they promote or reduce the happiness of all humans (and other animals). We study Mill's utilitarianism in part by considering its implications for such issues as the morality of friendship and partiality to friends and the limits of our moral obligations to help distant strangers. We also look at *On Liberty*, a famous book by Mill that affirms a strong right to individual liberty grounded on the value of individuality and self-development. In that book Mill presents utilitarian arguments for the position that in modern societies adult persons should be left free to do whatever they choose so long as they do not harm others in certain ways. We try to gauge the extent of Mill's libertarian commitment and to determine whether his libertarianism (a) coheres with his utilitarianism and (b) makes sense and is plausible on its own terms. (Maybe Mill's liberty principle can be justified even if the utilitarianism he offers to back it up cannot be justified.)

Another family of proposals holds, in a slogan, that the right is prior to the good: We should respect persons by constraining our conduct toward them in certain ways, and we are permitted to pursue our conception of what is good only within the limits set by these moral constraints. According to Immanuel Kant, these constraints on permissible conduct are set by pure practical reason and apply to all of us, regardless of our culture, upbringing, or personal desires. Kant seems to reject consequentialism and holds that there are some things we may not do whatever the consequences. We look at writings by recent and contemporary authors including Robert Nozick, Judith Thomson, Thomas Nagel, Amartya Sen, Peter Singer, Gertrude Elizabeth Anscombe, Joel Feinberg, J. David Velleman, and Christine Korsgaard to clarify what is at stake in the conflict between consequentialist and nonconsequentialist ethics. Besides not acknowledging constraints, consequentialism opposes common moral views in denying that people have wide options to live their lives as they choose so long as they do not harm others by violating their rights. Consequentialism also opposes common opinion in denying partiality: Most of us think it is sometimes morally permissible, and sometimes morally required, to favor those who are personally related to us by ties of friendship or kinship, over mere strangers. But morality is supposed to involve impartiality in some sense; so how do we draw a principled line between acceptable and unacceptable partiality? In course readings, Jean Hampton and Thomas Hurka and Peter Singer work at this question.

The issues discussed to this point concern the substance of morality. What is right and wrong? What is good and bad? At the end of the course we examine proposals that concerns the nature of moral and evaluative discourse. What sort of claims are ethical claims? Some think moral claims are genuine assertions, capable of being true or false. Others think that moral claims and

evaluative claims are not really assertions at all, rather expressions of attitudes or emotions. If one holds that ethical claims can be true, the question arises, what makes them true (or false), and how might we discover the truth or falsity of any particular claim. J. L. Mackie, Ronald Dworkin, John Rawls, and Michael Huemer explore these issues.

The aims of the course are (1) to improve our skills at reading and understanding difficult writings and thinking clearly about complex issues and (2) to become more aware of the structure of our own moral views and of moral positions opposed to our own.

COURSE TEXTS: J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*; J. S. Mill, *On Liberty*; and Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Other course readings are available at the course web page. Note that the two Mill texts are also available on-line at www.utilitarian.net/jsmill/.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Surprise quizzes to be posed occasionally in discussion section meetings, a midterm exam in class (week 5), a short writing assignment, five to seven pages in length, topics to be assigned in lecture, and a regular comprehensive final examination. On your exams and the writing assignment you will be graded according to the clarity of your prose, the cogency of your arguments, and the soundness of the understanding of course materials that you exhibit. The final examination will comprehend all course materials including required (but <u>not</u> merely recommended) readings, lectures, and handouts distributed in class.

GRADING: If you are taking the course on a PASS/NOT PASS basis, you must get (1) a C- or better on the final examination as well as (2) an overall C- average on all course work in order to achieve a PASS grade, with one exception: If you have an A- or better average on the midterm exam, section quizzes, and writing assignment, and are enrolled on a PASS/NOT PASS basis, you need not take the final exam in order to earn a PASS grade.

The quizzes in discussion section meetings count for ten per cent of your final course grade, the midterm exam counts for 20 per cent, the writing assignment for 30 per cent, and the final examination for 40 per cent.

Only medical excuses certified by a note from your physician or a comparable certified excuse will be accepted for late submission of the writing assignment or absence from the midterm exam, or to justify the assignment of an Incomplete course grade.

DISCUSSION SECTIONS. A discussion meeting for each section will occur once a week and students are expected to attend. Quizzes posed in discussion section will be based on the reading to be done for that specific section meeting, as your TA will explain. Your attendance and performance in section will also affect your course grade in borderline cases (e.g., if the average of your grades is on the border between A- and B+). Apart from grades, the discussion sections are essential to the learning process because they provide the opportunity for a structured dialogue in which your opinions on ethical issues can be expressed, debated, and clarified. Helped by your TA, you learn from your classmates and they from you. Also, the TA will sometimes offer a different perspective on the issues from what the lectures provide.

Disability. If you have a certified disability that requires accommodation, you should register with the campus office for students with disabilities. Please let me know your disability status at the start of the course, so I can work with the office to comply with the accommodation it stipulates as appropriate.

SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND READINGS

Week 1. March 38-April 3.

MON: Introduction to utilitarianism. Reading: Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chapter 1 and paragraphs 1-10 of chapter 2.

WED: Happiness and human good. Reading: Mill, *Utilitarianism* paragraphs 1-10 of chapter 2 again; Robert Adams, "Well-Being and Excellence." Further recommended reading: Richard Kraut, "Desire and Human Good", also Derek Parfit, "What makes Someone's Life Go Best?". FRI: The place of rules in utilitarianism. Reading: Mill, *Utilitarianism*, rest of chapter 2. Further recommended reading: J. J. C. Smart, "Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism."

Week 2. April 4-10.

MON: Morality and motivation; Mill's proof. Reading: Mill, Utilitarianism, chapters 3-4.

WED: Utilitarianism, rights, and justice. Reading: Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chapter 5; also John Rawls, "Classical Utilitarianism."

FRI: Act utilitarianism and rule utilitarianism. Reading: John Rawls, "Two Concepts of Rules"; also R.M. Hare, "The Archangel and the Prole."

Week 3. April 11-17.

MON: Against moral options; morality demands self-sacrifice. Reading: Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality."

WED: Doubts about self-sacrifice; the duty to favor oneself. Reading: Jean Hampton, "Selflessness and the Loss of Self."

FRI: Special ties; favoring friends and fellow citizens. Reading: Thomas Hurka, "The Justification of National Partiality" (sections 2 & 3 only).

Week 4. April 18-24.

MON: Moral rights, agent-relative duties, and consequentialism. Reading: Robert Nozick, "Moral Constraints and Moral Goals"; also Amartya Sen, "Rights and Agency" (sections 1-4 only).

WED: More on the nature of rights. Reading: Joel Feinberg, "The Nature and Value of Rights." Recommended reading: Feinberg, "The Rights of Animals and Unborn Generations."

FRI: The doctrine of double effect and the doctrine of doing and allowing. Reading: G. E. M. Anscombe, "War and Murder."

Week 5. April 25-May 1.

MON: Nonconsequentialism and rights. Reading: Judith Thomson, "Self-Defense."

WED: MIDTERM EXAM IN CLASS.

FRI: morality, deontology, and the personal point of view. Reading: Thomas Nagel, "Autonomy and Deontology."

Week 6. May 2-8.

MON: Mill's Liberty Principle. Reading: J. S. Mill, *On Liberty*, chap. 1. (Chap. 2 is recommended but not required.)

WED: Paternalism. Reading: Joel Feinberg, "Legal Paternalism."

FRI: Individuality and liberty. Reading: Mill, On Liberty, chap. 3.

Week 7. May 9-15.

MON: The Liberty Principle carefully stated or qualified to death? Reading: Mill, On Liberty, chapters 4 & 5.

WED: Introduction to Kant's ethics; moral worth. Reading: Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, section 1, plus Editor's "Introduction."

FRI From the good will to the categorical imperative. Reading: Groundwork, section 1 again.

Week 8. May 16-22.

MON: Categorical and hypothetical imperatives; the universal law formula; what if everyone did the same? Reading: Kant, *Groundwork*, section 2, pp. 19-36. **WRITING ASIGNMENT DUE IN CLASS.**

WED: Humanity as an end in itself, autonomy, and the kingdom of ends. Reading: Kant, *Groundwork*, section 2, pp. 36-51. again.

FRI: Absolutism. Reading: Kant, "On a Supposed Right to Lie Because of Philanthropic Concerns"; also Christine Korsgaard, "The Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing with Evil."

Week 9. May 23-29

MON: Kantian ethics applied—suicide and physician-assisted suicide.. J. David Velleman, "A Right of Self-Termination?".

WED: An attempt to reconcile common-sense deontology and consequentialism. Reading: Brad Hooker, *ideal Code, Real World*, chapters 1 & 2.

FRI: Is there any true or false, right or wrong in ethics? Reading: J. L. Mackie, "The Subjectivity of Values.

Week 10. May 30-June 5.

MON: No class. Memorial Day Holiday.

WED: Is there any true or false, right or wrong, in ethics? Reading: Ronald Dworkin, "You'd Better Believe It."

FRI: How, if at all, might we discover ethical truth, if there is any such thing? Reading: John Rawls, "Some Remarks on Moral Theory"; also Michael Huemer, "Revisionary Intuitionism."

Arneson's office hours: Mondays 1-2 & Tuesdays 3:30-4:30 in HSS 8057. Arneson's email: rarneson@ucsd.edu