Modern Moral Philosophy (PHI 4930)

Syllabus

Spring 2008

1 Basic Information

Instructor: Dr Stewart Duncan
Email: sduncan@phil.ufl.edu
Phone: 352-392-2084, ext.314
Office: 314 Griffin-Floyd Hall
Office hours: Tuesday, 3-4pm, and Thursday, 4-5pm
Class time: Tuesday, 1:55-2:45pm, and Thursday, 12:50-2:45pm in 200 Griffin-Floyd Hall

2 Course description

This course will examine some views in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century moral philosophy. Prominent philosophers whose work we’ll read and discuss will include Thomas Hobbes, Joseph Butler, David Hume, and Jeremy Bentham. But we’ll also look at the work of several of their contemporaries. Among the themes discussed will be the ways in which people responded to Hobbes’s apparently sceptical approach to morality, and the early development of utilitarian moral theories.

3 Books

We will focus on reading the primary texts. Almost all of these readings will be taken from J.B. Schneewind (ed.), Moral Philosophy from Montaigne to Kant
4 Assessment

Your grade for this class will be determined by your grades on four assignments: (1) a series of short quizzes; (2) a shorter paper; (3) a longer paper; and (4) a final exam.

10% of your grade will be determined by your grades on ten short quizzes. Each of the quizzes will count equally towards your quiz grade. The quizzes will be on unannounced days. They might cover topics from the reading for that day’s class, or things discussed in previous classes. Quizzes may be made up only if you have a good, documented excuse. Other missed quizzes will receive a grade of zero.

20% of your grade will be determined by your grade on the first paper. This will be a paper of 1500 words, due in class on 2/14. Paper topics will be handed out in class on 1/31.

35% of your grade will be determined by your grade on the second paper. This will be a paper of 3000 words, due in class on 4/3. Paper topics will be handed out in class on 3/20.

35% of your grade will be determined by your grade on the final exam. This will be held on 5/1 from 3:00 to 5:00pm.1 The exam may cover anything discussed in the course. Make-up final exams will only be permitted in those few situations that justify the awarding of an incomplete grade for the class.

5 Policies related to assessment

5.1 Numerical grades and letter grades

All assignments will be given a numerical grade on a 100-point scale. At the end of the semester, your overall numerical grade will be calculated, based on your grades for and the relative weights of the assignments.

This numerical grade will be rounded to the nearest whole number, and then converted to a letter grade using the following scale.

1http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/soc/200801/finalexamsched.html
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numerical grade ($n$)</th>
<th>Letter grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$90 \leq n \leq 100$</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$85 \leq n &lt; 90$</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>$80 \leq n &lt; 85$</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>$75 \leq n &lt; 80$</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$70 \leq n &lt; 75$</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>$65 \leq n &lt; 70$</td>
<td>D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60 \leq n &lt; 65$</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$0 \leq n &lt; 60$</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2 Late papers

Papers should be handed in in class, and will count as late as soon as the class is over. Any papers handed in late without a good, documented excuse will be penalized two points for every weekday they’re late.

5.3 Final deadline

No papers will be accepted after the final class on 4/22. If you fail to submit an assignment, you will receive a grade of zero for it.

5.4 Electronic versions

As well as being handed in in class, papers must also be sent by email to me. These versions will be submitted to turnitin.com, an anti-plagiarism service to which the university subscribes. Papers should be sent as attachments in one of the following formats: Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, RTF, PDF, PostScript, plain text, or HTML. These electronic versions are due by 5pm on the day the papers are due. Whether or not a paper has been submitted on time will be determined by whether the paper version has been submitted on time. However, no grade will be awarded for a paper if the electronic version has not been submitted. The electronic version of your paper must be identical to the paper version. Submitting a different version may be construed as an attempt to cheat.
5.5 Academic honesty

You must abide by the university’s academic honesty policy. A guide to academic honesty is available on the website of Student Judicial Affairs at http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.php.

You should expect the minimum penalty for academic dishonesty to be a grade of E for the class (not just the assignment).

All incidents of academic dishonesty will be reported to Student Judicial Affairs. Repeat offenders should expect penalties including suspension or expulsion from the university. You should by this stage have a good idea of what constitutes plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. I will also review this when handing out paper assignments. If you have any questions about this, ask me before it’s too late.

6 Further Policies and Information

6.1 Attendance

You are expected to attend all classes, to arrive on time and not to leave early.

6.2 Accommodations for students with disabilities

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

6.3 Behaviour in class

My aim is to have a classroom atmosphere that is both serious and relaxed. Discussion is encouraged, but talking to your neighbour about what you did last night is not. Things will go well if you (i) come to class prepared and (ii) avoid behaviour that is rude and distracts others (conversing during class; sending text messages; reading novels, the newspaper, books for other classes, and other irrelevant things; doing the crossword; letting your cellphone ring; falling asleep; etc.).
7 Topics and reading

We will work through the extracts from these philosophers in the Schneewind anthology. We’ll spend about a week on the work of each of these philosophers. More detailed reading assignments will be announced in class.

1. Challenges
   (a) Hobbes (Schneewind 111-35)
   (b) Spinoza (Schneewind 237-55)
   (c) Mandeville (Schneewind 388-98)

2. Rationalists
   (a) Descartes (Schneewind 216-36)
   (b) Leibniz (Schneewind 313-30)
   (c) Cudworth (Schneewind 275-92)
   (d) Clarke (Schneewind 293-312)

3. Hutcheson to Reid
   (a) Hutcheson (Schneewind 503-24)
   (b) Butler (Schneewind 525-44)
   (c) Hume (Schneewind 545-67)
   (d) Smith (not in anthology)
   (e) Reid (Schneewind 630-50)

4. Early utilitarianism
   (a) Paley (Schneewind 446-59)
   (b) Bentham (Schneewind 460-82)