Normative Theory
Dr Guy Fletcher

Contact Details
Course organiser — Guy Fletcher, [guy.fletcher[AT]EDdotACdotUK]
Course secretary — Ann-Marie Cowe [philinfo@ed.ac.uk]

Course Delivery
This course will be delivered in the following way:

Classes
- 2 hour in person seminar (whole class), from week 1.
- In-person tutorials (small groups), from week 2.

Office Hour
- I will host office hours Monday 10-11, on Zoom, where you can come and ask me / talk to me about anything you like. Just follow this link: https://ed-ac-uk.zoom.us/j/83053298190
  Meeting ID: 830 5329 8190  Passcode: $18FFAvD

Overview of the course
On this course we will examine two major species of normative ethical theory: Consequentialism and Contractualism. In part 1 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 1 by looking at Consequentialism and aggregation.

In part 2 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 2 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. In week 11, unless we elect to do something different (and I'll consult you about this in due course), we'll conclude by looking at the deontological moral pluralism of W D Ross.

General background to the course

Assessment
40% Mid-Term Essay [1500 words]
Deadline: Thursday 21st October, by midday.

60% Final Essay [2500 words]
Deadline: Thursday 9th December, by midday.

***Information about assessment, feedback, penalties, word counts, etc is here***
Readings and Topics
Listed below are the topics and readings. These divide into:
(i) Readings that would give you background for or will be discussed in the seminar.
(ii) Specific readings for the tutorial (i.e. the text that will be the basis for discussion in the tutorial). Note: sometimes these will be the same as the background for the seminar.
(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).

All readings will be available electronically either (a) through the library (check DiscoverED) (b) the readings page of the LEARN site, or both.

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

Seminar Reading
- Sinnott-Armstrong, W. ‘Consequentialism’ in https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/consequentialism/

Tutorial Reading
- Smart, J. J. C. ‘An Outline of a System of Utilitarian Ethics’ (skip §1 & §8 if you wish) in Smart & Williams Utilitarianism: For and Against.

Further Reading
- Bykvist, K. Utilitarianism: A guide for the perplexed (Continuum, 2010)
- Mill, J. S. Utilitarianism.

2 — CONSEQUENTIALISM (II): OBJECTIONS

Seminar 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

3 — CONSEQUENTIALISM (III): RULE-CONSEQUENTIALISM

Seminar Reading

Tutorial Reading
Further Reading

4 — CONSEQUENTIALISM (IV): SOPHISTICATED CONSEQUENTIALISM AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Seminar Reading

Tutorial Reading

Further Reading

5 — CONSEQUENTIALISM (V): CONSEQUENTIALISM AND AGGREGATION

Seminar Reading

Tutorial Reading

Further Resources
- ‘The Trolley Problem’ (s2, e5) of *The Good Place*.

PART II

6 — CONTRACTUALISM (I): CONTRACTUALISM INTRODUCED

Seminar 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*. 
7 — CONTRACTUALISM (II): CONTRACTUALISM DEVELOPED

Seminar 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

8 — CONTRACTUALISM (III): CONTRACTUALISM AND AGGREGATION

Seminar Reading

Tutorial Reading

Further Reading

9 — CONTRACTUALISM (IV): THE NON-IDENTITY PROBLEM

Seminar Reading

Tutorial Reading

Further Reading

10 — CONTRACTUALISM (V): CONTRACTUALISM AND HUMAN EXTINCTION

Seminar Reading

Tutorial Reading

Further Reading
- Crisp, R. ‘Would extinction be so bad?’ https://www.newstatesman.com/international/2021/08/would-extinction-be-so-bad
11 — Wrap up, Deontological Pluralism / Intuitionism

Seminar Reading

Frequently Asked Questions

Email is a wonderful resource but (a) we are all overwhelmed by it, partly because we don’t use other available methods and (b) it is a very inefficient method for me to communicate with you as a group. I’d prefer to spend time doing things that improve the class for everyone than answering a typical question many times individually. So please do ask questions in class wherever possible.

Q. When do tutorial start? / Is there a tutorial in week 1?
Tutorials start in week 2.

Q. How do I sign up to / switch tutorial group?
This isn't something I can help with, unfortunately. Timetabling will assign you to a group. If you cannot make that group due to a clash, contact the Philosophy teaching office philinfo@ed.ac.uk

Q. How do I go about finding extra readings?
Read the texts and the further reading suggestions listed above. Then read the things cited and discussed within those. And so on.

Q. How many references do I need for my essay?
There’s no fixed number and it’s a mistake 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.

Q. 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:

http://www.docs.is.ed.ac.uk/docs/Libraries/PDF/SEcitingreferencesHarvard.pdf

Q. I need an extension / I have special circumstances
Special circumstances are handled by the PPLS student support officers (SSOs). Their office is on the ground floor of DSB, opposite the teaching office. Their email is: PPLS.SSO@ed.ac.uk.

Extensions are handled by the Central Extension Service CES). Their website, with information on applying for extensions, is here:

https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-administration/extensions-special-circumstances/continuing-students