

Philosophy 5100: Proseminar in Ethics, Spring 2016
Thursdays, 5:00-7:30 p.m., HLMS 269
Instructor of Record: David Boonin

Professors

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Course Description

This team-taught proseminar will consist of a study of classic and influential texts in analytic ethics and political philosophy:

Henry Sidgwick's *The Methods of Ethics* (1874) (Norcross)
W.D. Ross' *The Right and the Good* (1930) (Heathwood)
John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* (1971) (Hosein)
Derek Parfit's *Reasons and Persons* (1984) (Boonin)
Elizabeth Anderson's *The Imperative of Integration* (2011) (Jaggar)

Each book is available at the CU Bookstore and corresponds to a three-week unit of the course. Each unit will be taught by a different professor. In addition to exposing you to some of the most important works of anglophone moral and political philosophy since the rise of analytic philosophy, we hope that this course will help develop a shared intellectual background among the entering class of graduate students, while allowing you to get to know a greater number of our faculty.

Requirements

Out of the five units that constitute the course, a total of four short papers are required. You may choose which four units to write papers for. The papers should be approximately 5-7 pages, or about 1,500-2,000 words, each. The topic for each paper should be based on some part of the readings for that unit of the course and should be sufficiently focused so that you can discuss it with sufficient rigor and in sufficient depth. We recommend discussing your topic in advance with the relevant professor to verify that it is a suitable topic. The paper for a given unit is due on the Monday following the final day of that unit and should be sent as an attachment, via e-mail, to the relevant professor in the form of a MS Word document. Papers are due by 5:00 p.m. on the relevant Monday.

Your papers should be written like professional journal articles. Accordingly, they should have these elements. *Thesis*: Your thesis should be non-trivial, and it should be stated clearly and explicitly, early on. Your thesis can be a positive philosophical point that connects up in some clear way with the reading, or it can be a criticism of a claim or argument made in the reading. It can also be an interpretive thesis, offering an interesting interpretation of some important or contested passage from the reading. *Argument*: Your argument(s) for the thesis should appeal to premises that would seem plausible to the great majority of people, including most people who

have not already accepted your thesis. *Replies to objections*: Consider how someone doubting your thesis might object to your argument, and say why these objections ultimately do not persuade you. *Things not to do*: Do not spend more than a quarter of the paper setting up the issue. Do not digress (these papers are too short for digressions). Do not make errors of grammar, punctuation, spelling, word usage, formatting, and the like. Make use of a good writing guide.

Grading

Your graduate student handbook contains the following remarks about grading standards: Grading standards can vary among professors. However, a majority of the faculty have come to a reasonable amount of consensus concerning grading standards for graduate students. The standards accepted by most professors are the following: “The grades for graduate students tend to run from A to B+, although lower grades are occasionally given. ... Although professors naturally differ in their grading patterns, and in their understanding of those grades, there is some consensus among the faculty in the Department that A’s should be given for excellent work, A-’s for good but not great work, and B+’s for work that is problematic, though still satisfactory.” You can use this as a rough guide to what our grades mean, though some of us might add further nuance to it. We expect that the most common grade in the class will be an A-, but that some A’s and B+’s will also be given. Your final grade for the class will be determined mainly by your four papers, but classroom participation can also influence your grade.

Issues, Complaints, etc.

If something is bothering you about the course, the readings, your classmates, the classroom environment, your professors, or anything related to our course, please do not hesitate to discuss the problem with any of us. If you don’t feel that we are dealing with the problem to your satisfaction, please bring your problem to the attention of our Director of Graduate Studies, Rob Rupert.

Course Schedule

Sidgwick 1 (Jan. 14): Background, Methods of Ethics, Goodness, Well-Being
pp. v-vi (foreword by Rawls), vii-viii, xvii-xxiii
Book I, chs. 1, 3, 6, 8, 9
Book I, chs. 4, 7 (optional)

Sidgwick 2 (Jan. 21): Intuitionism, Common Sense Morality, Moral Epistemology
Book III, chs. 1, 6 (§§5-9), 11

Sidgwick 3 (Jan. 28): Utilitarianism, Its Proof, Its Relation to CSM, Esoteric Morality
Book III, ch. 13
Book IV, chs. 1, 2, 3 (§§1, 7), 4 (§1), 5 (§1-3), Concluding Chapter (§§1, 2, 4, 5)
Book III, ch. 14 (optional)

Ross 1 (Feb. 4): What does ‘right’ mean? What makes right acts right?
Preface (v-vi), Chapter I (1-15), Chapter II (16-47)
Appendix I (48-56), Appendix II (56-64)

Ross 2 (Feb. 11): What does ‘good’ mean? What is the nature of goodness?
Chapter III (65-74), Chapter IV (75-104; 114-133; rest optional)

Ross 3 (Feb. 18): What things are good? How good are they? What about *moral* goodness?
Chapter V (134-141), Chapter VI (142-154), Chapter VII (155-173)
Editor’s Introduction (ix-l) (optional)

Rawls 1 (Feb. 25): Fairness versus Utility
Sections 1-9, 11-17

Rawls 2 (Mar. 3): The Original Position
Chapter 3
Nozick, pp. 183-231

Rawls 3 (Mar. 10): Freedom and Property
Sections 33-35, 39, 77, 82
Nozick, pp. 150-182

Parfit 1 (Mar. 17): The Non-Identity Problem
Chapter 16

Parfit 2 (Mar. 31): The Mere Addition Paradox
Chapters 17-19

Parfit 3 (Apr. 7): What Makes a Life Go Best for a Person?
Appendix I
Chapters 6, 8 (optional)

Anderson 1 (Apr. 14): Anderson’s Methodology
Chapters 1 and 5
Anderson’s APA Presidential address, July 2015.

Anderson 2 (Apr. 21): Anderson’s Critical Analysis
Chapters 2-4

Anderson 3 (Apr. 28): Anderson’s Prescriptions
Chapters 6-9

Additional Policies

Disability: If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Center for Community, N200, and <http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices>.

Religious Observances: Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, contact us if you face such a conflict. See full details at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html.

Classroom Behavior: Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, and gender expression, age, disability, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See policies at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and at http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code.

Discrimination and Harassment: The University of Colorado at Boulder Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures, the University of Colorado Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedures, and the University of Colorado Conflict of Interest in Cases of Amorous Relationships Policy apply to all students, staff, and faculty. Any student, staff, or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of sexual harassment or discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127, or the Office of Student Conduct (OSC) at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>.

Academic Integrity: All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-735-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and at <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/>.