PHIL 2020: *Issues in* *Practical Philosophy* (Fall 2024, Prof. Gordon Davis, Dept of Philosophy)

Wednesdays & Fridays 4:05 – 5:25

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

Office hours: Fridays 3:00-4:00 (or by appointment)

Prefatory note:

Several key evaluations will be held in class on Fridays. Weekend travel will not be accepted as justification for absence on those dates, hence requests for make-up arrangements will be denied in such cases. Absences due to other circumstances will require the official process of reporting, determining the scope (if any) for such arrangements.

REQUIRED READINGS (all available as online texts at [www.library.carleton.ca](http://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. B. Hooker, *Ideal Code Real World* (OUP 2000)+ Hooker @ SEP online: “Rule-Conseq’sm”
4. J.L. Mackie, ch. 1 of *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (London: Penguin, 1977)
5. Mary Midgley, *Heart and Mind: Varieties of Moral Experience* (Routledge 1981), ch. 5
6. Jesse Prinz, *The Emotional Construction of Morals* (OUP 2007), chs. 5 & 8
7. Selected entries from *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (plato.stanford.edu), TBA

\* *Depending on which essay topics you choose, other readings may also be required (as noted in online material relating to 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:

(Note: the timing of topics and readings may be subject to change, which whenever possible will be announced via the course website.)

Week 1 (Sept. 4-6) Introduction & overview

Reading: Kane, *Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, chs. 1-2

Week 2 (Sept. 11-13) Free will: compatibilism, incompatibilism and parallels in other debates

Readings: Kane, *Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, chs. 1-4

Week 3 (Sept. 18-20) Free will: reasons vs causes (and relevance to meta-ethics)

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

Week 4 (Sept. 25-27) ‘Living w/o free will’ Ethical/legal implications [**Fri Sept 27: In-class essay # 1**]

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

Week 5 (Oct. 2-4) From meta-ethical debate to normative ethics (the purpose(s) of moral theories)

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

Week 6 (Oct. 9-11) From normative uncertainty to the notion(s) of moral relativism

Readings: Goodman, Mackie & SEP tba (+ optional: J. Prinz on relativism: chs. 5 & 8)

Week 7 (Oct. 16-18) Overview of meta-ethics [**Fri, Oct. 18: In-class essay # 2**]

Readings: Mackie and Hooker excerpts (tba) & SEP entries (tba)

**“Week 8”… READING WEEK BREAK: \*\*\* no class on Oct. 23-25**

Week 9 (Oct. 30-Nov. 1) Review of ethical theories, in light of so-called ‘normative’ relativism

Readings: Mackie (review), Mary Midgley, ch. 5, + SEP’s “Moral Relativism”

Week 10 (Nov. 6-8) The scope of the relativism debate(s)

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

Week 11 (Nov. 13-15) Reprise of reasons and causes (metaphilosophy and ‘companions in guilt’)

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

Week 12 (Nov. 20-22) The scope of meta-ethics & purpose(s) of ‘theory’ [Fri]

Readings: Hooker (review), Prinz & tba

Week 13 (Nov. 27-29) Interconnections: Praxis vs. metaphysics and epistemology

(… with time allotted for followup essay consultation / discussion; readings tba)

Week 14 (Weds. only: Dec. 4) Review of main themes & Preview of advanced ethical theory

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)

First Essay(s) consultation 10 %

Final Essay consultation 10 %

In-class essay I 15 % (topic(s): free will)

In-class essay II 15 % (topic(s): meta-ethics)

In-class essay III 15 % (choice of topics TBA; some room for consultation on topic)

Optional take-home essay (can replace weakest of three essay marks)

Participation 15 % (mainly based on attendance records)

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 (sometimes involving citation requirements), 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.

SOME OTHER RULES AND POLICIES:

1. Phones and devices must be kept off during class; other recording devices also not permitted;
2. Permission to use a laptop for notetaking must be requested in advance, based on special needs;
3. Pls notify me of PMC accommodations, and/or any intention to seek one, before end of Week 4;
4. To qualify to write a make-up assignment, you must consult with me in advance, except possibly in certain emergencies that prevent attendance (proof of which is required, to qualify for consideration); some make-up assignments may require an oral component (as part of the mark) before &/or after submission of the assignment;
5. You are responsible for noting, *in class*, announcements made during lectures that may modify any of the above; you should therefore explain to me any absences, and if duly explained by the next class date, you may then request – in person – updates on policies, weights or scheduling (if any).

RE. OPTIONAL TAKE-HOME ESSAY:

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.

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.*

**Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2024-25)**

**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](https://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulationsoftheuniversity/examinations/#deferred-final-exams)). Visit the [Registrar’s Office](https://carleton.ca/registrar/special-requests/) 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](https://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulationsoftheuniversity/academic-integrity-and-offenses-of-conduct/#academic-integrity-policy))

**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](https://carleton.ca/edc/teachingresources/administrative-pedagogy/academic-accommodations/) website.
* *Academic accommodations for students with disabilities:* The [Paul Menton Centre](https://carleton.ca/pmc/) 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](mailto: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](https://carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support/).
* *Accommodation for* [*Student Activities*](https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf)*:* 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. 4 Classes start.

Sept. 17 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. 14 Statutory holiday. University closed.

Oct. 21-25 Fall Break – no classes.

Nov. 22 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. 6 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. 9-21 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. 21 All take-home examinations are due.

Jan. 6 Classes begin.

Jan. 17 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. 17 Statutory holiday. University closed.

Feb. 17-21 Winter Break – no classes.

Mar. 15 Last day for academic withdrawal from fall/winter and winter courses.

Mar. 25 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. 8 Last day of two-term and winter term classes.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. 9-10 No classes or examinations take place.

Apr. 11-26 Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.

Apr. 18 Statutory holiday. University closed.

Apr. 26 All take-home examinations are due.

**Addresses:**

Department of Philosophy:

[www.carleton.ca/philosophy](http://www.carleton.ca/philosophy)

520-2110

Registrar’s Office:

[www.carleton.ca/registrar](http://www.carleton.ca/registrar)

520-3500

Academic Advising Centre:

[www.carleton.ca/academicadvising](http://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