

PRELIMINARY COURSE DESCRIPTION

PHIL 230, Introduction to Moral Philosophy

Prof. Sarah Stroud, Fall 2011

lectures: MW 10:35-11:25 am (plus F Sept. 2 and possibly Sept. 9) lecture hall: Otto Maass 112
+ weekly conference on Fridays, for which you must register on Minerva

An introduction to central questions of moral philosophy through the study of classic texts by Aristotle, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, and G. E. Moore. Some of the fundamental questions we will investigate through these texts are the following: What things are worth pursuing? What constitutes a good life? What constitutes a moral life? What is the relation between the two? How do we reason about what to do? Can reason determine how one ought to live, or how one ought to treat others? Can reason motivate us to act in accordance with those determinations? What are moral judgments, and why are we influenced by them? Throughout the term we will take note of the ways in which our authors differ, not just in the answers they give to these questions, but in the questions they take to be most central.

Required Texts (for sale at Paragraphe Books at 2220 McGill College Avenue; students are expected to use the editions specified)

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (4th century B.C.) [trans. Irwin, Hackett, 2nd ed. 1999], selections
- David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739) [ed. Selby-Bigge, Oxford U. Press, 2nd ed. 1978], selections
- Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) [trans. Abbott, ed. Denis, Broadview Press 2005], through Second Section
- Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789), selections [see next item]
- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (1861) [in John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, *Utilitarianism and Other Essays*, ed. Ryan, Penguin 1987]
- G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (1903) [Prometheus Books 1988], selections

Course Requirements and Method of Assessment (tentative; to be confirmed on official syllabus distributed in the first week of class)

- a five-page (double-spaced) paper on Aristotle, worth 22.5% of the final course mark
- an in-class exam on Hume, worth 20% of the final course mark
- a five-page (double-spaced) paper on Kant, worth 22.5% of the final course mark
- a formal three-hour final examination, worth 35% of the final course mark

A choice of topics for each of the papers will be handed out 7-10 days before the due date. The final exam will consist entirely of essay questions. Some of the questions will pertain to Bentham, Mill, and Moore; these will not be given out in advance. The remaining questions will range over all course readings; these will be drawn from a list of review questions handed out in advance.

Discussion is an important part of philosophical endeavour. Students are therefore expected to attend conference each week and to contribute to conference discussions. If your final mark is borderline, your conference attendance and participation may be used as the deciding factor.

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