

Spring 2022 Graduate Seminar
Princeton University
PHI 525. Ethics

Tuesdays, noon-2:50pm
Marx Hall 201

Professor:
Elizabeth Harman
elizabethharman.org
eharman@princeton.edu

Heroes and Jerks

What should you do when there are wonderful things you could do that you don't have to do?
What should you do when morality allows you to do lousy things?

This course will examine moral questions within the realm of the morally permissible. In each half of the course, we will start with some general, more abstract questions, and then move into an in-depth discussion of a more specific topic: in the first half of the course, effective altruism; in the second half of the course, sexual morality.

There are wonderful things we could do for other people that morality does not require us to do. Must we do some of these things? How much of them should we do? Here is one you could do right now; should you do it? There may also be lousy things we could do to others that morality allows us to do. We might say, "he is a jerk for doing that, but it wasn't wrong"; could that be true? Should we always avoid the lousy things that aren't wrong, even though they aren't wrong?

Effective altruists hold both that we should be doing quite a bit for others and that there is a very specific way we should be helping others: we should be doing good *as effectively as possible* when we do good. How can we make the claims of effective altruists precise? Are their claims plausible? It is often less efficient to help the disabled and ill than to help the able-bodied and healthy – do the claims of effective altruists problematically discriminate? If effective altruism is true, how much should we be doing, and what specifically should we be doing?

When it comes to sexual morality, there is a lot of focus on *consent* and the very serious moral wrong of having non-consensual sex with someone. (That's rape.) But what does this focus on consent miss regarding sexual morality? What are the moral wrongs in sex that are not about consent? Is there a morally interesting phenomenon of being lousy to others, when it comes to sex, without treating them morally wrongly? And do some actions go above and beyond what morality demands when it comes to sex? We will examine sexual morality beyond consent.

Guest Professors

The following philosophers will join us via Zoom to discuss their work with us:

Julia Driver (University of Texas, Austin)
Quill Kukla (Georgetown University)
Amia Srinivasan (Oxford University)
Plus one more!

Seminar Schedule

This schedule is tentative. It will be revised during the semester.

1. Heroes:

The Supererogatory:

- What is the supererogatory?
- Do we need a category of the supererogatory?
- Can consequentialists acknowledge the supererogatory?
- Should you sometimes do the supererogatory thing?

Reading for January 25:

- Terry Horgan and Mark Timmons, “Untying a Knot from the Inside Out: Reflections on the ‘Paradox’ of Supererogation,” *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 2010

Reading for February 1 and February 8:

- Paul McNamara, “Supererogation Inside and Out,” *Oxford Studies in Normative Ethics*, 2011
- Neil Sinhababu, “Scalar consequentialism the right way,” *Philosophical Studies*, 2018
- Alfred Archer, “Supererogation and Consequentialism,” in *Oxford Handbook of Consequentialism*, 2020
- Larissa McFarquar, Chapters from *Strangers Drowning* (Penguin Books, 2015)
- Elizabeth Harman, “Morality Beyond Requirement,” Chapter 1, *When to Be a Hero*, in progress
- Elizabeth Harman, “Views that Reject the Expansive View,” Ch. 2, *When to Be a Hero*

Effective Altruism:

A guest professor will visit the seminar via Zoom to discuss effective altruism.

(Details are being worked out.)

Readings for February 15, February 22, and March 1:

- Hilary Greaves and Theron Pummer, “Introduction” to *Effective Altruism*, Oxford University Press, 2019
- William MacAskill, “The Definition of Effective Altruism,” in *Effective Altruism*, 2019
- Amia Srinivasan, “Effective Altruism and Its Limits,” in *Norton Introduction to Ethics*, forthcoming
- Richard Yetter Chappell, “Overriding Virtue” in *Effective Altruism*, 2019
- Emma Saunders-Hastings, “Benevolent Giving and the Problem of Paternalism” in *Effective Altruism*, 2019
- Elizabeth Harman, “Effective altruism,” Chapter 10, *When to Be a Hero*

No course session on March 8 (Spring break).

2. Jerks:

The supererogatory:

What is the supererogatory?

Is the supererogatory real?

What are the parallels and disanalogies between the supererogatory and the supererogatory?

On March 15, Guest Professor Julia Driver (University of Texas, Austin) visits via Zoom

Readings for March 15:

- Julia Driver, "The Supererogatory," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 1992
- Hallie Liberto, "Denying the Supererogatory," *Philosophia*, 2012
- Julia Driver, "Blame and the Supererogatory," manuscript

3. Heroes and Jerks in Bed

On April 5, Guest Professor Quill Kukla (Georgetown University) visits via Zoom.

The week of April 25-29, Guest Professor Amia Srinivasan (Oxford Univ.) visits via Zoom.

Readings for March 22, March 29, April 5, April 12, and April 26:

- Carol Hay, "Sexual Violence," *Think Like a Feminist*, W.W. Norton, 2020
- Kate Manne, "Unwanted—On the Entitlement to Sex," *Entitled: How Male Privilege Hurts Women*, Crown 2020
- Tom Dougherty, Chapters from *The Scope of Consent*, Oxford University Press, 2021
- Linda Alcoff, Chapters from *Rape and Resistance*, Polity, 2018
- Joseph J. Fischel, Chapters from *Screw Consent*, University of California Press, 2019
- Charles Mills, "Do Black Men have a Moral Obligation to Marry Black Women?" *Journal of Social Philosophy* 1994
- Robin Zheng, "Why Yellow Fever Isn't Flattering: A Case Against Racial Fetishes," *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 2016
- Quill Kukla, "That's What She Said: The Language of Sexual Negotiation," *Ethics* 2018
- Quill Kukla, "A Nonideal Theory of Sexual Consent," *Ethics* 2021
- Elizabeth Harman, "Sexual morality," Chapter 11, *When to Be a Hero*
- Amia Srinivasan, Chapters from *The Right to Sex: Feminism in the Twenty-First Century*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021

Getting Credit for the Course:

Graduate students in Princeton's philosophy department can take the course for credit to earn a unit by doing the following things. Graduate students in other departments and undergraduate students can take the course for credit and get a grade by doing the following things.

- Give one class presentation.
- Write one 5-6 page paper, due in week six.
- Write one 15-20 page paper, due during reading period (the week after classes end). (The longer paper can be an expansion of the shorter paper.)

For a class presentation, a student either presents and leads a discussion of one of the assigned readings, or presents their own ideas and argument (such as the argument of one of their papers).

If a philosophy graduate student would like to earn an oral exam unit, then an oral exam can be done on the basis of the long paper.

Any student auditing the course can give a class presentation.

Non-Princeton-University students who want to attend the course must be fully vaccinated against COVID and must have received a booster shot. Email me for the form giving you permission to enter campus buildings.

COVID safety

Do not come to class if you have any symptoms of illness. (I may be able to provide a Zoom link, but in general this is not a hybrid class.) Wear a high-quality mask, better than a cloth mask or a surgical mask, such as an N95, a KN95, or a KF95. If you do not have access to such masks, let me know; I have a limited quantity that I can distribute (including before the first day). Wear a mask that stays in place, fully covering your nose and mouth, without your having to touch or adjust the mask, even if you carry on a lengthy conversation.