

## Unit Guide

# ATS2839

## Philosophy: Ethics

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*Class Description:* This unit deals with some central debates in normative theory and their underpinning in the meta-ethical theories of Hume and Kant. A major focus of discussion is the opposition between consequentialist theories, such as utilitarianism, which judge rightness and wrongness solely in terms of consequences, and Kantian theory which judges rightness and wrongness according to whether the act is in accordance with rational will. How do these theories account for the agent-centred reasons which arise from relations of love and friendship and which seem to have the potential to conflict with impartial moral requirements? Is there a limit to our obligation to minimise suffering and maximise happiness?

### Learning Objectives

1. Have a detailed understanding of central ethical theories such as consequentialism and Kantianism.
2. Have developed skills in written communication, argument analysis, textual interpretation, and argument construction.
3. Have some acquaintance with the main theories and arguments in meta-ethics.

### Assessment Summary

Written work: 60%

Exam: 40%

Assessment Tasks (ATs)	Value	Due Date
1. Expository 1 (500 words)	10%	Week 4
2. Expository 2 (500 words)	20%	Week 7
3. Essay (2000 words)	30%	Week 12
4. Exam (2 hours)	40%	TBA, During Exam Period

### Text

**Required text:** *Unit Reader* (collection of readings, available in Bookshop).

**Optional reading:** *Unit Study Guide* (available electronically on Moodle).



# List of Required Readings

## 1. Introduction

1. Plato (ca. 380 BCE/1997) 'Euthyphro' (excerpt) in *Plato: Complete Works*, J. M. Cooper & D. S. Hutchinson (eds.), Hackett, pp. 9-11.
2. Singer, Peter (1999) 'The Singer Solution to World Poverty' *The New York Times Magazine*, 5 pp. URL = <<http://www.nytimes.com/library/magazine/home/19990905mag-poverty-singer.html>>.

## 2. Egoism: An Initial Challenge for Morality

1. Butler, Joseph (1726/1991) 'Sermon XI: Upon the Love of Our Neighbor' from *Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel*. Reprinted in part in D. D. Raphael ed. *British Moralists* (1991), Vol. I, pp. 325–377.
2. Sober, Elliott & Wilson, D. S. (1998), 'Philosophical Arguments [concerning Egoism]', excerpt from *Unto Others*, Harvard University Press, pp. 275-79.

## 3. Moral Realism: Judgment & Objectivity

1. Ayer, A. J. (1936/1952) 'Critique of Ethics and Theology' excerpt from *Language, Truth, and Logic*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Dover, pp. 107-113.
2. Shafer-Landau, Russ (2010) 'Ethical Relativism' Ch. 19 of *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 276-291.

## 4. Moral Motivation: A Problem for Realism?

1. Hume, David (1739/2006), 'Of the Influencing Motives of the Will', Section 2.3.3 of *A Treatise of Human Nature*, in Geoffrey Sayre-McCord (ed.), *David Hume: Moral Philosophy*, Hackett, pp. 60-64.
2. Hume, David (1740/2006), 'Moral distinctions not deriv'd from reason' paragraphs 1-16 of Section 3.1.1 of *A Treatise of Human Nature*, in Geoffrey Sayre-McCord (ed.), *David Hume: Moral Philosophy*, Hackett, pp. 67-72.
3. Smith, Michael (1993/1994) 'Realism' in Peter Singer (ed.), 1993, *A Companion to Ethics*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, pp. 170-6.

## 5. Sentimentalism: Reason vs. Passion

1. Hume, David, (1740/2006) 'Moral distinctions not deriv'd from reason' paragraphs 17-26 of Section 3.1.1 of *A Treatise of Human Nature*, in Geoffrey Sayre-McCord (ed.), *David Hume: Moral Philosophy*, Hackett, pp. 72-77.
2. Hume, David (1740/2006) 'Of the origin of the natural virtues and vices', paragraphs 1-10 of Section 3.3.1 of *A Treatise of Human Nature*, in Geoffrey Sayre-McCord (ed.), *David Hume: Moral Philosophy*, Hackett, pp. 151-154.
3. Prinz, Jesse (2006) 'The Emotional Basis of Moral Judgments' *Philosophical Explorations* Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 29-43.

## 6. Consequentialism: Variations and Attractions

1. Pettit, Philip (1993) 'Consequentialism' in Peter Singer (ed.), 1993, *A Companion to Ethics*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, pp. 230-40.
2. J. J. C. Smart (1973/1994) 'An Outline of a System of Utilitarian Ethics' in Smart & Williams, *Utilitarianism: For and Against*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 62-4.

## 7. Consequentialism: Objections

1. Williams, Bernard (1973) 'A Critique of Utilitarianism' in Smart & Williams, *Utilitarianism: For and Against*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 96-100, 110-117.
2. Brink, David O. (1986) 'Utilitarian Morality and the Personal Point of View' (excerpt) *Journal of Philosophy* Vol. 83, No. 8, pp. 430-438.

## 8. Rationalism: Deontological Foundations

1. Kant, Immanuel (1785/1994) 'Section I', excerpt from *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, in Peter Singer (ed.), *Ethics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 123-9.
2. Korsgaard, Christine (1997/2008) 'From Duty and for the Sake of the Noble' (excerpt) from her *The Constitution of Agency*, Oxford University Press, pp. 174-187.
3. Bennett, Jonathan (1974) 'The Conscience of Huckleberry Finn', *Philosophy* Vol. 49, pp. 123-134.

## 9. Deontology: Kantianism & Contractualism

1. Kant, I., (1785a/1994), 'Section II', excerpts from the *Groundwork*, in Peter Singer (ed.), 1994, *Ethics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 274-9.
2. Kant, I., (1785b/1994), 'On a Supposed Right to Lie for Altruistic Motives' in Peter Singer (ed.), 1994, *Ethics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 280-1.
3. Scanlon, T. M. (1982/2003) 'Contractualism and Utilitarianism', reprinted in his *The Difficulty of Tolerance: Essays in Political Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 124-150. (Originally published 1982 in *Utilitarianism and Beyond*.)

## 10. Must Morality Be So Impersonal?

1. Stocker, Michael (1976) 'The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories', *Journal of Philosophy*, 73(14), pp. 453-66.
2. Wolf, Susan (1982/1994) 'Moral Saints' in Peter Singer (ed.) *Ethics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, Item 86, pp. 345-361.

## 11. Virtue Ethics: A Third Way?

1. Annas, Julia (2006) 'Virtue Ethics' in David Copp (ed.), 2006, *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory*, Oxford University Press, pp. 515-536.
2. Hursthouse, Rosalind (1999) 'Right Action' Ch. 1 of *On Virtue Ethics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 25-39.