

Introduction to Ethics
Fall 2021
Chapman University

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to problems of *moral philosophy*, or *ethics*. We begin by examining certain problems that arise when making moral judgments, such as whether ideas of moral rightness or wrongness are specific to a certain culture, and what is the appropriate object of moral evaluation—whether it be a character trait or a deficiency in motivation to act on duty, say. Next, we turn to the moral, social, and political philosophy of John Stuart Mill, and carefully consider his analysis of the basis of moral rightness in *Utilitarianism* and the justification of state infringement on individual freedom in *On Liberty*. Finally, we examine seminal philosophical writings on a range of controversial contemporary moral issues, including abortion, animal rights, and the legalization of drug use. We will be interested in considering what general principles are suggested by our moral judgments about these cases, as well as the implications they have for various moral theories.

Part 1: Introduction

Week 1: Against relativism

- Monday, 8/30: No reading, course overview
- Wednesday, 9/1: James Rachels, “The challenge of cultural relativism”
- Friday, 9/3: Loretta Kopelman, “Female circumcision/genital mutilation and ethical relativism”

Week 2: Overview of virtue and Kantian ethics

- Monday, 9/6: **Labor Day No Class**
- Wednesday, 9/8: Julia Annas, “Virtue ethics” (up to page 528)
- Friday, 9/10: Allen Wood, “How a Kantian decides what to do”

Week 3: Hume and sentimentalism

- Monday, 9/13: Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Section 1
- Wednesday, 9/15: Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Section 4
- Friday, 9/17: Discussion; Peter Millican, “Key ethical thinkers—David Hume”

Part 2: John Stuart Mill

Week 4: Mill’s *Utilitarianism*

- Monday, 9/20: Chapter 2, pages 120-126; Chapter 3, pages 140-147
- Wednesday, 9/22: Chapter 4, pages 148-154
- Friday, 9/24: Discussion

Week 5: Mill’s *On Liberty*

- Monday, 9/27: Review
- Wednesday, 9/29: **Exam #1**
- Friday, 10/1: Chapter 1, pages 5-17

Week 6: Mill’s *On Liberty*

- Monday, 10/4: Chapter 2, pages 18-54

- Wednesday, 10/6: Chapter 2, continued
 - Friday, 10/8: Discussion
- Week 7: Mill's *On Liberty*
- Monday, 10/11: Chapter 3, pages 55-72
 - Wednesday, 10/13: Chapter 4, pages 73-90
 - Friday, 10/15: Discussion
- Week 8: Mill's *On Liberty*
- Monday, 10/18: Chapter 5, pages 91-112
 - Wednesday, 10/20: Chapter 5, continued
 - Friday, 10/22: Discussion
- Week 9:
- Monday, 10/25: Review
 - Wednesday, 10/27: **Exam #2**
 - Friday, 10/29: Judith Jarvis Thomson, "In defense of abortion"

Part 3: Applied Ethics

- Week 10: Abortion
- Monday, 11/1: Thomson, continued
 - Wednesday, 11/3: Rosalind Hursthouse, "Virtue theory and abortion"
 - Friday, 11/5: Discussion
- Week 11: Against eating meat
- Monday, 11/8: Peter Singer, "All animals are equals"
 - Wednesday, 11/10: Cora Diamond, "Eating meat and eating people"
 - Friday, 11/12: Discussion
- Week 12: In favor of eating meat
- Monday, 11/15: Dan Shahar, "Speciesism and human partiality"
 - Wednesday, 11/17: Nick Zangwill, "Our moral duty to eat meat"
 - Friday, 11/19: Discussion, virtual visit by Prof. Shahar
- Week 13: **Thanksgiving Break No Class**
- Week 14: America's drug war
- Monday, 11/29: Douglas Husak "In favor of drug decriminalization";
 - Wednesday, 12/1: Peter de Marneffe "Against the legalization of drugs"
 - Friday, 12/3: Discussion
 - Optional: Michael Huemer, "America's Unjust Drug War"
- Week 15:
- Monday, 12/6: TBA Reading on genetic enhancement
 - Wednesday, 12/8: Discussion
 - Friday, 12/10: Review
- Week 16: **Exam #3**