PHIL 42400 - Recent Ethical Theory

This is a draft of the syllabus and subject to revisions

Adam Waggoner (aawaggon@purdue.edu)
https://purdue.brightspace.com
BRNG 1248 (M 10:30-12:20, W 11:30-12:20)
Office Hours: M 12:30-1:30 @ BRNG 7154 and by appointment

Course Description:

A philosophical examination of significant issues in recent ethical theory and metaethics, such as the nature of value, obligation, virtue, rationality, moral knowledge, the status of ethical sentences, practical applications, and the relationship between ethics and natural science or religion. This semester we will focus on issues central to Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, including moral disagreement, attempts to justify morality, and the resurgence of virtue ethics in recent ethical theory.

Required Books:

- *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, Third Edition), Alasdair MacIntyre, ISBN 9780268035044
- Please bring a *printed copy* of our other readings to class.

Assignments:

Reading Responses (10%): Except for the first class and Sept 3, reading responses are due at midnight on the Sunday before each Monday reading (marked with an asterisk below). For full points, reading responses should make it clear that you did the reading and thought about it. Reading responses should **reference page numbers,** be ~250 words, and can

- point out something you found puzzling, explaining why it was puzzling
- point out something you found interesting, explaining why you found it interesting
- make a connection to the reading (e.g. personal experiences, media, other readings)
- briefly explain a point of disagreement with the author

Participation & Attendance (15%): Good participation includes quality completion of in-class handouts, which is how I track attendance. Two absences will be excused without any justification. **If you must be absent from class,** please email me with a brief explanation of your absence and a ~250 word reading response (in addition to any scheduled reading responses).

Good participation also requires contributing to in-class philosophical conversation. Here is a helpful guide on different ways to contribute. I want you to feel free to contribute, so you will not be graded on the philosophical quality of your contributions.

Midterm Essay Exam (25%): Essay prompts will be provided ahead of time and discussed in class.

Project Proposal (5%): Proposals will include an outline of a proposed research project. We will meet together to discuss the project.

Presentation (20%): ~15-minute presentation to the class on the topic of your research project. More details will be provided in class.

Final Paper (25%): The final paper will be on the same topic as your presentation and incorporate feedback provided after the presentation.

Grading:

A+: [99-100]	B+: [87, 90)	C+: [77, 80)	D+: [67, 70)	F: [0, 60)
A: [94, 99)	B: [83, 87)	C: [73, 77)	D: [63, 67)	
A-: [90, 94)	B-: [80, 83)	C-: [70, 77)	D-: [60, 63)	

Accommodations:

Any student with a disability that may prevent them from fully demonstrating their abilities should contact me personally as soon as possible so that we can discuss any accommodations necessary to ensure full participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Disability Resource Center at: drc@purdue.edu or by phone: 765-494-1247.

Academic Integrity:

You can find Purdue's policy on academic dishonesty here. For this class, submitting work produced by generative AI, such as ChatGPT, is prohibited. The goals of this class include developing your own ideas through critical reflection and exercising your creativity. Outsourcing writing tasks to generative AI is much more likely to hinder rather than help with the achievement of these goals.

Electronic Device Policy:

The use of laptops, tablets, and cell phones in class is forbidden, unless they are required for class participation due to a disability. Please bring a *printed copy* of readings to class

Other University Policies:

Some other University policies that may be helpful to consult include the Purdue University Bill of Student Rights, Purdue's Statement of Commitment to Freedom of Expression, and Purdue's Nondiscrimination Policy Statement.

Schedule and Readings:

Part 1: Morality and Disagreement

M, Aug 25: Mary Midgley, "Trying Out One's New Sword"

W, Aug 27: Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, 7th ed., 1.3.1-1.3.3

M, Sept 1: No class, Labor Day

W, Sept 3*: John Doris and Alexandra Plakias, "How to Argue about Disagreement: Evaluative Diversity and Moral Realism"

M, Sept 8*: Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, Chapter 2; Simon Blackburn, excerpt from *Spreading the Word* (starting w/final paragraph on page 187)

W, Sept 10: T.M. Scanlon, "Motivation and the Appeal of Expressivism" in *Being Realistic about Reasons*

Part 2: Justifying Morality

M, Sept 15*: Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue,* Chapter 4

W, Sept 17: Simon Blackburn, "Self-Control, Reason, and Freedom" in *Ruling Passions*, **pages 238-256**

M, Sept 22*: Christine Korsgaard, "The Authority of Reflection, 3.1.1-3.3.6" in *The Sources of Normativity*, **pages 90-112**.

W, Sept 24: Christine Korsgaard, "The Authority of Reflection, 3.3.7-3.6.1" in *The Sources of Normativity*, **pages 112-130**

M, Sept 29*: Simon Blackburn, "Self-Control, Reason, and Freedom" in *Ruling Passions*, **pages 256-278**

W, Oct 1: No Reading, Midterm Review

M, Oct 6: Midterm Exam

W, Oct 8: No Reading, In-Class Discussion

M, Oct 13: No Class (Fall Break)

Part 3: Virtue Ethics and Human Flourishing

W, Oct 15: Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, Chapter 5; G.E.M Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy"

M, Oct 20:* Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, Chapter 6 (pages 62-66) & J.S. Mill, excerpt from *Utilitarianism*

W, Oct 22: Giving Exercise

M, Oct 27*: Peter Geach, "Good and Evil"

W, Oct 29: Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, Chapter 12

M, Nov 3*: Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, Chapter 14

W, Nov 5: Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, Chapter 15 (**Project Proposals due Nov 7**)

M, Nov 10*: Martha Nussbaum, "Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach"

Part 4: What Does Virtue Look Like?

W, Nov 12: Susan Wolf, "Moral Saints"

M, Nov 17*: Vanessa Carbonell, "What Moral Saints Look Like"

W, Nov 19: Presentations

M, Nov 24: Presentations

W, Nov 26: No Class (Thanksgiving Break)

M, Dec 1: Presentations

W, Dec 3: Presentations

M, Dec 8: No Class, extra office hours to discuss presentation feedback/final paper

W, Dec 10: No Class, extra office hours to discuss presentation feedback/final paper