

PHIL 2020: *Issues in Practical Philosophy* (Winter 2022, Prof. Gordon Davis, Dept of Philosophy)

Mondays & Wednesdays 4:05 – 5:25

Email: Gordon.Davis@carleton.ca (* Pls always email me from your ‘carleton.ca’ address.)

Prefatory note:

Fortunately, this will be an in-person class! However, due to a variety of circumstances (to be discussed in our first class), there are some contingencies we have to plan for, including the possibility of a few weeks of class being replaced – in the same timeslots – by live Zoom sessions. This may not happen, and probably will not happen more than once or twice. So, if any segment of this course moves online, this would be (a) probably temporary, and (b) ‘synchronous’, IE, the usual meeting times would be kept, and the planned class discussions would proceed as planned. **Please check your cunet.carleton email inboxes as often as possible**; advance notice of Zoom substitute sessions will be emailed, although – being due to contingencies, if needed at all – the advance notice may end up being in the order of days rather than weeks.

REQUIRED READINGS (all available at www.library.carleton.ca)

1. Robert Kane, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will* (Oxford: OUP, 2005), chs. 1-11
2. Charles Goodman, *Consequences of Compassion* (Oxford: OUP, 2009), ch. 2 + excerpts(tba)
3. R. Shafer-Landau, TBA (on moral scepticism, anti-realism and moral relativism)
4. Mary Midgley, *Heart and Mind: Varieties of Moral Experience* (Routledge 1981), ch. 5
5. Jesse Prinz, *The Emotional Construction of Morals* (OUP 2007), chs. 5 & 8
6. Selected entries from *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (plato.stanford.edu), TBA

* *Depending on which essay topics you choose – especially wrt the **Final** Essay – other readings may also be required (as noted in online material relating to the various essay topics).*

COURSE DESCRIPTION and COURSE OBJECTIVES:

This course is a selective introduction to value theory in the broadest sense – an ‘introduction’ because most students who already have exposure to ethics will have taken ‘applied ethics’ rather than theoretical ethics; and ‘selective’ because rather than covering everything, we need to see how deeply the tools of contemporary philosophy can dig in this area, before surveying how broadly we can apply the ideas and theories of value analysis and norm analysis, as well as those of traditional ethics. (We need not avoid ‘applied ethics’, but since that area is sometimes equated with ‘*practical* ethics’, it will be important to partly disentangle the latter from the notion of ‘practical philosophy’ as it appears in the course title.)

‘Value theory’ has never been well-defined, but it is often meant to cover things like philosophical aesthetics and virtue epistemology, as well as ethics and adjacent fields such as normative political theory. It also overlaps, to some extent, with moral psychology. Insofar as the latter addresses (inter alia) the rational regulation of desire, and the difference between automatism and conscious action, one key – and classic – problem in that field is the problem of free will. Theories of free will can also have ethical implications. Another reason this will be our first topic, though, is because it helps to show that many of the same tools we use in ‘theoretical philosophy’ remain important in ‘practical philosophy’.

We'll begin, then, with the free will problem, and then come at meta-ethics from a few different angles, interpolating a discussion of normative principles and theories (such as consequentialism and deontology) before tackling meta-ethical topics such as objectivity and relativism. As a theoretical introduction to an advanced field of philosophical analysis, many of our topics may not seem to be of pressing social importance. However, it would seem that themes surrounding the idea(s) of relativism have become flashpoints for some issues of vital contemporary importance (especially in a global context), so naturally this will be worth discussing as well; and this may also be true of the free will problem, among others.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS:

Week 1 (January 10-12) Introduction & overview

Reading (**for Jan. 12**): Kane, *Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, chs. 1-2

Week 2 (January 17-19) Free will: compatibilism, incompatibilism and parallels in other debates

Readings: Kane, *Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, chs. 3-4

Week 3 (January 24-26) Free will: reasons vs causes (and relevance to meta-ethics)

Readings: Kane, *Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, chs. 5-8

Week 4 (Jan. 31-Feb. 2) 'Living without free will'? Ethical implications of the free will debate

Readings: Kane (chs 9-11) & SEP entries on reasons and rationality (tba)

Week 5 (Feb. 7-9) From meta-ethical debate to normative ethics (the purpose(s) of moral theories)

Readings: Kane (continued), Goodman (ch. 2) & SEP entries (tba)

Week 6 (Feb. 14-16) From normative uncertainty to the notion(s) of moral relativism

Readings: Goodman (*Consequences of Compassion*, excerpts tba) & SEP entries (tba)

READING WEEK BREAK: * no class on Feb. 21-23**

Week 8 (Feb. 28-Mar. 2) Overview of meta-ethics

Readings: Shafer-Landau excerpts (tba) & SEP entries (tba)

Week 9 (Mar. 7-9) Review of ethical theories in (unstable) relation to 'normative' relativism

Readings: Goodman (review), Mary Midgley, ch. 5, SEP's "Moral Relativism"

Week 10 (Mar. 14-16) The scope of relativism debate(s)

Readings: Midgley and J. Prinz (ch. 5)

Week 11 (Mar. 21-23) Reprise of reasons and causes (metaphilosophy and 'companions in guilt')

Readings: J. Prinz (ch. 8) & SEP entries (tba)

Week 12 (Mar. 28-30) The scope of meta-ethics and (other levels of) ethical 'theory'

Readings: Shafer-Landau (review), Prinz & tba

Week 13 (April 4-6) Review of themes & review of essay guidelines

April 15 : Final Essay due by midnight (via email)

... **April 27 : Optional take-home essay due by midnight**

EVALUATION (w/ weight of assignments as percentage of total mark):

Two short reading ass'ts	20 % (10 + 10, first on R. Kane text, second TBA)
Mid-term essay	30 % (choices of topic TBA)
Final essay	40 % (choices of topic TBA; some room for consultation on topic)
Optional take-home essay	(can replace half of the first essay mark)
Participation	10 % (full attendance guarantees full marks)

Essay instructions will specify minimum and maximum length (on website). Essays that are significantly beyond the word limit will not be marked and will have to be resubmitted within a specified period of time. **It's your responsibility to check your Carleton email, each day following your submission, for replies about this or about the formatting you've used, in case it needs correcting.**

The main components of evaluation concern the following: clarity of thesis statement (and other 'signposting'), logical and effective use of argument, due consideration of objections (with effective replies), balanced essay structure, effective use of relevant readings (with full and consistent citations), sensitive interpretation of primary texts, effective writing style (including basics such as grammar, spelling and punctuation, as well as clarity in wording and phrasing), and originality in thesis and/or arguments.

More will be said in class about these expectations and their role in how we evaluate the essays. A point to be emphasized here, though, concerns 'originality'. There are two different senses in which essays should be 'original'. In one sense, 'originality' involves coming up with ideas and arguments that are novel (or outside the norm for this level); this can be quite difficult, and those earning the highest marks generally do well on this score, while good essays may show only a modest degree of originality in this sense. In another sense, an essay is 'original' when it is entirely a student's own work, and any ideas in it that derive from the work of others are duly credited in citations of these sources. In this sense, 'originality' is not a component of the mark, but is simply an absolute minimum requirement. If any part of an essay – apart from explicit quotations – is not original *in this sense*, the student has committed the serious offence of *plagiarism* (...)

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON PLAGIARISM:

According to the Undergraduate Calendar's definition (in section 14 of "University Regulations"), it constitutes *plagiarism* "to use and pass off as one's own idea or product work of another without expressly giving credit to another." It is the responsibility of each student to understand this definition, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding/abetting plagiarism by other students. Penalties for plagiarism are decided by the Dean's office, and can range from an automatic zero on the assignment to suspension or expulsion from the university.

OTHER POLICIES:

Submission of essays: Essays should be attached & sent to **Gordon.Davis@carleton.ca**. Your essay must arrive before midnight on the due date, to be on time. **You are also responsible for sending a reformatted document within 24 hours in case I contact you about a problem with your file or format (which**

means: * you're required to check for any email from me within 48 hours of submission, in case there is any such problem, or else a late penalty may apply).**

Presentation / formatting of essays: Save your document, (a) with a doc. title indicating your name and your topic, (b) in a format compatible with Word, which includes most formats *except 'odt'*. Begin p. 1 with a title, *but not a title page*; and include your name on p. 1. **Indicate the topic # in both the subject line of your email, and in the title of your document.** Re. methods of citation: I accept MLA, APA or Chicago style, provided you stick to whichever you choose; however, I may add a few requirements of my own, which apply regardless of which style you use (if specified in essay instructions).

Consultations re. essays: Neither the teaching assistant nor I will be able to read pre-submission drafts of essays. In the case of the only long essay required (the final essay), we may be able to look at summary outlines of less than a page (point-form) – but only if we are approached well in advance of a due date. For more help with structuring your draft(s), you can contact the university's 'Writing Tutorial Service'.

Extensions: Extensions will be granted only upon presentation of a medical certificate, or other documented emergency or crisis. *It is essential that I have documents that have been signed by a professional whose contact info. is well indicated.* Requests based on conflicts with other coursework will not be granted.

Late essays: **Late submissions will lose 5 % per day.** *Also, essays submitted late will get lowest (last) priority in the order of marking. Prompt return of results cannot be guaranteed in general; but this is particularly true for essays that are received late.* (See below for other dept./univ. policies...)

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2021-22)

Assignments:

Please follow your professor's instructions on how assignments will be handled electronically. There will be NO hard copies placed in the essay box this coming year.

Evaluation:

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Deferrals for Term Work:

If students are unable to complete term work because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control, they should contact their course instructor no later than three working days of the due date. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of the term. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.

Deferrals for Final Exams:

Students are expected to be available for the duration of a course including the examination period. Occasionally, students encounter circumstances beyond their control where they may not be able to write a final examination or submit a take-home examination. Examples of this would be a serious illness or the death of a family member. If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a take-home examination by the due date, you may apply for a deferral no later than three working days after the original due date (as per the University Regulations in Section 4.3 of the Undergraduate Calendar). Visit the Registrar's Office for further information.

Plagiarism:

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of 'plagiarism' as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. (Section 10.1 of the Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations)

Academic Accommodation:

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term:

- Pregnancy or religious obligation: write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the EDC website.
- Academic accommodations for students with disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class test or exam requiring accommodation. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your professor to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.
- Survivors of Sexual Violence: As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy.
- Accommodation for Student Activities: Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

Important Dates:

Sept. 8 Classes start.

Sept. 22 Last day for registration and course changes for fall term and fall/winter (two-term) courses.

Sept. 30 Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from fall term or two-term courses.

Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.

Oct. 11 Statutory holiday. University closed.

Oct. 25-29 Fall Break – no classes.

Nov. 26 Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, before the official examination period.

Dec. 10 Last day of fall term classes. Classes follow a Monday schedule. Last day for academic withdrawal from fall term courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for term work for a fall term course.

Dec. 11-23 Final examinations for fall term courses and mid-term examinations in two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.

Dec. 23 All take-home examinations are due.

Jan. 10 Classes begin.

Jan. 24 Last day for registration and course changes in the winter term.

Jan. 31 Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter term courses or from the winter portion of two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.

Feb. 21 Statutory holiday. University closed.

Feb. 22-25 Winter Break – no classes.

Mar. 29 Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in winter term or fall/winter courses before the official examination period.

Apr. 12 Last day of two-term and winter term classes. Classes follow a Friday schedule. Last day for academic withdrawal from fall/winter and winter courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for two-term and for winter term courses.

Apr. 13 No classes or examinations take place.

Apr. 14-28 Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.

Apr. 15 Statutory holiday. University closed.

Apr. 28 All take-home examinations are due.

Addresses:

Department of Philosophy:
www.carleton.ca/philosophy
520-2110

Registrar's Office:
www.carleton.ca/registrar
520-3500

Academic Advising Centre:
www.carleton.ca/academicadvising
520-7850

Writing Services:
<http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/>
520-3822

MacOdrum Library
<http://www.library.carleton.ca/>
520-2735