

Philosophy 373: Ethics and Theory of Value

Spring, 2008

Edward Langerak; H601C; 3494; <langerak>; class alias: <philosophy-373>

Office hours: T,W,F, 3-5, and by appointment

We will begin by discussing the challenges to traditional ethical theory raised in Alisdair MacIntyre's seminal book, *After Virtue*, (we will use the newly published 3rd edition), including his claim that the Enlightenment project not only failed, it *had* to fail. We will then look at Rawls's *Political Liberalism*, in which he reacts to criticisms of *A Theory of Justice* and argues for a version of liberalism that is responsive to some of MacIntyre's worries. We will also consider current contributions to the debate, such as those of Richard Rorty, Martha Nussbaum, Michael Sandel, William Galston, Susan Okin, Jeffrey Stout, and Chris Eberle. The debate over political liberalism involves discussion about combining personal integrity with the tolerance required in a diverse society: Can we disagree about (our theories of) the *good*, and still reach consensus on the *right*? Can we flatly contradict each other on what makes life meaningful and still agree on basic justice? Participants in the seminar will explain and critique, in class presentations and term papers, current ethical thinkers or movements that engage this debate, making use of at least one of the many important recent works that combine analysis of current issues with some attention to the historical factors influencing the contemporary debates. A list of books and topics appropriate for a project is provided, but students are also encouraged to suggest their own. In short, we will take seriously one of the strongest and most influential challenges to the possibility of developing a reasonable public ethic in a pluralistic world, then discuss the most important effort to do precisely that, and then listen to the critiques and alternatives that are of greatest interest to seminar participants. This seminar will assume familiarity with ethical theory; participants who have not had an introduction to ethics should contact the instructor to discuss texts they should read in preparation for the seminar.

Your seminar presentation, which will involve reading assignments and study questions, will be developed into a term paper due May 2-12 (depending on date of class presentation). There will be some sort of midterm and final exam, format to be decided. Once or twice weekly "response comments and/or questions" are due via email to <langerak> by noon of class day until students' presentations begin. **Group A consists of those with last names Benson through Hagen, and Group B is Hamilton through Smith.** Course grade will be take into account class participation (10%), response comments/questions (10%), midterm (15%), the class presentation (15%), the term paper (25%), and the final exam (25%). Please do not eat during class (coffee, etc. is fine).

Academic accommodations: Any student with a documented cognitive, physical or social/emotional disability needing academic accommodations is expected to speak with the instructor during the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain confidential. Students with a disability who do not have an accommodation letter to present to me must also contact Ruth Bolstad (bolstadr@stolaf.edu) or Connie Ford (ford@stolaf.edu) in Student Disability Services in the Academic Support Center (x3288) located in the back of the Modular Village.

Websites:

<http://ethics.sandiego.edu> This very useful website has material on most of the ethicists and many of the topics that we discuss (click on “Classic Texts in Ethics” for most of the complete works in Western ethical theory).

<http://plato.stanford.edu/contents.html> This site is an excellent encyclopedia with articles on most of the people and issues that we discuss.

<http://dir.yahoo.com/arts/humanities/philosophy> This is a comprehensive site for philosophy, including ethics. Lots of links to dictionaries, philosophy magazines, and even philosophical humor

This site is a useful guide to good writing: <http://www.nutsandboltsguide.com>

Texts: Alasdair MacIntyre’s *After Virtue, 3rd ed.*, and handouts, including selections from John Rawls’s *Political Liberalism*, Langerak’s *Civil Disagreement*, Rorty’s books, and those for class presentations (\$10 photocopy fee).

February

F-8: Introduction

M-11: MacIntyre’ *After Virtue*, Prologue, Preface, and 1-2 Group **A** provides questions.

W-13: Mac 3-4 Group **B**

F-15: Mac 5-6 **A**

M-18: Mac 9 (7-8 recommended) **B**

W-20: Langerak’s *Civil Disagreement*, 1-2 (up to p. 45) **A**

F-22: *Civil Disagreement*, rest of 2 **B**

M-25: Mac 10-11 **A**

W-27: Mac 12 **B**

Th-28: Lecture by William Galston (Liberal Pluralism) in Buntrock’s Black and Gold Ballroom, 11:30am

F-29: Mac 13 **A**

March

M-3: Mac 14 **B**

W-5: Mac 15 **A**

F-7: 16 **B**

March

M-10: Mac 17 **A**

W-12: Mac 18 and Postscript and Prologue **B**

F-14: Rawls: xvi-xxvii (First Intro), xxxii-xliiii (Intro to PB up to section 3), 3-64, xliiii-lxii
(rest of intro to PB), 134-200. **A**

M-17: Rawls and Skhlar's "Liberalism of Fear." **B**
Belgium Lectures: Julia Annas on Virtue and Happiness, March 17, 7pm and 18, 3:30pm, in HH 501

M-19: Langerak's "Duties to Others and Covenantal Ethics" and *Civil Disagreement*, 3 **A (B make-up)**

Easter Break

M-31: Langerak's "Duties to Others and Covenantal Ethics" and *Civil Disagreement*, 3 **B (A make-up)**

April

W-2: **Midterm**

F-4: Rorty, esp. "Private Irony and Liberal Hope" Charilie **A or B make-up**

M-7: Rorty **A or B make-up**

W-9: Tom Marti on Robert Audi's *Religious Commitment and Secular Reason*

F-11: John Giannini on Chris Eberle's *Religious Convictions in Liberal Politics*

M-14: Paul Hamilton on William Galston's *Liberal Pluralism*, etc.

W-16: Sean Miyamoto on Feminist Critique of Western Ethics

F-18: Jason Smith on Grenberg's *Kant and the Ethics of Humility*

M-21: Bryan Benson on Narrative Ethics (Hilde Nelson, etc)

W-23: Hilary Boussein on Narrative Ethics (Rudd and Strawson, etc)

F-25: Krista Lucas on Conflict and Moral Imagination

M-28: Kate Hagen on Human Rights

W-30: Liz Duel on Human Rights and Religions

May

F-2: Eric Larson on Richard Kraut's *What is Good and Why?*

M-5: Keith Fox on Harry Frankfurt's *The Reasons of Love*, etc.

W-7: Cole Johnson on John Doris's *Lack of Character*

F-9: Brett DeFries on emotivism (John McDowell's *Mind, Value, and Reality*)

M-12: Review

Final Exam: Tuesday, May 20, 2-4

Some Possible Books or Topics for Philosophy 373 Projects

(Ethical theory section on 5th floor Rolvaag Library: BJ1012-1031, etc.)

Richard Rorty, any number of books, articles, and critics.

Appiah, Kwame, *Experiments in Ethics*, *The Ethics of Identity*, and *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*

Jeffery Stout, *Ethics after Babel*, with new postscript

Stephen Darwall, *The Second-Person Standpoint*

Richard Kraut, *What is Good and Why*

Alisdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals; Whose Justice, Which Rationality; Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry*

John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*

Nancy Sherman, *Making a Necessity of Virtue*.

Thomas Hill, *Dignity and Practical Reason in Kant; Respect, Pluralism, and Justice; Autonomy and Self-respect*.

John Hare, *The Moral Gap: Kantian Ethics, Human Limit, and God's Assistance*.

J B Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy*.

Stuart Hampshire, *Justice Is Conflict*; etc.

John Kekes, *Against Liberalism*, etc.

William Galston, *Liberal Purposes: Goods, Virtues and Diversity in the Liberal State*, *Liberal Pluralism*, and *The Practice of Liberal Pluralism*

Michael Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent*, etc.

Jeanine Grenberg, *Kant and the Ethics of Humility*

Bernard Gert, *Morality*; etc.

Robert Audi, *Moral Knowledge and Ethical Character*, *Moral Value and Human Diversity*

Martha Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development*; etc.

Harry Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love. Taking Ourselves Seriously and Getting It Right*

Public Square debate: Christopher Eberle, *Religious Convictions in Liberal Politics*; Paul Weithman, *Religion and the Obligations of Citizenship*; Robert Audi, *Religious Commitment and Secular Reason*; *Religion in the Public Square* debate with Wolterstorff

Narrative Ethics: Anthony Rudd vs. Galen Strawson and John Lippeitt; Hilde Nelson, *Stories and their Limits*; Hauerwas, *Why Narrative?*; etc.

Virtue Ethics: John Doris, *Lack of Character: Personality and Moral Behavior* vs. Slote, Pincoffs, Sherman, etc.

Pluralism: Nicholas Rescher, *Pluralism*; John Kekes, *The Morality of Pluralism*; Ed Santurri, *Perplexity in the Moral Life*; Christopher Gowans, *Innocence Lost: An Examination of Inevitable Wrongdoing*; Michael Walzer, *Politics and Passion*; etc.

Feminist critique: Susan Okin, *Justice, Gender and the Family*; review of *Political Liberalism*; Martha Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice*; "The Feminist Critique of Liberalism"; etc.

Particularism vs. Generality in Ethics: John Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*; Sean McKeever and Michael Ridge, *Principled Ethics: Generalism as a Regulative Ideal*

Evolution and Ethics: Elliot Sober, *Unto Others: the Evolution and Psychology of Unselfish Behavior*; James Wilson, *The Moral Sense*; etc.

Human Rights: the UN Declaration; Mary Ann Glendon, *A World Made New*; Michael Perry, *The Idea of Human Rights*; Martha Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development*, and *Frontiers of Justice*; Sisela Bok, *Common Values*; etc.

Relativism; Virtue Ethics; Theological Ethics; International (cross-cultural; cosmopolitan) Ethics; Postmodernism; Communitarian Ethics; etc.