

Ethics/Politics
1st Year Tutorials in Philosophy

Tutor: Mary Guzelian

Meeting Time: Tuesdays 12:00 – 13:00 or 14:00 – 15:00

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Requirements:

1. To do all assigned reading for each class.
2. To participate actively: to be prepared to ask questions, to think about and discuss the issues raised by the reading.
3. An essay of not more than 1000 words to be turned in at the start of each tutorial. Late essays will be marked zero, but will still be commented on and returned to the student.
4. All essays must either be emailed or turned in on floppy disk.

Week I:

Required reading: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part I: 'Of Man,' especially chapters 13-15 and 17-21.

Optional reading: J. Wolf, 'Hobbes and the motivations of social contract theory' in *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 1994

Essay question: Can Hobbes' second contract go through? Please explain your answer.

Questions to think about:

What is Hobbes' description of man?

Why do people want to leave the state of nature?

What is the state of nature?

What are the gender relations in the state of nature? in the commonwealth?

What role does philosophy play here?

Week II:

Required reading: J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chapter 5 'On the Connection between Justice and Utility'

Optional reading: J. Glover, *Utilitarianism and its Critics* and the rest of Mill's *Utilitarianism*

Essay questions: For the essay I would like you to pick one point raised by Mill that you find significant and argue both for and against it.

Questions to think about:

Is Mill's proof for hedonism successful? Why or why not?

In what sense does utilitarianism aim to treat people equally? Are there better ways of doing this?

Does utilitarianism clash with some of our moral intuitions? If so, is this a weakness of utilitarianism?

Week III:

Required reading: J. S. Mill, *On Liberty*

Optional reading: R. Dworkin, 'Liberalism' in his *A Matter of Principle*

Essay questions: According to Mill, what is political liberty, how valuable is it, and from where does it draw its value?

Questions to think about:

What is the 'tyranny of the majority'?

In Chapter 2 of On Liberty Mill presents four arguments as to why restrictions on free expression are illegitimate. What are they and how does he argue for them? Do the arguments withstand scrutiny?

Week IV:

Required reading: Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, Section 2.

Optional reading: D. Wiggins, 'Categorical Requirements: Kant and Hume on the Idea of Duty' in *The Monist* 83-106.

Essay question: Kant claims that the supreme principle of morality is supposed to be a categorical imperative; Kant claims that there is only one categorical imperative; and he gives several allegedly equivalent, formulations of it. What are the different formulations of the categorical imperative and are they equivalent? Please explain your answer.

Questions to think about:

Does the demand for a categorical imperative really follow from the presuppositions of common morality?

Why does Kant think prudence (rational consideration for one's own interest) cannot yield a categorical imperative)? Is he right?

Kant's claims that morality consists (i) in treating persons as ends in themselves, and (ii) in the autonomy, as opposed to the heteronomy, of the will, have attracted attention. But what do they mean, and are they really supported by his argument?

Week V:

Required reading: Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, Book III, part 2, sections 2-12 and *Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, Sections III and V.

Optional reading: Plato, *Republic*, Book II. And John Mackie, *Hume's Moral Theory*

Essay question: Hume's account of justice is a broadly utilitarian explanation of moral principles that, as Hume insists, might at first sight seem non-utilitarian. His argument introduces some of the main strategies available for those who want to give a utilitarian explanation of common-sense morality, and some of the main difficulties facing such an explanation. Please explain Hume's account of justice and its utilitarian underpinnings.

Academic accommodation:

Please let me know if you are a student who needs academic accommodation because of a documented disability. You should present your letter of accommodation as soon as possible.

Academic integrity:

You are here as a student to learn, to the best of your ability, philosophy. This is not an easy task, but you are capable of it. Undermining your potential by passing another's work as your own is not only malicious to the person whose work it is, but is detrimental to your own academic growth. The only way to learn philosophy is to do it. If you have any questions or concerns, please talk to me.

See §59 of the Department of Philosophy: Undergraduate Handbook 2003 - 2004 for a definition of plagiarism.

Another good source for this is the University of London study guide for Philosophy. It should also be noted that this is an excellent study guide and will be of great use to your years of study in philosophy.