PHIL 503: Introduction to Contemporary Philosophical Literature on Value
Spring 2020
Wednesdays 4:30–6:50pm
MHP 102

Instructors
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Course Overview
This seminar is an intensive survey of some of the classic contributions to ethics of the last 50 years. The issues raised in these texts lie at the heart of much of the work in current ethical theory – in both normative theory and metaethics—and most of these texts would be regarded as among those that everyone who researches or teaches in any branch of ethics needs to be familiar with. The goal of the seminar is to develop a thorough understanding of these central issues.

The assigned readings will be made available on the course Blackboard site.

Requirements
- Presentations: Each student should present twice
- Three short papers (approx. 2500 – 3000 words each): due Feb 17, Mar 23, May 4

The topics for the thee paper assignments will be circulated 2–3 weeks before the assignment is due.

A student’s grade for the course will be based on the class presentation (25%) and the three papers (25% each).

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.)
Schedule

1. Jan 15: Introduction

2. Jan 22: Utilitarianism—For
   - Smart, “An outline of a system of utilitarian ethics”, in *Utilitarianism: For and Against*.

3. Jan 29: Utilitarianism—Against
   - Williams, “A critique of utilitarianism”, in *Utilitarianism: For and Against*.

4. Feb 5: Consequentialists on Alienation
   - Jackson, “Decision-Theoretic Consequentialism and the Nearest and Dearest Objection”
   - Railton, “Consequentialism, Alienation, and the Demands of Morality”

5. Feb 12: Consequentialism, Virtues, and Constraints
   - Foot, “Utilitarianism and the Virtues”
   - Scheffler, “Agent-Centred Restrictions, Rationality, and the Virtues”

6. Feb 19: Scanlon
   - Scanlon, “Preference and Urgency”
   - Scanlon, “Contractualism and Utilitarianism”

7. Feb 26: Trolleys
   - Thomson, “Turning the Trolley”
   - Hare, “Should We Wish Well to All?”

8. Mar 8: Personal Identity
   - Parfit, “Personal Identity”
   - Johnston, “Human Concern without Superlative Selves”

9. Mar 11: Reasons and Normativity
   - Williams, “Internal and External Reasons”
   - Korsgaard’s “Skepticism about Practical Reason”.

10. Mar 25: Rationality of Preferences
    - Broome, “Can a Humean be moderate?”
    - Broome, “Expected Utility and Rationality” (*Weighing Goods*, Chap. 5)
11. Apr 1: Political Liberalism and Public Reason

12. Apr 8: Expressivism
   - Schroeder, *Noncognitivism in Ethics*, Chapters 6 and 7

13. Apr 15: Evolutionary Debunking
   - Street, “A Darwinian Dilemma for Realist Theories of Value”

   - Finlay, “A Good Word to Start With” (*Confusion of Tongues*, Chapter 2)
   - Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen, “The Strike of the Demon”

15. Apr 29: Free Will and Responsibility
   - Frankfurt, “Alternative possibilities and moral responsibility”
   - Strawson, “Freedom and Resentment”