



Boston University International Programs
London

Boston University British Programmes
History of Western Ethical Philosophy
CGS HU 201 (CGS)
Fall 2009

Instructor Information

A. Name	Terry Sullivan
B. Day and Time	Thursday September 3 rd 1.30-3.30pm lecture. Friday September 4 th 11am-1pm lecture; 2-3pm seminar A; 3-4pm seminar B. From September 7 th to October 1 st lectures will take place on Mondays 1.30-3.30pm and seminar groups will meet on Thursdays 1.30-2.30pm & 2.30-3.30pm. From October 13 th to December 1 st lectures will take place on Tuesdays from 9-11am and seminars from 11am-12pm & 12-1pm.
C. Location	Bell room, Crofton, 14 Queens Gate, SW7 5JE
D. BU Telephone	020 7244 6255
E. Webpage	www.bu-london.co.uk/academic/hu201
F. Office hours	By appointment

Course Objectives

We are discussing nothing trivial but how a man should live (Plato)

Ethics is a branch of Philosophy which in itself is an exercise in being self-aware; it is a radical and critical questioning of assumptions upon which beliefs are based. It requires us to be clear and careful in assessing our views and those of others. Ethics invites us to criticise radically assumptions about good and bad, right and wrong and how they may be applied both to the private lives of individuals and to the wider realms of organised social and political life.

Aims and Learning Outcomes

The course aims to introduce you to the nature of philosophy and the philosophical contributions to ethics by examining the ideas of certain major thinkers and schools of ethical and political thought from the times of the ancient Greeks to modern times. It will also invite you to consider the possible relevance of classical ethicists to contemporary ethical controversies.

On successful completion of the course you should:

- Have become aware of the purpose and reach of philosophy
- Have become aware of the of the main arguments of the major ethicists in Western thought
- Be able to apply some of the criteria of classical ethicists to on-going moral issues.

Assessment

You are required to submit a 1500 word paper from the choices below, drawing on the primary source extracts in Denise, Denise *et als* comments as well as secondary commentary/criticism in Arrington and at least one other precisely referenced secondary source from the extensive list below by **Tuesday October 20th**.

1. Choose the readings of one thinker from the course text and analyse them. Draw out the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments used raising support and/or objections in the secondary literature and possibly those rooted in your own reflections or experience.
2. Discuss and illustrate the insight offered by one or two of the thinkers you have studied so far into any contemporary ethical issues. (be sure to explain the thinkers' ideas before bringing in possible applications).

The paper counts for one third of the grade for the course.

There will be a quiz in week four of the course.

In the **final examination on December 1st** you will be required to answer **two questions** in essay format from a choice of about twelve questions. You are not allowed to answer a question on the thinker chosen for your paper. The final examination counts two thirds of the grade for the course.

Attendance

You are expected to attend every session and any absence, through illness or other legitimate reason should be reported to the Academic office as soon as possible. Poor attendance without adequate reason will be used to moderate your grades downwards. Excellent attendance will be used to moderate final grades in borderline cases.

Please note: I will endeavour to be available after classes to discuss this course and your studies in general.

Please check your email and the weekly Student Newsletter for field trip updates and reminders.

Grading

Please refer to the Academic Handbook for detailed grading criteria, attendance requirements and policies on plagiarism:

<http://www.bu-london.co.uk/files/images/ACADEMICHANDBOOKFA09.pdf>.

Course Chronology

(In each seminar two or three students per week will be expected to make a short presentation based on the readings for each class. The whole class, of course is expected to read thoroughly as well and support the presenters).

Prior to the first class, students are expected to have read:

T. Denise et al Great Traditions in Ethics (Chapter 1 introduction and Chapter 2 Knowledge and Virtue.

R. L. Arrington Western Ethics: A Historical Introduction (Chapter 1 Socrates and the Sophists: An Introduction to Ethics.

3rd September Introduction to the course: Lecture: *The Nature of Philosophy and Ethics*.
Film and Discussion *What is Philosophy?* 1.30-3.30

4th September Why Start with the Greeks? Lecture 11-1. 2-3 seminar A; 3-4 seminar B.
In each class a presentation rota will be organised.

7th September 1.30pm, Lecture Plato's Ethics and Politics

10th September Seminars 1.30pm and 2.30pm.
Reading: Denise, chapter 2; Arrington chapters 1& 2.

14th September 1.30pm lecture: Aristotle's Virtue Ethics.

17th September Seminars 1.30 pm and 2.30 pm
Reading: Denise chapter 3; Arrington chapter 3

21st September 1.30 pm lecture: Medieval Christian Ethics: Augustine and Aquinas

24th September Seminars 1.30pm and 2.30pm. Reading: Denise chapters 6 & 7

28th September 1.30 pm lecture Hobbes: Contractualism and Egoism

1st October Seminars 1.30 pm and 2.30 pm
Reading: Seminar: Denise Chapter 8, Arrington chapter 6.

Semester Break 5th -11th October

Part B of the Semester 13th October to December 1st

13 October 9-11 lecture: David Hume: Reason, Passion and Ethics
Seminars 11-12 & 12-1: Reading: Denise chapter 11; Arrington chapter 9

20th October 9-11 lecture: Kant's Deontological Ethics
Seminars 11-12 & 12-1: Reading: Denise chapter 12; Arrington chapter 10.

N. B. Paper due in today!

27th October 9-11 lecture: Utilitarianism: Bentham and J.S. Mill
Seminars 11-12 & 12-1: Reading: Denise chapter 13, Arrington chapter 12.

- 3rd November** 9-11 lecture: Karl Marx: Capitalist Ethics and Future Ethics
Seminars 11-12 & 12-1: Reading: Denise, chapter 17.
- 10th November** 9-11 lecture: Nietzsche and the Transvaluation of Values
Seminars 11-12 & 12-1: Reading: Denise chapter 17; Arrington chapter 13.
- 17th November** 9-11 lecture: Sartre and Existentialist Ethics
Seminars 11-12 & 12-1: Reading: Denise chapter 22
- 24th November** 9-11 lecture: John Rawls: Contractarian Ethics
Seminars 11-12 & 12-1:
Reading: Denise Chapter 25
- 1st December** **11 am Final Examination (two hours)**

Readings

Required Purchases (for sale in orientation week before the start of the course)

T. C. Denise, N. P. White &
S.P. Peterfreund
R. L. Arrington

Great Traditions in Ethics
Western Ethics: An Historical Introduction

Other References on Ethics in the BU London Library

Please note all of the books in this section make references to all or most of the thinkers covered in the course

- G. Graham [Eight Theories of Ethics](#)
M. Baron (et al) [Three Methods of Ethics](#)
M. L. Morgan [Classics of Moral and Political Theory](#)
J. E. Gracia (ed) [Classics of Western Philosophy](#)
D. Collinson (ed) [Fifty Major Philosophers](#)
N. White [A Brief History of Happiness](#)
M. Timmons [Conduct and Character: Readings in Moral Theory \(Very good detailed extracts plus commentary on the great thinkers\)](#)
H. LaFollette (ed) [Ethics in Practice \(3rd edition, section 1\)](#)
G. Larmore [The Morals of Modernity](#)
R. Norman [The Moral Philosophers](#)
S. Darwell [Virtue Ethics](#)
D. Wiggins [Ethics: Twelve Lectures on the History of Morality](#)
A. Quinton [Utilitarian Ethics](#)

References on Applied Ethics

- J. Nuttall [Moral Questions](#)
D. Robinson [Ethics for Beginners](#)
J. Driver [Ethics: The Fundamentals](#)
J. Thiroux [Ethics: Theory and Practice](#)
R. Trigg [Morality Matters](#)

D. Raphael	<u>Moral Philosophy</u>
P. Singer (ed)	<u>A Companion to Ethics</u> (Excellent section on religion and ethics)
P. Singer	<u>The Life You Can Save</u>
P. Singer	<u>Practical Ethics</u>
P. Singer	<u>Applied Ethics</u>
P. Singer	<u>Unsanctifying Human Life</u>
J. P. Sterba	<u>Ethics: The Big Questions</u>
J. P. Sterba	<u>Morality in Practice</u>
M. Warnock	<u>An Intelligent Person's Guide to Ethics</u>
E. Bond	<u>Ethics and Human Well-Being</u>
J. L. Mackie	<u>Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong</u>
R. Billington	<u>Living Philosophy: An Invitation to Moral Thought</u>
J. Glover	<u>Causing Death and Saving Lives</u>
J. Glover	<u>What Sort of People Should there Be?</u>
A. Cohen and C. Wellman (eds)	<u>Applied Ethics</u>
B. Almond	<u>Introducing Applied Ethics</u>
J. Evans	<u>Moral Philosophy and Contemporary Problems</u>
B. Williams	<u>Morality: an introduction to Ethics</u>
D. Koehn	<u>Rethinking Feminist Ethics</u>
M. Cohen	<u>101 Ethical Dilemmas</u>
A. MacIntyre	<u>A Short History of Ethics</u> (Difficult read but makes good critical points)
H. LaFollete (ed)	<u>Ethics in Practice</u> (Excellent discussions of modern moral problems in all three editions)
H. LaFollette	<u>The Practice of Ethics</u>
C. Clement	<u>Care, Autonomy and Justice</u>
J. Teichman	<u>Social Ethics: a Student's Guide</u>
P. Kitcher	<u>Lives to Come: The Genetic revolution and Human Possibilities</u>
B. Rollin	<u>The Frankenstein Syndrome</u>
B. Appleyard	<u>Brave New Worlds: Genetics and Human Experience</u>
M. Ridley	<u>Genome: The Autobiography of a Species</u>
A. Cohen & H. Wellman	<u>Contemporary Debates in Applied Ethics</u>

References on Philosophy in General

J. Nuttall	<u>An Introduction to Philosophy</u>
J. Cottingham (ed)	<u>Western Philosophy</u>
P. Facione	<u>The Student's Guide to Philosophy</u>
B. Almond	<u>Exploring Philosophy</u>
J. Rosenberg	<u>The Practice of Philosophy: A Handbook for Beginners</u>
K. Appiah	<u>Thinking it Through</u>
N. Bunnin (ed)	<u>The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy</u>
M. Cohen	<u>101 Philosophy Problems</u>
N. Warburton	<u>Thinking from A-Z</u>
A. Morton	<u>Philosophy in Practice</u>
J. Gaader	<u>Sophie's World: an adventure in Philosophy</u>

Additional readings may be posted on the course webpage:

<http://www.bu-london.co.uk/academic/hu201> (you must be logged in to view materials).