

## PHIL 525: Ethics

Spring Semester 2018  
Tuesdays, 9 – 11.50 am  
Marx Hall 201

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The goal of this seminar is to explore the possibility that *values* – ways in which things might be *good* or *bad*, or *better* or *worse* than other things – might lie at the foundation of ethics and the theory of rational choice and practical reason. In particular, we shall explore the possibility of *non-consequentialist* theory that is grounded on a conception of values.

The seminar will be divided into four parts: (1) *conceptual* issues, about the nature of value-concepts; (2) *formal* issues, about the measurement and aggregation of value; (3) issues about values and *practical reason*; (4) issues about values and *morality*.

One recurrent theme that we will explore is whether, in understanding the nature and structure of the various different values, we can make use of some of the formal tools that have been developed by *decision theorists*. (This theme will be especially prominent in the topics for Weeks 2, 4, 5, 6, and 10.) In Weeks 7, 8, and 11, we will investigate whether in understanding the structural relationships *between* values, we can make use of some of the formal tools that have been developed by *social choice theorists*; the issue of how to accommodate non-consequentialist intuitions will be prominent in Weeks 3, 9, and 12.

### Assessment

To get credit for this seminar, you should *write either* one term paper of 5000-6000 words, or *two* papers of 2500-3000 words. You should come to meet with the instructor early in the semester to devise a plan for how to meet the requirements for getting credit for the course.

### Schedule of Topics

#### Part I: Conceptual issues – the nature of value-concepts

##### 1. 6 February

What value-concepts are there? How do they work? A classic view and one of its critics

- Hurka, *British Ethical Theorists from Sidgwick to Ewing*, Chap. 2
- Geach, “Good and Evil”

##### 2. 13 February

Towards a better account of value concepts?

- Thomson, “The Right and the Good”
- Wedgwood, “The Unity of Normativity”
- Wedgwood, “Values First?”

### 3. 20 February

The ontology of value: Are values primarily exemplified by states of affairs, or by concrete items, or ...? What is the difference between consequentialist and non-consequentialist views?

- Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*, Chap. 2
- Zimmerman, *The Nature of Intrinsic Value*, Chap. 3
- Portmore, *Commonsense Consequentialism*, Chap. 3
- Pettit, “Consequentialism”

### 4. 27 February

Is goodness is reducible to betterness? Is the “fitting attitude equivalence” correct? If it is correct, what is its significance?

- Broome, “Goodness is reducible to betterness”
- Bykvist, “No Good Fit: Why the Fitting Attitude Analysis Fails”
- Rabinowicz and Rønnow-Rasmussen, “The Strike of the Demon”
- Wedgwood, “The ‘Good’ and the ‘Right’ Revisited”

### 5. 6 March

The varieties of value: Intrinsic vs. extrinsic value, final vs. instrumental value, simple vs. complex value, etc.

- Zimmerman, “Intrinsic vs. extrinsic value”
- Korsgaard, “Two Distinctions in Goodness”
- Hurka, *Virtue, Vice, and Value*, Chaps. 1–2
- Pettit, *The Robust Demands of the Good*, Preview and Chap. 1

## Part II: Formal issues – the measurement and aggregation of value

### 6. 13 March

The measurement of value: Value and expected value

- Broome, *Weighing Goods*, Chaps. 5–6
- Krantz et al. *Foundations of Measurement*, Vol. 1, Chaps. 3–4 and 8, esp. pp. 71–75, 136–148, and 369–382.
- Joyce, *Foundations of Causal Decision Theory*, Chap. 2

### 7. 27 March

The aggregation of value

- Broome, *Weighing Goods*, Chap. 10
- Harsanyi, “Cardinal Welfare, Individualistic Ethics, and Interpersonal Comparisons of Utility”, esp. § III, pp. 314–316.
- Mongin and Pivato, “Social Evaluation under Risk and Uncertainty”

### Part III: Values and Practical Reason

#### 8. 3 April

Values and reasons for action

- Snedegar, *Contrastive Reasons*, Chaps. 1–2
- Raz, *Engaging Reason*, Chap. 2

#### 9. 10 April

The distinctive values of acts: Double effect; the doing / allowing distinction; etc.

- Wedgwood, “Intrinsic Values and Reasons for Action”
- Wedgwood, “Defending Double Effect”

#### 10. 17 April

*Akrasia* and value: Choice, and uncertainty

- Wedgwood, “Gandalf’s Solution to the Newcomb Problem”
- Wedgwood, “*Akrasia* and Uncertainty”

### Part IV: Values and Morality

#### 11. 24 April

How do moral values relate to other values?

- Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, Concluding Chapter
- Foot, “Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives”
- Wedgwood, “The Weight of Moral Reasons”

#### 12. 1 May

The distinctive character of moral value

- Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*, Chap. 4
- Wedgwood, “Two Grades of Non-Consequentialism”

### References

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