PHIL. 1100: Ethics

Fall, 2014

Lecture: MWF, 1:00 - 1:50, MCol E155
Professor: Michael Huemer
Email: bmsjrqcrna@snkmail.com

Web page: http://spot.colorado.edu/~huemer/
Office Hours: MWF, 12:00-12:50, 2:00-2:50
Hellems 266

What Is This Course About?

This course is an introduction to ethics, as studied in contemporary academic philosophy. The course will have 4 units, addressing the following sorts of questions:

First unit: Metaethics. Do evaluative facts exist? Are they objective? How do we know about them?

Second unit: Ethical Theories. Do the ends justify the means? What rights do we have, and why? Are rights absolute?

Third unit: Fetuses & animals. Is it wrong to abort a fetus? Is it wrong to eat animals?

Fourth unit: Poverty & inequality. What should we do about world poverty? Is equality intrinsically valuable?

Fifth unit: The non-identity problem & the repugnant conclusion. Can you wrong a person who would not have existed if not for your action? Is it good to make more people?

Sixth unit: Honor & virtue. What is honor, and why do people care about it? Should one be honest, and if so, why? When should one forgive others?

Educational Philosophy & Goals

a. Philosophy in general is a search for truth. Philosophers try to figure out which beliefs are most likely to be true, and discard the others.
b. The way we search for truth is through argumentation: we examine different sides of an issue, formulate logical arguments, consider objections, and look for replies to the objections. If you find this sort of thing fun, you will like the course; otherwise, you won't.
c. The way I try to teach philosophy is by doing philosophy in the classroom – advancing arguments, addressing objections, and so on. I hope that you will then pick it up.
d. As a result of this course, you should learn the most important theories about each of the topics addressed, understand the reasons why people hold these theories, be able to form more rational and accurate thoughts about these issues, and improve your ability to think clearly and logically in general.

Texts

There are two sources of required readings:
1. *Ethical Intuitionism*, by Michael Huemer, will be available at the university book store. This provides the reading for the first unit.
2. The remaining readings are available online through D2L (https://learn.colorado.edu/d2l/home/73282). I recommend that you print them all now to ensure that you have them when you need them.

1

Who Should Take This Class?

There's only one good reason to take this class. That is because you want to learn more about good and bad, right and wrong. If you don't want that, you're in the wrong place.

Warnings and requests: Don't take the class if you are unable to make it here on time. Be forewarned that the objective nature of my tests means that if you don't do the readings and come to class, you will be pretty much screwed on the tests. Lastly, if you love political correctness, if you want someone to stoke your self-esteem, or if you think there's no truth and all beliefs are equally good, then you are not going to like this class.

The benefit of the course is that you will learn to think more critically and rationally about value questions, and perhaps even become more ethical.

Course Requirements & Grading

• *Unit Tests (90% of final grade):*
There will be six in-class tests. See schedule below for dates. About 20 questions, multiple choice & short answer. They will be objective questions about what was said in the readings and in class.

• *Participation (10%):*
This is based on the professor's subjective sense of how well you contributed to class discussion, and how regularly you attended class.

Note about grades: Grades are based on observable performance, rather than effort or virtue. Please do not tell me you should get a higher grade because you tried really hard, or because you really need it. Also, do not obsess about your grade. After you graduate, no one will ever look at your grades again. You should come here to increase your understanding, not to get a grade.
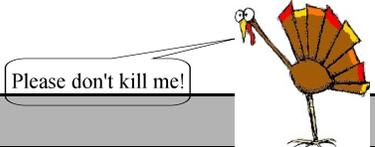
Other Guidelines

1. *To contact me:* Send email to the address listed above. *Type it in carefully.* If I don't respond within a day, assume I didn't get it.
2. *Office hours:* Come to my office to talk about philosophy, etc. I will try to answer any questions you have, but you needn't have a specific question to come.
3. *Classroom discussion:* During class, you are encouraged to raise questions, comments, objections, etc. Don't be afraid of contradicting other people, expressing unpopular views, or asking a "stupid" question. You're here to learn, which you will do by interacting freely.
4. *Course web page:* <spot.colorado.edu/~huemer/>. Includes information about the course, including this syllabus and course lecture notes. You should download the notes and study them before each test.

Schedule

This shows what you should read for the class discussion on each day. Also note the **test dates**. All readings are indicated by the author's last name.

Unit 1	Metaethics	
M, Aug 25	Introduction, the nature of ethics	Huemer, *Ethical Intuitionism*, sections 1.1-1.3
W, Aug 27	Non-cognitivism	Huemer, *Ethical Intuitionism*, ch. 2 (skip 2.4-2.7)
F, Aug 29	Subjectivism, Relativism	Huemer, *Ethical Intuitionism*, ch. 3 (skip 3.5)
M, Sept 1	*No Class – Labor Day*	
W, Sept 3	Naturalism	Huemer, *Ethical Intuitionism*, ch. 4 (skip 4.3.2-4.3.5, 4.4.3-4.4.4)
F, Sept 5	Nihilism & Intuitionism	Huemer, *Ethical Intuitionism*, ch. 5 (skip 5.6-5.7)
M, Sept 8	More Intuitionism	Huemer, "Liberal Realist Answer ..."
W, Sept 10	Review	
F, Sept 12	**Test #1.**	
Unit 2	Ethical Theory: Utilitarianism & Deontology	
M, Sept 15	Utilitarianism	Smart, "Outline of a System...", pp. 30-7, 27
W, Sept 17	Criticisms of utilitarianism	McCloskey, "Note on Utilitarian Punishment" Nozick, "The Experience Machine" Smart, "Outline...", pp. 67-73
F, Sept 19	Absolute deontology	O'Neill, "Moral Perplexities of Famine Relief" Nozick, "Moral Constraints & Moral Goals"
M, Sept 22	Moderate deontology	Ross, "What Makes Right Acts Right"
W, Sept 24	Criticisms of deontology	Huemer, "Paradox for Weak Deontology" (section 5 optional)
F, Sept 26	Review	
M, Sept 29	**Test #2.**	
Unit 3	Cute Things: Fetuses & Animals	
W, Oct 1	For abortion.	Tooley, "Abortion and Infanticide"
F, Oct 3	Against abortion.	Marquis, "Why Abortion Is Immoral"
M, Oct 6	For abortion.	Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion"
W, Oct 8	Animal welfare.	Lomasky, "Is it Wrong to Eat Animals"
F, Oct 10	Vegetarianism.	Rachels, "Vegetarianism", sections 1-3
M, Oct 13	Vegetarianism, cont'd.	Rachels, "Vegetarianism", sections 4-6
W, Oct 15	Review	

F, Oct 17	**Test #3.**	
Unit 4	**Poverty & Inequality**	
M, Oct 20	Feed the poor	Singer, "Rich and Poor"
W, Oct 22	Don't feed the poor	Hardin, "Case Against Helping the Poor"
F, Oct 24	Aid the poor	Sen, "Population: Delusion & Reality"
M, Oct 27	Egalitarianism	Nagel, "Equality"
W, Oct 29	Priority View	Parfit, "Equality and Priority"
F, Oct 31	Non-egalitarianism	Huemer, "Against Equality"
M, Nov 3	Review	
W, Nov 5	**Test #4.**	
Unit 5	**Puzzles: Non-Identity Problem & Repugnant Conclusion**	
F, Nov 7	The non-identity problem	Parfit, "Non-Identity Problem", pp. 351-64
M, Nov 10	More non-identity	Parfit, "Non-Identity Problem", pp. 364-78
W, Nov 12	The repugnant conclusion	Parfit, "Repugnant Conclusion"
F, Nov 14	More repugnance	Huemer, "In Defence of Repugnance", sections 1-3
M, Nov 17	More repugnance	Huemer, "In Defence of Repugnance", sections 4-8
W, Nov 19	Review	
F, Nov 21	**Test #5.**	
M, Nov 24	*No Class – Thanksgiving Break*	
W, Nov 26		
F, Nov 28		
Unit 6	**Honor & Virtue**	
M, Dec 1	Honor	Shackelford, "Evolutionary Psychological..."
W, Dec 3	More honor	Demetriou, "Honor for Intro"
F, Dec 5	Dishonesty	Thomas, "Being Moral..."
M, Dec 8	Honesty	Hsieh, "False Excuses"
W, Dec 10	Forgiveness	Smith, "Justice as a Personal Virtue"
F, Dec 12	Review	
W, Dec 17 10:30 am	Scheduled final exam time. **Test #6.**	

Please don't kill me!