

Philosophy of Well-Being

PHIL 10152

Semester 1

2019-20

1. Course Information

Course Organiser: Tom Baker

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2. Course Description

This course will examine well-being, a central issue in practical philosophy and practical thinking. First, we will examine the main theories of well-being. These include hedonism, desire-fulfilment theory, objective-list theory, perfectionism. We will also look at some more recent views, including hybrid theories. Second, we will examine some general theoretical issues connected to well-being. We will look at whether well-being is holistic by examining whether lifetime well-being is some simple function from momentary well-being (the ‘shape of a life’ debate) and when, and why, it is true to say that someone was harmed by something or someone. We’ll also spend two weeks thinking about disability and well-being.

Learning Objectives

Knowledge:

Students should gain a critical appreciation of debates concerning the main theories of well-being, and their strengths and weakness.

Skills:

Students will develop their ability to: reason, philosophically, to a well-thought-out position on various topics in well-being; develop their own views, systematically, drawing upon the sources on which the course focuses; express themselves clearly and precisely in writing and in seminar discussion; develop confidence in presenting ideas in forms other than essays.

Understanding:

Students should gain a critical understanding of the main philosophical debates and practical issues for which the theory of well-being has implications.

3. Structure of Teaching

Total Hours: 200

There will be 11 two-hour seminars and 4 programme level learning and teaching hours. This leaves 174 hours of directed and independent learning. If you want to do well on this course, you need to be disciplined with yourself and do the required work outside of class time.

It's *vital* that you only come to class (a) having done the reading and (b) prepared to contribute to discussion on it. The issues under consideration are of crucial importance and you all have interesting points to make. Think about what your view is and come to class ready to discuss it. Make sure to bring with you (a) the reading (b) your notes (c) some questions and thoughts on the reading. (If you can't afford to print the reading let me know and I'll give you hard copies).

4. Course Content

4.1 Seminar Schedule

Seminars are Tuesday 16:00-18:00 (wks. 1-11) in 3.10 Peter Ladefoged Room, Dugald Stewart Building.

4.3 Reading List

Listed below are the topics and readings for each seminar. For additional further readings please consult the bibliographies of the papers we read.

** = required

* = highly recommended

1. Intro & Hedonism

** Fletcher, G. (2016) *The Philosophy of Well-Being: An Introduction*, [chapter 1](#)

** Hewitt, S. (2010) '[What do our intuitions about the experience machine really tell us about hedonism?](#)', *Philosophical Studies* 151(3): 331-349.

Further Reading

Crisp, R. (2006), '[Hedonism Reconsidered](#)', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 73: 619–645.

Weijers, D. (2013) '[Intuitive Biases in Judgements about Thought Experiments: The Experience Machine Revisited](#)', *Philosophical Writings* 41(1):17-31.

Fletcher, G. (2016) '[Knowing What's Good for You](#)', *Forum for European Philosophy Blog* (26th September).

2. Desire Theories

** Fletcher, G. (2016) *The Philosophy of Well-Being: An Introduction*, [chapter 2](#)

** Murphy, M. (1999) '[The Simple Desire-Fulfillment Theory](#)', *Nous* 33(2): 247-272

Further Reading

Lauinger, W. (2011) '[Dead Sea Apples and Desire-Fulfillment Welfare Theories](#)', *Utilitas* 23: 324-43.

3. Objective List Theories

** Fletcher, G. (2013) '[A Fresh Start for the Objective-List Theory of Well-Being](#)', *Utilitas* 25: 206- 220.

* Fletcher, G. (2016) *The Philosophy of Well-Being: An Introduction*, [chapter 3](#).

Further Reading

Lin, E. (2016) '[Monism and Pluralism about well-being](#)' in Fletcher, G. (ed.) *Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Well-Being* (Routledge).

Rice, C. (2013) 'Defending the Objective List Theory of Well-Being', *Ratio* 26(2): 196-211.

Fletcher, G. (2016) '[Objective List Theories of Well-Being](#)' in Fletcher, G. (ed.) *Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Well-Being* (Routledge).

4. Perfectionism

** Dorsey, D. (2010) 'Three Arguments for Perfectionism', *Nous* 44: 59–79.

** Fletcher, G. (2016) *The Philosophy of Well-Being: An Introduction*, [chapter 4](#).

Further Reading

Bradford, G. (2016) '[Perfectionism](#)' in Fletcher, G. (ed.) *Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Well-being* (London: Routledge).

Kraut, Richard (2007) [What is Good and Why: The Ethics of Well-Being](#) (Harvard University Press.)

Sobel, D. (2011) '[The Limits of the Explanatory Power of Developmentalism](#)', *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 7(4): 517-527.

5. Hybrid Theories

** Sarch, A. F. (2012), '[Multi-Component Theories of Well-being and Their Structure](#)', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 93: 439–471.

* Fletcher, G. (2016) *The Philosophy of Well-Being: An Introduction*, [chapter 6](#).

Further Reading

Woodard, C. (2016) '[Hybrid Theories](#)' in G. Fletcher (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Well-Being* (Routledge).

6. Internalism

** Sarch, A. (2011) '[Internalism about a Person's Good: Don't Believe It](#)', *Philosophical Studies* 154(2): 161-184.

** Rosati, C. (1996) '[Internalism and the Good for a Person](#)', *Ethics* 106(2): 297–326.

N.B. Read Sarch first (it will help you to understand the Rosati).

Further Reading

Fletcher, G. (2016) *The Philosophy of Well-Being: An Introduction*, [appendix to chapter 3](#).

7. Shape of a Life

** Velleman, D. (1991) '[Well-Being and Time](#)', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 72(1):48-77.

** Fletcher, G. (2016) *The Philosophy of Well-Being: An Introduction*, [chapter 7](#).

Further Reading

Dorsey, Dale (2015) '[The Significance of a Life's Shape](#)' *Ethics*, 125 (2): 303-330.

Glasgow, J. (2013) '[The Shape of a Life and the Value of Loss and Gain](#)', *Philosophical Studies* 162/3: 665-82.

Rosati, C. S. (2013) '[The story of a life](#)', *Social Philosophy and Policy* 30(1-2): 21-50.

Further resources

See also the Stanley Kubrick Film *Barry Lyndon* (based on the Thackeray novel).

8. Harm

** Klocksiem, J. (2012) '[A Defense of the Counterfactual Comparative Account of Harm](#)', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 49(4): 285-300.

** Harman, E. (2009) '[Harming as Causing Harm](#)', in M. A. Roberts and D. T. Wasserman, eds., *Harming Future Persons: Ethics, Genetics and the Nonidentity Problem* (Dordrecht: Springer): 137-54.

Further Reading

Shiffrin, S. V. (2012) '[Harm and Its Moral Significance](#)', *Legal Theory* 18(3): 357-398.

Gardner, M. (2016) '[Well-Being and the Non-Identity Problem](#)', in Fletcher, G. (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Well-Being* (Routledge).

Rabenberg, M. (2015) '[Harm](#)', *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* 8 (3):1-32.

9. Disability I

** Barnes, E. (2014) '[Valuing Disability, Causing Disability](#)', *Ethics* 125(1): 88-113.

** Schroeder, S. A. (2016) '[Health, Disability, and Well-being](#)', in Fletcher, G. (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Well-Being* (Routledge).

Further Reading

Andrić, V. & Wünderlich, J. (2015) '[Is It Bad to Be Disabled? Adjudicating Between the Mere-Difference and the Bad-Difference Views of Disability](#)', *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy*, 9 (3),1–16.

10. Disability II

**Kahane, G. & Savulescu, J. (2016) '[Disability and Mere Difference](#)', *Ethics* 126: 774-788.

**Barnes, E. (2016) '[Reply to Guy Kahane and Julian Savulescu](#)', *Res Philosophica* 93(1): 295-309.

Further Reading

Schroeder, S. A. (2018) '[Well-being, Opportunity, and Selecting for Disability](#)', *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* 14(1): 1-27.

11. Review Class

Details will be given in week 9.

5. Assessment

1. Essay 3,000 words (80%).
2. Participation (20%).
 - a. Two in class quizzes (each worth 5%)
 - b. Project (either individual or small group), (10%).

5.1 Essay

More info to follow, via LEARN.

Due date: **Thursday 12th December 2019, by 12pm (mid-day)**

5.2 In Class Quizzes

The quizzes will consist of short response questions (3-4 sentences maximum) and multiple-choice questions. They will take place at the beginning of the class in **week 4** (assessing material from weeks 1-3) and in **week 11** (assessing material from weeks 7-10).

5.3 Project

You will be required to do a project based on the content of the course. You must discuss your project with me before getting started on it. The task is as follows: **Explain, analyse and evaluate some theory, idea, argument, or objection from the course in any format other than a written essay.**

You'll be assessed against the following criteria:

- a. How clearly and accurately you explain the relevant (e.g.) theory.
- b. How accurately you analyse and how well you evaluate it.

As to the **form** of your project, the following kinds of thing are possible:

1. Making a simple website (using e.g. Weebly)
2. Writing a Wikipedia entry
3. Making a PowerPoint (Prezi, etc.) presentation
4. Recording a video (~10 minutes)
5. Making a poster
6. In-class presentation (5-10 minutes, with handout)
7. If you have another idea for a format, that's great, just please run it by me first.

You must submit your project (either hard copy, if appropriate, or electronic copy by email) **to the teaching office.**

Deadline for submission: **Wednesday 6th November 2019, by 12pm (mid-day).**

5.4 Coursework Dissertation

For undergraduates taking this course by coursework dissertation the relevant details are:

- Deadline for notifying the teaching office which course you'll be completing the dissertation on: **Monday 21st October 2019, by 12pm (mid-day).**
- Deadline for submission: **Tuesday 17th December 2019, by 12pm (mid-day).**

6. FAQ

Note: I include here the answers to the most common queries. You are *absolutely* free to email me with your questions (or, preferably, ask me in class so that I can give the answer to others at the same time). However, please check this document and the course material on the LEARN page for the answer to your question first. This is a test – please email me a picture of a sloth. Email is a wonderful resource but (a) we are all overwhelmed by it, partly because we don't use other available resources and (b) it is a very inefficient method for me to communicate with you all as a group.

(1) I missed a class, can you send me a summary of what was covered?

No. Make sure you are familiar with the reading(s) for that week.

(2) How do I go about finding extra readings?

Read the prescribed texts and the further reading suggestions listed above. Then read the things cited within those. And so on.

(3) How many references do I need for my essay?

There's no fixed number. And it's better not to think in that way (that there's some number of references you must include). When deciding whether to reference something the only relevant question is whether discussing this person's view/objection/etc. contributes positively to your answering the question. If it doesn't, then leave it out.

(4) How should I reference?

I don't mind at all which convention you use. Just pick some convention and apply it consistently. For more information see, for example, [this site](#).

(5) I need an extension / I have extenuating circumstances.

You must talk to the teaching office and the student support officers (SSOs).