

<p style="text-align: center;">PHIL 101 ETHICS MODULE HANDBOOK</p>
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A. Tutor Details

Lecturers

Juan Arana; module coordinator, arana@liv.ac.uk

Attila Tanyi; atanyi@liv.ac.uk

Offices

Arana: Room 341, Department of Philosophy, Walnut House, 3rd Floor, Mulberry Court

Tanyi: Room 346, Department of Philosophy, Walnut House, 3rd Floor, Mulberry Court

Office Hours

Arana: Tuesday 10-12. Please contact me beforehand.

Tanyi: Tuesday 14-16. Please contact me beforehand (preferably via email).

Office hours are times when the tutor has committed to be in his office and free to see any students who turn up. You do not need an appointment, but it is advisable to contact us beforehand to better assist you. Use these hours if you have a problem with the module and need to talk to the lecturer about it. If there is anything you wish to discuss about your studies in general, you should speak to your academic advisor in the first instance.

B. Teaching

This is a 15 credit module and so the contact teaching is delivered through **two weekly lectures** and one weekly seminar (starting in week 2), with students required to attend each. The lectures are primarily *teacher*-led and are designed to cover the main ground of the topic for that week. You may ask questions or offer comments during the lectures and time will always be left at the end of each lecture for further discussion. The seminars are designed to discuss the reading for that week, led by the teacher but also building on the active participation of the students.

To get the most out of the module it is essential that you follow the lectures and seminars and, as outlined below, do the associated reading. The lecture and seminars times have been scheduled by ORBIT.

Lecture times/places:

Lecture 1: Wednesday 12-13:00. Mathematical Science Building, Room 029. Building 206 on your campus map.

Lecture 2: Thursday, same time and location as above.

Lectures in weeks 1, 10, 11, and 12 will be taught by Attila Tanyi. The remaining lectures will be taught by Juan Arana. Seminars will be team taught by several members of staff. See your timetable to find the time and location of your seminar group. *Please note that lectures start in week 1 and seminars start in week 2.*

C. Module Overview

In this module, we will be considering how moral philosophy is done by contemporary figures in philosophy, but also how it has been pursued historically. The issues and arguments raised in the texts you read will structure the lectures and the assessment. So, it is of the utmost priority that you get to grips with them thoroughly.

Aims of the Module

‘How should one live?’ is the one of the guiding question for the study of ethics. To answer it requires reflection on the idea of the good life and the difference between the right thing to do and the wrong thing to do, as well as on the existence of virtues and of an objective moral code that everyone ought to follow. This introductory module will approach such issues in terms of both the contemporary debates philosophers are engaged in and also key historical contributions to ethics. Questions students will be exploring include: ‘is a good action more about good intentions than beneficial outcomes?’, ‘does lying possess an objective property of badness?’, ‘ought different people to follow different moral codes?’ and ‘what activities lead to a good life?’ The module aims to introduce students to key concepts in ethics – both meta-ethics and normative ethics. Students will gain an acquaintance with the main approaches to moral theory (such as virtue ethics, deontology, utilitarianism), as well as key debates in meta-ethics (such as subjectivism vs. objectivism, naturalism vs. non-naturalism). The

module starts with a general introduction to ethics, then moves on to discussing different normative ethical theories, and ends with lectures on skepticism about ethics.

The module content is structured roughly in the following order, but you should bear in mind that there are many interconnections between the weekly lecture topics for which you should be on the lookout (bear in mind also that the seminar discussion will typically focus on issues related to the previous week's lecture topics).

Weekly lecture topics:

Week 1 Introduction to Ethics

Week 2 Natural law theory

Week 3 Egoism

Week 4 Consequentialism

Week 5 Kantian deontology

Week 6 Independent study week (no philosophy teaching sessions)

Week 7 Social contract theories

Week 8 Ethical pluralism

Week 9 Virtue ethics

Week 10 Feminist ethics

Week 11 The meta-ethical landscape

Week 12 Skepticism

Module Textbook

In addition to attending the lectures, all students *must* read the essential reading and (at least) some of the further recommended reading. The electronic reading list for the whole module can be found online via VITAL as well as through the Library – please consult it regularly.

The essential reading for this module is:

Russ Shafer-Landau: *Fundamentals of Ethics*, 3rd edition, Oxford University Press, 2015

This book, written to be accessible to students, covers very well every topic on the module. As a rule, readings for seminars will be assigned from the book. In general, the module is designed to follow the structure of the book, hence reading it while attending lectures is probably the best way to prepare for the essay and the exam. The book also covers important

and relevant topics (such as hedonism) that are not covered in any detail in the lectures. I have asked the Library to purchase sufficient number of copies of the book and if possible, make it available as an e-book (this, according to my latest information, is not possible because the book is only available in physical form).

Note that if you choose to use the second edition instead of the third you will be missing some aspects of the readings. Thus we strongly recommend you to get hold of the latest version. These are the aspects added to the third edition:

- The introduction contains a new section on defining morality.
- Chapter 6 includes a new discussion on human nature.
- Chapter 9 presents a new section on the nature of the slippery slope arguments.
- Chapter 21 offers a new section on moral objectivity and cultural variations.
- New discussion questions have been added to every chapter.
- The comprehensive Companion Website associated with this book has been updated.

The textbook does not include primary sources. There is a Companion Volume to it with the title: *The Ethical Life: Fundamental Readings in Ethics and Moral Problems* with excerpts from canonical texts. Occasionally you may be directed to a specific piece as seminar reading. When that is the case the reading would be uploaded to VITAL ahead of time. *The Ethical Life* is recommended as your main secondary source but, except when so directed, it is not a compulsory reading; only the textbook is.

Here is a list of some other books that I recommend you to read (when writing your essays, or revising for exams, or just out of pure interest):

Fisher, *Metaethics: An Introduction*, Acumen, 2011.

Shafer-Landau, R. *Whatever Happened to Good and Evil?*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

Millar, A., *An Introduction to Contemporary Metaethics*. Polity, 2nd edition, 2013.

Deigh, J. *Introduction to Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, 2010

Ellin, J. *Morality and the Meaning of Life*, Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1995

Suikkanen, J. *This is Ethics*, Wiley Blackwell, 2014

Tännsjö, T. *Understanding Ethics*, 2nd edition, Edinburgh University Press, 2008

Driver, J. *Ethics: The Fundamentals*, London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006

Benn, P. *Ethics*, London: Routledge, 1997

The electronic reading list has further primary and secondary sources and they are also growing in number, as I find new relevant material for the module.

Assessment

The assessment of the module is by examination, constituting 60% of the total assessment, and one 2,000-word essay, constituting 30%, and one assessed seminar presentation, constituting 10%. Deadlines regarding essay submissions are circulated by the Department; examinations are organized centrally on University level.

Presentations

The required reading for the seminar presentations will be posted on VITAL the week before the presentations: *everyone should read these each week, not just those doing the presentations*. The readings will either be chapters of Shafer-Landau's book mentioned above or readings taken from the companion volume (also mentioned above). These readings will vary in length and complexity: this will be borne in mind by the tutors assessing the presentations.

Points to bear in mind when preparing seminar presentations:

- They should be 10-15 minutes in length (no longer)
- When the reading is complex and covers a range of views and arguments do not try to report every point; pull out and focus on those you think most important.
- Try to present (briefly) your own views on the material you present.
- If you find aspects of the reading obscure it is acceptable to mention this in your presentation: one of the main points of the presentations is to generate a discussion and asking for clarification of the material is a way of doing this.

Essays

The essay questions will be made available by October 16; that is the Friday of week 3. There will be two questions of which you answer one. ***The deadline for essay submission is 14.00 on Friday, November 20; that is the Friday of week 8. Marks and feedback will be made available at 17.00 on December 4; that is Friday of week 10.***

All essays must be submitted electronically via VITAL and are passed through plagiarism detection software before being marked. Essays must be anonymised, that is, they should not contain any identifying information such as your student number or name. There is no need

for a separate title page, but please do provide title on the first page of your essay. Pages of the essay should be numbered.

Guidance in writing philosophy essays and the philosophy marking descriptors will be available in the assessment part of the module on VITAL. It is important that you go through these guidelines; the advice on referencing is particularly useful: part of your mark will come from quality of your presentation in the essay, which includes referencing.

Exam revision

The exam paper will have 6 questions of which you answer two in two hours, which 2 is your choice. Hence you should reckon on approximately 1 hour per question/answer. To make sure you go into the exam able to answer two questions I suggest you revise at least 5 topics where 'topic' means the theory/theories covered in one week of lecturing. Make sure you answer the question that's there in front of you and be prepared to *critically* discuss the material you use in your answers: you should say whether or not you agree with the views you are discussing (rather than just describe them) and why. In other words, don't just learn the material you are revising, but think about it too.

There are past papers in the Sydney Jones library. Here are some sample questions from last year (the module content has been revised; in any case the exam questions will not be the same this year):

- Explain and discuss the Euthyphro argument. Do you find it convincing?
- The superhero Ozymandias, the smartest man on earth, faces an ethical dilemma: in order to save the world from nuclear war, he has to kill several million people. What would be the right thing to do in his case and which ethical theory would support your viewpoint and/or his?
- A friend of yours is in excruciating pain as you are driving her to the hospital. A red light stops you in the way and your friend encourages you to jump it. Your answer is: "I'm sorry, it's a general rule and it works fine for the whole, we shouldn't jump it". Argue your position and your friend's by using ethical theories related to the situation.
- Explain and discuss Mackie's argument from queerness. Do you find it convincing?

Feedback to students

Shortly after your presentation your seminar tutor will provide a mark and some feedback via VITAL. Once they have been marked and moderated, feedback, not just a mark, will be provided on your essays, also via VITAL. ***For both forms of assessment you should read the feedback provided, not just the mark!***

Towards the end of the semester there should be an opportunity for you to individually discuss your essay feedback with me, so you can ask questions about it and ensure you understand any advice it contains. It is important that you do consider and understand the feedback provided so that you are better prepared for the exam and for the philosophy essays you will write in the future. Feedback on exam performance will be provided in the form of generic comments posted to the module email list, should that be appropriate.

Feedback from students

Around half way into the semester, a very simple mid-term questionnaire will be distributed to students. This is not formal feedback, but your views can help me to change the module already in the course of the semester.

Towards the end of the semester a module questionnaire will be made available on VITAL. Please take advantage of this opportunity to comment on the module.

Each case I will read and respond in writing to your comments. My response will be uploaded to VITAL.