Ethics

Dr Guy Fletcher

Class
Monday 11:10-1pm, LG. 11 David Hume Tower

Course Secretary
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General

On this course we will examine two major species of normative ethical theory: Consequentialism and Contractualism. In part I we examine Consequentialism (and Utilitarianism). Our two main lines of inquiry will be (a) which form of consequentialism is best? and (b) is even the best form of consequentialism good enough? We close part I by looking at Consequentialism and aggregation.

In part II we turn to Contractualism, specifically the form defended by T. M. Scanlon in his groundbreaking What We Owe to Each Other. We will seek to understand the view in its own terms, assess the extent to which it improves upon Consequentialism, and consider what objections it faces. We close part II by looking specifically at Contractualism and aggregation and Contractualist answers to the Non-Identity Problem before, at the very end, thinking about the ethics of human extinction. Note: The material in part II will be substantially more difficult than the material in part I. Students considering taking this course should therefore read the introduction to What we Owe to Each Other, available online here, to familiarise themselves: https://nyti.ms/2DXVy0m

Assessment

30% Mid-Term Essay [1500 words]
   Deadline: Midday, Thursday 28th February.
70% Final Essay [2000 words]
   Deadline: Midday, Thursday 25th April

100% Coursework Dissertation
   Deadline: Midday, Tuesday 23rd April

Readings and Topics

Listed below are the topics and readings. These divide into:

(i) Readings that would give you background for the lecture (i.e. they tend to discuss the same issues).
(ii) Specific readings for the tutorial (i.e. the text that we will discuss in the tutorial). Note: sometimes these will be the same as the background for the lecture.
(iii) Further readings (i.e. places to learn more about the topic and to start your research if thinking of writing an essay on a particular topic or papers to discuss with your ALG).

PART 1

CLASS 1 — INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE, CONSEQUENTIALISM (I):
ACT CONSEQUENTIALISM

Lecture Background Reading
- Bykvist, K. Utilitarianism: A guide for the perplexed (Continuum, 2010)
- Sinnott-Armstrong, W. ‘Consequentialism’ in https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/consequentialism/

Tutorial Reading
CLASS 2 — CONSEQUENTIALISM (II): RULE-CONSEQUENTIALISM

Lecture Background Reading
- Hooker, B. ‘Rule Consequentialism’ [Link]

Tutorial Reading

Further Reading

CLASS 3 — CONSEQUENTIALISM (III): SOPHISTICATED CONSEQUENTIALISM AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Lecture Background Reading

Tutorial Reading

Further Reading

CLASS 4 — CONSEQUENTIALISM (IV): OBJECTIONS

Lecture Background Reading
- Williams, B. ‘A Critique of Utilitarianism’ in *Utilitarianism: For and Against*.

Tutorial Reading
- Williams, B. ‘A Critique of Utilitarianism’ in *Utilitarianism: For and Against*.

Further Reading

CLASS 5 — CONSEQUENTIALISM (V): CONSEQUENTIALISM AND AGGREGATION

Lecture Background Reading
NOTE: Innovative Learning Week falls between class 5 and class 6

PART II

CLASS 6 — CONTRACTUALISM (I): CONTRACTUALISM INTRODUCED

Lecture Background Reading
- Scanlon, T. M. What We Owe to Each Other, ch. 4 ‘Wrongness and Reasons’.

Tutorial Reading
- Scanlon, T. M. What We Owe to Each Other, ch. 4 ‘Wrongness and Reasons’.

Further Resources
- ‘What We Owe to Each Other’ (s1, e6) of The Good Place.

CLASS 7 — CONTRACTUALISM (II): CONTRACTUALISM DEVELOPED

Lecture Background Reading
- Scanlon, T. M. What We Owe to Each Other, Ch. 5 ‘The Structure of Contractualism’.

Tutorial Reading
- Scanlon, T. M. What We Owe to Each Other, Ch. 5 ‘The Structure of Contractualism’.

Further Reading

CLASS 8 — CONTRACTUALISM (III): CONTRACTUALISM AND AGGREGATION

Lecture Background Reading

Tutorial Reading

Further Reading

CLASS 9 — CONTRACTUALISM (IV): THE NON-IDENTITY PROBLEM
**Lecture Background Reading**
- Roberts, M. A. ‘The Nonidentity Problem’ in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*  
  https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/nonidentity-problem/  

**Tutorial Reading**

**Further Reading**

**CLASS 10 — CONTRACTUALISM (V): CONTRACTUALISM AND HUMAN EXTINCTION**

**Lecture Background Reading**

**Tutorial Reading**

**Further Reading**

**CLASS 11 - CONCLUSION AND WRAP UP**