

USC Philosophy 472: Moral Philosophy
4.0 units

Spring 2020, Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:00 – 3:20 pm
Location: Von Kleinsmid Center 201

Instructor: Professor Ralph Wedgwood
wedgwood@usc.edu
Office Hours: Mondays 4 – 5:30 pm, Stonier Hall 222

Course description

This advanced undergraduate class is an in-depth study of some of the most important recent work in ethics. It is designed for Philosophy majors in their senior year; but others may petition the instructor to be allowed to take the class.

The recent work that we shall focus on is the following:

- Derek Parfit, *On What Matters*, Volume One (Oxford University Press, 2011), Parts Two and Three.
- Derek Parfit, *On What Matters*, Volume Two (Oxford University Press, 2011), T. M. Scanlon's Comments in Part Four, and Parfit's Reply to Scanlon in Part Five.
- Christine Korsgaard, *Fellow Creatures: Our Obligations to the Other Animals* (Oxford University Press, 2018).
- Samuel Scheffler, *Death and the Afterlife* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

All of these works are available in electronic versions from Oxford Scholarship Online.

Course Objectives

The goal of this course is for you to explore these topics in metaethics, and to do so in a way that will improve your skills at *reading, thinking, writing, and speaking* about philosophical issues of this kind.

After taking this course, you will have acquired knowledge of some of the main ideas and arguments that various thinkers have developed about these fundamental issues. More importantly, (i) you will have improved your ability for independently reading and comprehending complicated texts – in a way that will enable you to identify and state the main claims of these texts, and to reconstruct the texts' key arguments in favour of these claims; and (ii) you will also have developed your skills at critically evaluating these claims and arguments, and giving clear and persuasive arguments of your own – both in your writing and in your contribution to oral discussions – about disputed issues of this kind. (These two last goals (i) and (ii) are some of the most central objectives of any undergraduate studies in philosophy.)

Paper Assignments and Grading

There will be **three** paper assignments, due on February 17, March 30, and May 4. Suggested paper topics will be distributed at least two weeks before the due date. You may also write your paper on a different topic if you wish – but only after consultation with me.

Your papers should be turned in electronically *via* the course Blackboard site.

Each of these papers will count for **one-third** of your overall grade for this course. There will be no final exam.

Academic integrity

Any form of academic dishonesty that comes to my attention will result in your receiving an F for the course.

It is your responsibility to understand the standards for basic academic integrity. If you are in any doubt about the standards governing academic honesty, please consult:

http://senate.usc.edu/LinkFiles/Academic_Integrity.pdf.

If you are concerned that you are having trouble completing one of the assignments, the right strategy is to avail yourself of one of the many resources on campus, including me and the Writing Center. Misrepresenting someone else's work as your own cheats you out of a learning opportunity, as well as cheating others in the course.

Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability should register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP), and provide us with a statement listing the requested accommodations. (DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number is (213) 740-0776.)

Office Hours

I will be holding office hours on Mondays, from 4 pm until 5.30 pm. Office hours are an opportunity for you to ask questions about the class or the readings. They are also a chance to chat about how the course is going, to tell me about your ideas about any of the moral issues that we are discussing, to test out a plan for one of your papers on me, or to ask for general advice. Don't hesitate to take advantage of this opportunity.

Schedule of classes and assignments

1. Monday 13 January: Introduction

Part I: Derek Parfit, *On What Matters*, Volume One (Parts Two and Three)

2. Wednesday 15 January: Chapter 1
3. Monday 20 January – No class (Martin Luther King’s birthday)
4. Wednesday 22 January: Chapter 8
5. Monday 27 January: Chapter 9
6. Wednesday 29 January: Chapter 10
7. Monday 3 January: Chapter 12
8. Wednesday 5 February: Chapter 13
9. Monday 10 February: Chapter 14
10. Wednesday 12 February: Chapter 15
11. Monday 17 February – No class (Presidents’ Day)
12. Wednesday 19 February: : Chapter 16
13. Monday 24 February: Chapters 17

Part II: Derek Parfit, *On What Matters*, Volume Two (Parts Four and Five – selections)

14. Wednesday 26 February: T. M. Scanlon’s Commentary (pp. 116–139)
15. Monday 2 March: Parfit’s Reply to Scanlon – Chapter 21
16. Wednesday 4 March: Parfit’s Reply to Scanlon – Chapters 22

Part III: Christine Korsgaard, *Fellow Creatures: Our Obligations to the Other Animals*

17. Monday 9 March: Chapter 1
18. Wednesday 11 March: Chapter 2

15 – 22 March: Spring Break

19. Monday 23 March: Chapters 3–4
20. Wednesday 25 March – No class
21. Monday 30 March: Chapters 5–6
22. Wednesday 1 April: Chapter 7
23. Monday 6 April: Chapters 8–9
24. Wednesday 8 April: Chapters 10–11
25. Monday 13 April: Chapter 12

Part IV: Samuel Scheffler, *Death and the Afterlife*

26. Wednesday 15 April: Lecture 1 (pp. 15 – 49)
27. Monday 20 April: Lecture 2 (pp. 51–81)
28. Wednesday 22 April: Lecture 3 (pp. 83–110)
29. Monday 27 April: The Commentaries (pp. 113–173)
30. Wednesday 29 April: Scheffler’s Responses (pp. 177–207)

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: sarc.usc.edu

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. equity.usc.edu

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. dsp.usc.edu

Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

Diversity at USC

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. diversity.usc.edu

USC Emergency Information

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. emergency.usc.edu

USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime.

Provides overall safety to USC community. dps.usc.edu