Theory of Virtue Honours: Autumn Semester 2017

Course organiser: Dr Andrew Mason
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Office Hour: Monday, 2.00-3.30 (6.10, DSB).

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Course Description

The course will introduce students to central ideas in the theory of virtue from the ancient, early modern and contemporary periods, illustrating the development of this area of moral philosophy, the various ways in which the concept of virtue has been interpreted, and the different views which have been held about its significance for ethics.

Teaching will consist of a weekly lecture (10.00-10.40 a.m. Tuesday: place TBA), and a tutorial, for which there will be two groups (12.10-1.00 p.m. and 1.10-2.00 p.m. Tuesday: places TBA). A list of readings for tutorials will be published at the start of term. The tutorial in week 1 will be introductory; after this tutorials will move a week behind lectures, i.e. the tutorial in week 2 will be based on material from the lecture in week 1, etc.
There will be an additional fortnightly meeting for M.Sc. students (time and place to be arranged).

Assessment

Assessment consists of a tutorial presentation (20%), and an final exam in the December exam period (80%). Each student will be asked to make a presentation in the course of the term, introducing a passage from the reading and raising questions for discussion. A written submission may be substituted for the presentation with the course organiser’s approval. (Note that this is a change from previous years.)
Fourth year honours students who have chosen to submit a coursework dissertation (5000 word essay) in this course should follow the usual procedure for coursework dissertations. They should consult the course organiser about their plans for the dissertation before the decision deadline (Monday 23rd October).
M. Sc. students will be assessed by an end-of-term essay of 2500 words, following the usual procedure for the M. Sc., and will have the opportunity to submit a midterm formative essay.

Readings: Major Works

Plato, *Protagoras, Meno, Republic* Books II-IV.
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books I-IV.
A. Long and D. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (selections)
Aquinas, *Treatise on the Virtues*.
I. Kant, *The Doctrine of Virtue.*
A. Macintyre, *After Virtue.*
R. Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*
N. Athanassoulis: *Virtue Ethics*

(Other suggestions for reading may be made during the semester.)

**Seminar Content**

1. **Virtue in Socrates.**

Background reading:

2. **Virtue in Plato**
Plato, *Republic* book II, 357a-367b: book IV, 427e-445d. (See also 484a-502d: 519c-512b; 577c-592b.)

Background reading:

3. **Virtue in Aristotle**
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, book I, chapters 1-5, 7, 13: book II, chapters 2, 4-6. (See also the rest of book II, and book VI, 1 and 5.)

Background reading:
G. Santas, ‘Does Aristotle have a Virtue Ethics?’, in Statman.

4. **Virtue in the Stoics**
Long and Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol I, sec 61. (See also sections 58, 60, 63.)

Background reading:

5. **Virtue in Aquinas**
Aquinas, *Treatise on the Virtues* (in *Summa Theologica*), Questions 55-66. (More precise recommendations will be made before the lecture.)
6. Virtue in Hume

Background Reading:

7. Virtue in Kant
I. Kant, *The Doctrine of Virtue* (in *The Metaphysic of Morals*) especially the introduction. (More precise recommendations will be made before the lecture.)

Background reading:

8. Modern virtue ethics (1): The revival of naturalism
P. Geach, *The Virtues*, chapter 1.

9. Modern virtue ethics (2): Virtue, tradition and culture
A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, chapter 14 (reprinted in Crisp and Slote: see also chapters 13 and 15).

Background reading: A. Mason (no relation!), ‘MacIntyre on Modernity and how it has Marginalised the Virtues’, in Crisp, ed. *How Should One Live?*

10. Modern virtue ethics (3): Varieties of virtue ethics

11. The place of virtue in a moral theory
followed by a question period for revision. (No set reading.)