Instructor Information
Prof. Kate Moran
Office: Rabb 353
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Office Hours: Thursdays, 10:00-12:00

Course Overview and Goals
This course will introduce you to some of the major theories about what makes actions right or wrong (so-called ‘normative theories’) and will help you improve upon the way you think and write about moral issues. We will read and discuss both famous historical texts in ethics and contemporary articles about some of the major moral questions of our day.

By the end of this course, you should be able to identify, differentiate, and critically discuss theories like Utilitarianism, Kantianism, and Virtue Ethics. You should also be able to locate the morally-relevant facts of a debate and give a reasoned argument in favor of your position.

Requirements
- Reading Quizzes (10%): Before certain classes, you will be asked to take a short, multiple-choice reading quiz online. The lowest 10% of your scores will be dropped.
- In Class ‘Reflections’ (10%): This is your participation grade. At the end of certain classes, I will ask you to write a 1-page reflection on that class’s discussion. These cannot be made up if you miss one.
- First Impressions Paper (pass/fail; required for course grade): A 3-4 page paper responding to the issues raised in Michael Pollan’s piece. (Due 2/1)
- Take-Home Midterm (20%): To be completed using LATTE. I will give detailed instructions as the exam approaches. (3/4)
- First Impressions Revisited Paper (10%): This is a significant revision/rewrite of your first paper based on what you have learned in the interim. (Due 3/26)
- Longer Paper (25%): About six pages (Due April 19)
- Final Exam (25%): This will be comprised of short answer questions on the main themes of the course.

Required Texts
- John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism
- Immanuel Kant, Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals
- All other reading will be available on LATTE. Please make sure you are able to access the course website and the readings posted there.
- Simon Blackburn’s Ethics: A Very Short Introduction is bundled for free with your textbooks. This is an optional text, but it might be useful to you.

Please Note: If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately either after class or during my office hours.
Course Schedule (subject to change)

Introduction

Wednesday, January 20: Class Introduction (assignments, texts, readings, etc.)

Thursday, January 21: Case Study and Discussion – Food Ethics
Reading: Michael Pollan, “An Animal’s Place” (on LATTE)

I. Challenges to Moral Theory
Optional Reading: Blackburn, pages 9-48

Monday, January 25: Psychological Egoism
Reading: Joel Feinberg, “Psychological Egoism” (on LATTE)

Wednesday, January 27: Ethical Egoism
Reading: Selections from Nietzsche (on LATTE)

Thursday, January 28: Psychological Egoism and Ethical Egoism Compared
Reading: Terrance C. McConnell, “The Argument from Psychological Egoism to Ethical Egoism” (on LATTE)

Monday, February 1: Cultural Relativism
Reading: Ruth Benedict, “In Defense of Cultural Relativism” (on LATTE)

First Impressions Paper Due

Wednesday, February 3: Cultural Relativism
Reading: James Rachels, “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism” (on LATTE)

II. Normative Theories

Thursday, February 4: The Principle of Utility
Reading: Utilitarianism II
Recommended: Peter Vallentyne, “Consequentialism” (in EP)

Monday, February 8: The Principle of Utility
Reading: Utilitarianism IV

Wednesday, February 10: The Principle of Utility
Reading: Utilitarianism V

Thursday, February 11: Act vs. Rule Utilitarianism
Reading: JJC Smart, “Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism” (on LATTE)

Monday, February 15 – Friday, February 19: Midterm Recess
Monday, February 22: Kant’s Theory  
Reading: *Groundwork*, Section I  
*Recommended: McNaughton and Rawling, “Deontology” (in EP)  
Editor’s Introduction to the *Groundwork*  

Wednesday, February 24: Kant’s Theory  
Reading: *Groundwork*, Section II (part one, pages TBA)  

Thursday, February 25: Kant’s Theory  
Reading: *Groundwork*, Section II (remainder)  

Monday, March 1: Virtue Theory  
Reading: Rosalind Hursthouse, “Virtue Theory” (in *EP*)  

Wednesday, March 3: Review of Normative Theories  

Thursday, March 4: **Take-Home Midterm**  

Monday, March 8: Peter Singer, “All Animals are Equal”  
*Also: re-read Michael Pollan’s piece from the beginning of the semester*  

Wednesday, March 10: Michael Allen Fox, “The Moral Community”  


Monday, March 15: Judith Jarvis Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion”  

Wednesday, March 17: Mary Anne Warren, “On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion”  

Thursday, March 18: Don Marquis, “An Argument that Abortion is Wrong”  


Wednesday, March 24: John Stuart Mill, “Freedom of Thought and Discussion”  

Thursday, March 26: Susan J. Brison, “‘The Price we Pay?’ Pornography and Harm”  

**Revised/Rewritten First Impressions Paper Due**  

Monday, March 29 – Tuesday, April 6: Passover and spring recess  

Wednesday, April 7: Andrew Altman, “The Right to Get Turned On”  

Thursday, April 8: John Arthur, “Sticks and Stones”  

Monday, April 12: Andrew Altman, “Speech Codes and Expressive Harms”
Wednesday, April 14: Michele Moody-Adams, “Racism”

Thursday, April 15: Thomas Hill, “Servility and Self-Respect”

Monday, April 19: Anita M. Superson, “Sexual Harassment”

**Longer Paper Due**

Wednesday, April 21: Lois Pineau, “Date Rape”

Thursday, April 23: Larry May and Robert Strikwerda, “Men in Groups: Collective Responsibility for Rape”

Monday, April 26: Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence and Morality”

Wednesday, April 28: John Arthur, “Famine Relief and the Ideal Moral Code”

Thursday, April 29: Holmes Rolston III, “Feeding People vs. Saving Nature”

Monday, May 3: Class Choice/Catch-up

Wednesday, May 5: Class Choice/Catch-up

**Final Exam: Date and Time TBA**