

Syllabus

Professors

David Boonin	david.boonin@colorado.edu	HLMS 182	By Appointment
Robert Hanna	rhanna@colorado.edu	HLMS 142	Tues. & Th., 4:00-6:00
Chris Heathwood	heathwood@colorado.edu	HLMS 192	Wed., 11:00-2:00
Adam Hosein	adam.hosein@colorado.edu	HLMS 184	Tues., 1:00-3:00
Alastair Norcross	alastair.norcross@colorado.edu	HLMS 182	Mn. & Wed., 12:30-2:00

Each of us is also very happy to meet by appointment.

Course Description

This relatively new, team-taught proseminar will consist of a study of five classic and hugely influential texts in analytic ethics:

Henry Sidgwick's <i>The Methods of Ethics</i> (1874)	(Heathwood)
G.E. Moore's <i>Principia Ethica</i> (1903)	(Norcross)
W.D. Ross' <i>The Right and the Good</i> (1930)	(Hanna)
John Rawls' <i>A Theory of Justice</i> (1971)	(Hosein)
Derek Parfit's <i>Reasons and Persons</i> (1984)	(Boonin).

Each book is available at the CU Bookstore. Sidgwick can also be found online for free here:

<http://www.laits.utexas.edu/poltheory/sidgwick/me/>

And here: <http://www.archive.org/details/methodsofethics00sidgiala>

And Moore here: <http://fair-use.org/g-e-moore/principia-ethica>

Each book corresponds to a three-week unit of the course. Each unit will be taught by a different professor (as indicated above). In addition to exposing you to some of the most important works of anglophone moral 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

Four short papers are required. A paper for each of the five 3-week units bar one. You may choose which of the four units to write for. Further details:

Length: 5-7 pages, or about 1,500-2,000 words, each.

Topic: Something on some part of the book we read for that unit of the course. Be sure to pick a topic that is circumscribed, so you can discuss it thoroughly, rather than giving a shallow discussion of a large topic. We recommend discussing your idea in advance with the relevant professor to verify that it is worth writing about.

Due dates: Each Sunday following the last day of a unit. See schedule below for exact dates.

Submission: Attach papers, written in MS Word, to an email to the relevant professor – except for Bob Hanna, who prefers hard copies, delivered to his box. Papers are due by midnight on the relevant Sunday.

Content: 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. For example, for Hanna, ‘A-’ means *very good but not-quite-excellent*. Heathwood uses ‘A’ to mean *exceeds expectations*, ‘A-’ to mean *meets expectations*, and ‘B+’ to mean *fails to meet expectations*. 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 like we are dealing with the problem to your satisfaction, please bring your problem to the attention of our Department Chair, Graeme Forbes and/or our Director of Graduate Studies, Mitzi Lee.

Current Course Schedule (subject to change)

Date	Possible Topics	Readings (due on date listed)
Tu 8/23	Background, Methods of Ethics, Goodness, Well-Being	Required (73 pages): - pp. v-vi (foreword by Rawls), vii-viii, xvii-xxiii. - Book I, chs. 1, 3, 6, 8, 9. Recommended: - Book I, chs. 4, 7.
Tu 8/30	Intuitionism, Common Sense Morality, Moral Epistemology	Required (52 pages): - Book III, chs. 1, 6 (§§5-9), 11.
Tu 9/6	Utilitarianism, Its Proof, Its Relation to CSM, Esoteric Morality	Required (76 pages): - Book III, ch. 13. - Book IV, chs. 1, 2, 3 (§§1, 7), 4 (§1), 5 (§1-3), Concluding Chapter (§§1, 2, 4, 5). Recommended: - Book III, ch. 14.
Sn 9/11	Sidgwick Paper due (to heathwood@colorado.edu)	
Tu 9/13		Moore, Chapt. 1
Tu 9/20		Moore, Chapt. 3, Sec. 36-57; Chapt. 5
Tu 9/27		Moore, Chapt. 6
Sn 10/2	Moore Paper Due (to alastair.norcross@colorado.edu)	
Tu 10/4		Ross, pp. 1-64 (chs. I-II, including appendix)
Tu 10/11		Hanna <i>Objectivity Regained: Benacerraf's Dilemma & Intuitions in Mathematics, Logic, Morality, & Philosophy</i> , complete OR pp. 23-42, & 167-211 (sections IV & XI) available online at-- http://www.colorado.edu/philosophy/paper_hanna_objectivity_regained_march11.pdf
Tu 10/18		Ross, pp. 65-74, [131-133], & 134-173, (ch. III, [conclusion of ch. IV], & chs. V-VII) Hanna, complete OR pp. 212-227 (section XIII)
Sn 10/23	Ross Paper Due (in Hanna's box - not by email)	
Tu 10/25	Fairness vs. Utility	Rawls, Sections 1-9, 1--17
Tu 11/1	The "Original Position"	Rawls, Chapt. 3
Tu 11/8	Equal Liberties	Rawls, Sections 33-35, 39, 77, 82
Sn 11/13	Rawls Paper Due (to adam.hosein@colorado.edu)	
Tu 11/15	The Non-Identity Problem	Parfit, chs. 16-17.

11/21-25	Thanksgiving Break	
Tu 11/29	The Non-Identity Problem	Other Recommendations, TBA
Tu 12/6	TBA	Parfit, TBA
Sn 12/11	Parfit Paper Due (to david.boonin@colorado.edu)	