

# Ethical and Moral Practice (FIL-3008)

## IDENTITY AND MORALITY

*MA course, Philosophy*

*University of Tromsø*

*Winter Semester, 2018*

### **Course overview**

This course will focus on personal identity and its role in ethical theory. We will discuss several theories of personal identity and examine their implications for our views about prudence, moral responsibility, bioethics, distributive justice, and special obligations.

Persons seem to persist through some physical and psychological changes, but not others. What are the conditions of personal identity through time, and how are they related to a person's physical and psychological characteristics? What unites different stages of a single life, and what distinguishes stages in different lives? Some views about personal identity are reductionist, claiming that a person's persistence is a matter of familiar physical and/or psychological facts; others deny these reductionist claims. We will look at the classical debate between reductionists, such as John Locke and non-reductionists such as Joseph Butler and Thomas Reid (1710-1796), and also consider the eliminativist position of David Hume. After this, we will turn to contemporary discussions, especially the imaginative and resourceful defense of psychological reductionism by Derek Parfit. In the second half of the course, we will then discuss the role personal identity plays in moral philosophy. Our focus will be on prudence, moral responsibility, bioethics (abortion and advance directives), distributive justice, and special obligations. (Note: this is provisional and depending on student interests, the list of topics can change.)

### **Form of instruction**

The course will be taught through weekly 2-hour long seminars (10-12 in number). Each seminar will discuss one piece of writing presented by one or more students. (NB: Both the exact form of instruction and the number of seminars may change depending on eventual student numbers.)

## Course schedule

### 1. LOCKE AND HIS CRITICIS: THE MEMORY CRITERION.

(Note: these are short pieces.)

Locke, 'Of Identity and Diversity' in. Perry

Reid, 'Of Identity' and 'Of Mr. Locke's Account of Our Personal Identity' in. Perry

Butler, 'Of Personal Identity' in. Perry

### 2. ELIMINATIVISM

Hume, 'Our Idea of Identity', 'Of Personal Identity' and 'Second Thoughts' in. Perry

### 3. PSYCHOLOGICAL REDUCTIONISM AND ITS RIVALS I

Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, Chapter 10

### 4. PSYCHOLOGICAL REDUCTIONISM AND ITS RIVALS II

Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, Chapter 11

### 5. PSYCHOLOGICAL REDUCTIONISM AND ITS RIVALS III

Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, Chapter 12

### 6. PSYCHOLOGICAL REDUCTIONISM AND ITS RIVALS IV

Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, Chapter 13

### 7. REDUCTIONISM AND SPECIAL CONCERN

Perry, 'The Importance of Being Identical' in. Rorty

### 8. REDUCTIONISM AND PRUDENCE

Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, Chapter 14

### 9. REDUCTIONISM AND MORALITY

Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, Chapter 15

### 10. REDUCTIONISM AND BIOETHICS I: ADVANCE DIRECTIVES

Buchanan and Brock, *Deciding for Others*, Chapter 3

### 11. REDUCTIONISM AND BIOETHICS II: ABORTION

Conee, 'Metaphysics and the Morality of Abortion'

Note: All readings are uploaded to Canvas.