Course Overview and Goals
This course explores several major themes in the history of ethics, specifically in the history of modern ethics. Beginning with modern natural law theory, we begin to see notions of obligation and responsibility develop in moral philosophy. We follow the path of these notions through moral sense theory, Kantianism, and utilitarianism. We conclude with an examination of Nietzsche’s response to moral philosophy as he knew it. The course does not presuppose any knowledge of philosophy or philosophical traditions, but it does require a close reading of several major texts.

By the end of the course, you should be able to identify how several major themes in moral philosophy develop or change over the course of the centuries. The themes include: the nature and origin of moral obligation, the nature and origin of moral motivation, and the purpose or goals of moral philosophy.

Assignments
Students taking the course for undergraduate credit
- One class presentation (10%)
  
  Once during the semester, you will be asked to present some ideas and discussion questions to class. You should plan to meet with me before your presentation.

- In-class responses (10%)
  
  You will be asked to write unannounced responses to the lecture or discussion from time to time. This will constitute your participation grade.

- Two ‘argument summaries’ (about 2 pages each) (10% each)
  
  You will be asked to write a two-page summary of an argument. You will be able to choose which argument to write about, but please expect to write one during the first half of the semester, and the other during the last half of the semester.

- Two longer papers (about 7 pages each) (20% each)
  
  You may choose to ‘build’ on your argument summary to write these papers.

- A take-home final exam (30%)

Students taking the course for graduate credit
- One class presentation (20%)

  Once during the semester, you will be asked to present in class. I expect your presentation to be more detailed than a presentation completed for undergraduate credit.

- Reading group (10%)

  Regular attendance at a weekly reading group is expected. We will work our way through Steven Darwall’s The British Moralists and the Internal Ought and either J.B. Schneewind’s The Invention of Autonomy or Sidgwick’s Methods of Ethics.
In-class responses (10%)
You will be asked to write unannounced responses to the lecture or discussion from time to time. This will constitute your participation grade.

Term paper (60%)
About 20 pages, due during finals week. You should think about topics early in the semester.

Texts Available at Bookstore
Please note: These texts are ‘classics’ – if you are looking to save money, you will probably be able to find inexpensive used copies.
Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan (Penguin)
Francis Hutcheson, An Inquiry into the Origin of our Idea of Virtue (Liberty Fund)
David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature (Oxford)
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract (Hackett)
Immanuel Kant, Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals
Jeremy Bentham, The Principles of Morals and Legislation
John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism (Oxford)
Friedrich Nietzsche, The Genealogy of Morals (Oxford)

Course Schedule
Week 1 (January 20): Course Overview

Weeks 2 - 3 (January 25 – February 3)
Modern Natural Law Theories
Readings: Hobbes, Leviathan
Grotius, The Rights of War and Peace, selections (distributed)

Weeks 4 – 7 (February 8 – March 3)
(Note: Week 5: No Class/Spring Recess)
Moral Sense Theories
Readings: Hutcheson, An Inquiry into the Origin of our Idea of Virtue
Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature

Weeks 8 - 10: March 8 - 24
Ethics of Autonomy: Rousseau and Kant
Readings: Rousseau, The Social Contract
Kant, Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals

Week 11 and April 5: No Class/Passover Recess

Weeks 12 - 14: April 7 – April 21
Utilitarianism
Readings: Bentham, The Principles of Morals and Legislation
Mill, Utilitarianism
Week 15: April 26 and 28
Nietzsche
Reading: Nietzsche: *The Genealogy of Morals*

Week 16: May 3
Catch-up day/review