

07-14  
App. 10-23-07  
Info. 11-6-07

**Undergraduate Distance Education Review Form**  
(Required for all courses taught by distance education for more than one-third of teaching contact hours.)

**Existing and Special Topics Course**

Course: PHIL 222: Ethics

Instructor(s) of Record: Eric M. Rubenstein

Phone: x3575

Email: erubenst@iup.edu

**Step One: Proposer**

A. Provide a brief narrative rationale for each of the items, A1- A5.

PLEASE SEE ATTACHED FOR ANSWERS TO A1- A5.

1. How is/are the instructor(s) qualified in the distance education delivery method as well as the discipline?
2. How will each objective in the course be met using distance education technologies?
3. How will instructor-student and student-student, if applicable, interaction take place?
4. How will student achievement be evaluated?
5. How will academic honesty for tests and assignments be addressed?

B. Submit to the department or its curriculum committee the responses to items A1-A5, the current official syllabus of record, along with the instructor developed online version of the syllabus, and the sample lesson. This lesson should clearly demonstrate how the distance education instructional format adequately assists students to meet a course objective(s) using online or distance technology. It should relate to one concrete topic area indicated on the syllabus.

**Step Two: Departmental/Dean Approval**

Recommendation:  Positive (The objectives of this course can be met via distance education)

Negative

Sherrill Rogers 9/14/07  
Signature of Department Designee Date

Received

Endorsed: A Ann  
Signature of College Dean

9/18/07  
Date

OCT 13 2007  
Liberal Studies  
Received

Liberal Studies



## **REVIEW FORM for Distance Education version of Course**

### **Step One: Proposer: Eric M. Rubenstein (for PHIL 222 Ethics (DE))**

**A1. How is/are the instructor(s) qualified in the distance education delivery method as well as the discipline?**

I have been teaching Philosophy for over a decade, including many courses in Ethics over the years. I have not taught an online course before, admittedly. But I have wide ranging knowledge of many computer technologies, have used WebCT for a number of years in different courses, have done a lot of digital recording and sound processing (which will prove useful for preparing the "podcast" lectures I will use in this DE course), and also maintain a personal webpage (albeit a relatively simple one- <http://www.chss.iup.edu/erubent/>).

What's more, in preparing this proposal I have done extensive research on web-based Philosophy courses for ideas on different ways of assessing student work, how to present material in a digital context. I have also profited from the kindness of various IUP faculty members who have permitted me to browse their own WebCT online courses for ideas and information. (Special thanks here to Prof. Steve Jackson in particular.)

**A2. How will each objective in the course be met using distance education technologies?**

Here are the 2 objectives from the syllabus of record followed by an answer for each of these objectives.

**A. To introduce students to some of the great moral philosophers of Western civilization within the area of ethics. Included will be a variety of relevant epistemological and metaphysical issues, and the material will be covered will have both historical and contemporary significance.**

The ease of uploading lectures (in audio format), course outlines, study guides, and extra readings as pdf's to WebCT will make it easy to present all of the information about the various moral theories I want students to learn. The ease of providing students with these materials will also make it easy to me for to make clear what I think valuable and what students are going to be held accountable for learning. The study guides, for instance, that will accompany the podcasts and lecture outlines will be a way of summarizing and presenting what is essential from the lecture material.

**B. To enhance student's abilities to think critically and responsibly about ethical issues by understanding the philosophical concepts and methods of analysis that are central to ethics and by applying those concepts and methods to selected contemporary moral issues.**

Th discussion boards available through WebCT will help get students thinking in both analytic and synthetic ways, I believe. For instance, I can pose questions for discussion

that ask students to apply something learned earlier to a new situation or context. I might ask them, to give an example, to apply the theory of utilitarianism to the issue of euthanasia, and asking them to discuss what they do and do not find appealing in this approach.

I will use WebCT's format for quizzes, in addition to pointed short essay questions to help focus their thinking and make sure they are concentrating on the essentials of a given subject. By getting students to work on writing clear and concise answers to such questions will also help sharpen their thinking. As a famous philosopher once wrote, "Anything that can be said can be said clearly".

WebCT offers the potential for presenting difficult material in several different media, which I think will help foster learning. For instance, given material will be presented for them to listen to (audio lectures); and then will be reinforced with written outlines and study guides, and finally, reinforced again in a different way by having students discuss the issues with their classmates (and me, of course). This multi-sensory approach, for lack of a better word, should help increase comprehension.

A3. How will instructor-student and student-student, if applicable, interaction take place?

Obviously the easiest form of communication will be that which goes from me to the students. Here I intend to use as many media as I can, including use of recorded lectures that will be uploaded to WebCT (and also made available on my homepage). The lectures will be formatted as .mp3 audio files, the same format that many students listen to music in, and will be uploaded in a way that will notify students when a new one is ready. (They will, in other words, be presented as "podcasts".) These recorded lectures will be posted along with a detailed lecture outline and also a study guide. Finally, I will communicate with students by email as necessary, and will post discussion questions and "ice-breakers" on the Discussion Board section of WebCT.

Students will have an opportunity to communicate with me by email, and through the Discussion boards. I will have regular office hours as well, as part of my contractual obligations for the "podium courses" I will also offer this semester, though I recognize that not all students may have an opportunity to attend.

The most difficult direction I believe, will be having students communicate with each other. This poses the greatest challenge, and arguably the greatest weakness of Distance Learning. I hope that the Discussion boards of WebCT will prove helpful here- and my goal will be to draw students into a conversation with each other by posting questions and topics that they will find both interesting and also helpful to the learning of the required material. Of course I am open to using other forms of communication as I learn and discover what else is possible.

A4. How will student achievement be evaluated?

Grades will be based upon the following assignment types (with percentage of grade noted)”

3 Short Writing Assignments: 15%

5 Unit Quizzes: 30%

3 Exams: 30%

Final Exam: 15%

Online Discussion/Participation: 10% (Students will be required to participate in a yet-to-be-determined percentage of discussion topics/questions. My research, at least to this point, indicates that if students are required to participate in all discussions or make contribution to every discussion/topic, they view their participation as but another duty to discharge, come to resent it, and as a result the quality of participation suffers.)

A5. How will academic honesty for tests and assignments be addressed?

I will take a multi-pronged approach to issues of academic honesty and plagiarism. There will be an educational component, where students will learn what academic integrity requires, what constitutes plagiarism and academic dishonesty, why academic integrity matters, etc. There will also be a “screening” element, which will involve the processing of writing assignments (long or short) through TurnItIn.com, which I have used in the past with great success. This will be aided by use of timed quizzes and exams which will reduce the ease and opportunity for dishonesty. Finally, there will be a “deterrent” component. By this I mean that all exam questions, writing assignments, and the like, will be written with an eye to making academic dishonesty simply less easy to accomplish. To put it in a perhaps overly philosophical manner, one might think of concepts as abilities and so to have the concept of  $x$  is to have the ability to think about  $x$ . In an exam or essay context, this means that a student who has learned a given concept will be able to think about how that concept applies to familiar examples, but also to new ones, and will be able to show their command of a given concept by showing how to apply that concept in a variety of contexts. In short, one may write exam questions with an eye to getting students to show how to think in new, creative ways about a given matter, and by refraining from asking too many encyclopedia-type questions I think one can also reduce opportunities for dishonesty. To put it slightly differently, I think that one might reduce opportunities for plagiarism and dishonesty by imagining students to be writing “open-book exams”- where one imagines them able to access all of the notes they would like but where that doesn’t suffice to give them the answer to a given question unless they truly understand the material.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS, POLICIES AND GENERAL INFORMATION

Philosophy 222 (Ethics)  
Fall, 1995

- I. INSTRUCTOR:* Dr. Sherrill Begres  
Office: 446 Sutton Hall  
Telephone: 357-2310  
Office Hours: M/W/F 8-9 A.M.; M/W 2-3 P.M.;  
and by appointment.  
Section Times & Locations:  
001: 9:15-10:15 A.M., UHL 101  
002: 10:30-11:30 A.M. UHL 101  
003: 1:00- 2:00 P.M. WIL 203

### *II. DESCRIPTION OF COURSE:*

This course is an investigation of efforts to rationally justify moral judgments. It deals with fundamental issues such as: What is morality? Are moral notions cultural, rational, divine, or innate in origin? Are they relative or absolute? Are they freely chosen or determined by genetics and/or environment? This course will cover a variety of ethical theories significant both historically and contemporarily and will apply those theories to current issues that involve moral dilemmas.

This is an elementary course in ethical reasoning. In it I will explain basic concepts and principles involved in moral deliberation. I will also ask you to consider particular ethical issues that confront many humans in the world today. The aim is to provide you with tools and a background that will help you make your own reasonable moral decisions rather than let them be determined by the biases and prejudices of your family, your peers, and your immediate political and cultural context. We shall be guided throughout by the principle that everyone must make her or his own ethical decisions; however, we shall learn that this does not mean that all of us are right all of the time.

The ability to view the world through a moral perspective may be one of our most distinctive human traits and also may be one of the central factors defining our own personal identity. In a strong sense what we do is an expression of what we value. So in understanding ethics we gain a significant understanding of ourselves.

### *III. COURSE OBJECTIVES:*

(A) To introduce students to some of the great moral philosophers of Western civilization (across gender, ethnic and racial boundaries where appropriate and feasible) within the area of ethics. Included will be a variety of relevant epistemological and metaphysical issues, and the material covered will have both historical and contemporary significance.

(B) To enhance students' abilities to think critically and responsibly about ethical issues by understanding the philosophical concepts and methods of analysis that are central to ethics and by applying those concepts and methods to selected contemporary moral issues.

#### IV. TEXTS:

- (A) Gary Percesepe, ed., *Introduction to Ethics: Personal and Social Responsibility in a Diverse World* (ITE)
- (B) Plato, *The Last Days of Socrates* (LDS)

#### V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

(A) Readings: Most of the readings are listed below under the heading "Course Outline" and most of them will be covered in class in the order given. Students are responsible for all the readings whether or not they are covered in lecture. There may also be additional readings or a change in readings assigned during the semester. Some of these additional readings may regard applied issues.

You are expected to do all the readings, to attend all lectures, and to participate intelligently.

(B) Video Material: There will be three videos assigned during the semester; these videos, naturally, will be related to ethical issues and are not optional. A two-page report on each of the three videos will be required and each will be worth a maximum of 10 points. Late reports will be docked one point for each day late.

(C) Examinations and Course Grade:

(1) There will be three objective examinations. The first examination will be on or about Oct. 2, the second examination will be on or about Nov. 3, and the final examination will be on Dec. 18, 2:45 P.M. to 4:45 P.M. Each examination will be worth 90 points.

(2) Be aware that I adhere to the university final exam policy. We will be using our scheduled Final Exam Period for a final examination. Thus, you are forewarned not to make any plans to leave campus before your scheduled final exam.

(3) Grading Scale:

0 - 59% F	80 - 89% B
60 - 69% D	90 - 100% A
70 - 79% C	

With regard to the course grade, a class curve may be used when, in my judgment, it is warranted. No student, however, will receive a course grade lower than that determined by the above scale.

#### VI. COURSE OUTLINE:

- (1) INTRODUCTION (ITE, pp. 1-27)
- (2) ETHICAL THEORIES (ITE, pp. 30-94):
  - a. Alasdair MacIntyre, "Tradition and the Virtues"
  - b. James Rachels, "Utilitarianism"
  - c. Onora O'Neill, "Kant's Ethics"
  - d. Ronald Dworkin, "Taking Rights Seriously"
  - e. John Rawls, "A Theory of Justice"
  - f. Carol Gilligan, "In a Different Voice: Women's Conceptions of Self and of Morality"
- (3) PLATO, *The Apology & The Crito*, (LDS 37-92)
- (4) ETHICS OF COMMUNITY:  
Martin Luther King, Jr., "On Being a Good Neighbor" (ITE, 106-111)
- (5) ETHICS OF FRIENDSHIP, LOVE, AND CARING:  
Shulamith Firestone, "Love and Women's Oppression" (ITE, 190-197)
- (6) ETHICS OF TRUTH, POWER, AND LYING:  
Sissela Bok, "Lies for the Public Good" (ITE 237-244)
- (7) ETHICS OF WAR, VIOLENCE, AND PEACE:  
Hannah Arendt, "Violence, Power, and Bureaucracy" (ITE, 269-272)
- (8) ETHICS OF HUNGER, WELFARE, AND HOMELESSNESS:  
Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" (ITE, 293-301)
- (9) ETHICS OF RACE AND POWER:  
Lisa Newton, "Reverse Discrimination as Unjustified" (ITE, 360-363)
- (10) ETHICS OF SEX AND POWER:  
Christina Sommers, "Philosophers Against the Family" (ITE, 390-404)
- (11) ETHICS OF ABORTION:  
Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion" (ITE 431-442)
- (12) ETHICS OF ANIMALS AND THE NONHUMAN ENVIRONMENT:  
Joel Feinberg, "The Rights of Animals and Unborn Generations" (ITE 483-491)

#### VII. ATTENDANCE:

(A) Attendance is not mandatory, except on examination days. Because most of you will find some of the material difficult to master without the benefit of lectures and class discussions, I strongly encourage you to attend all lectures. In any event, you are responsible for all lecture material and announcements that are made in class, whether or not you are there. If you must miss



a lecture, read the assignment and another student's class notes. I consider attendance in determining borderline semester grades.

(B) Attendance is mandatory on examination days. There will be no make-up examinations. Students will receive an "F" for each examination missed. Exceptions to this policy will be made only in cases where an examination is missed for a reason that is both justifiable and verifiable. Since you are not familiar with my standards of justification and verification, do not undertake to judge what I will accept or reject.

In all cases where an examination has been missed, contact me and discuss the problem.

Please, again be forewarned, with regard to your final examination, not to make plans to leave campus before December 18, 1995, 2:45-4:45 P.M.

(C) Late arrival and early departure: It is better to arrive late or to leave early than not to come at all. If circumstances occasionally force you to arrive late or to leave early, please do so as unobtrusively as possible. It is expected that late arrival and/or early departure will not become a habitual or frequent practice.

(D) In the event that I am delayed, students should wait for 15 minutes. If I do not arrive by 15 minutes after the time the class is scheduled to begin, there will be no class-meeting on that day.

#### VIII. WITHDRAWAL FROM THE COURSE:

If you wish to drop this course, you must initiate the withdrawal. Do not assume that I will drop you if you stop attending. I won't. I will simply record an "F" for each missed examination.

#### IX. OFFICE HOURS AND PRIVATE CONSULTATIONS:

(A) I strongly encourage students who are having problems in the course to discuss them with me during office hours. If a student cannot see me during regularly scheduled office hours, I will arrange to see the student at a time that is mutually convenient.

(B) Private consultations are intended as a supplement to classroom instruction and not as a substitute for missed classes.

## **(Proposed) SYLLABUS for PHIL 222: Ethics (Online Course)**

### **O. Instructor Information**

**Name:** Eric M. Rubenstein

**Email:** erubenst@iup.edu

**Personal Homepage:** <http://www.chss.iup.edu/erubenst/>

**Office Location:** 438 Sutton Hall; IUP Campus, Indiana, PA

**Office Hours:** TBA

**Phone:** 724.357.3575

**Biography:** Prof. Rubenstein received his Ph.D from University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill) in 1996, and taught at Colgate University for 4 years before moving to IUP. He teaches a number of courses besides Ethics, including Metaphysics and also Ancient Philosophy. His recent research and publications focus on the nature of color and experience of color. When not doing Philosophy, he is a die-hard NASCAR fan. Feel free to visit his homepage at <http://www.chss.iup.edu/erubenst/>

### **I. Course Information**

**Title:** Ethics (PHIL 222)

**Description\*:** ~~This course is~~ An investigation of efforts to rationally justify moral judgements. ~~It~~ Deals with fundamental issues such as: What is morality? Are moral notions cultural, rational, divine, or innate in origin? Are they relative or absolute? Are they freely chosen or determined by genetics and/or environment? ~~This course will cover~~ a variety of ethical theories significant both historically and contemporarily and will apply those theories to current issues that involve moral dilemmas.

This is an elementary course in ethical reasoning. It will explore basic concepts and principles involved in moral deliberation. You will be asked to consider ethical issues that confront many humans in the world today. The aim is to provide you with tools and a background that will help you make your own reasonable moral decisions rather than let them be determined by the biases and prejudices of your family, your peers, and your immediate political and cultural context.

(\* From Syllabus of Record)

**Date:** Spring 2008 Semester

**Location:** Online (WebCT)

**Prerequisites:** None

#### **Required Text:**

Bonevac, D. Today's Moral Issues: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives (McGraw Hill, 2002).

## **II. Course Outcomes and Objectives**

**A. To introduce students to some of the great moral philosophers of Western civilization within the area of ethics. Included will be a variety of relevant epistemological and metaphysical issues, and the material will be covered will have both historical and contemporary significance.**

**B. To enhance student's abilities to think critically and responsibly about ethical issues by understanding the philosophical concepts and methods of analysis that are central to ethics and by applying those concepts and methods to selected contemporary moral issues.**

## **III. Evaluation**

**Grades will be based upon the following.**

**3 Short Writing Assignments: 15%**  
**5 Unit Quizzes: 30%**  
**3 Exams: 30%**  
**Online Discussion/Participation: 10%**  
**Final Exam: 15%**

**Here is an overview of how the course will work. You will refer to the syllabus for a given day, reading the pages from the textbook that assigned for that day, in addition to any articles listed for that day. Having done the reading, listen to the lecture that is scheduled for that day/week. It will be available as a podcast from my personal webpage, or as a downloadable MP3 file from WebCT. While listening to the lecture, or afterwards, carefully review the lecture outline and study guide that have been prepared for that lecture. Once you've done all that, you will be ready for discussions with your classmates. I will ask you to review the message boards to see what issues or questions either I or your peers have raised, and to participate as you feel comfortable. Finally, you will be asked to study the material for that lesson and prepare for one of the quizzes that will be posted (and for the exams as well). Above all, I will ask you to be a responsible, active learner, ready to ask questions and to engage in dialogue, even if it is just to ask for help or for more explanation. And my email inbox is always open should you have any questions at all.**

**A word about participation in online discussions. Your contributions to these discussions will count towards your final grade. I will circulate a handout which describes in more detail what I'm looking for, but for now let me say this. Unlike some online courses, I am not going to require a certain number of contributions, nor that you contribute to**

every discussion. That leads students to do it for the sake of doing it, even if they have nothing to offer or ask. Instead, I will be looking for the quality of your contributions, and what they add to the discussion. Good questions can be just as important, if not more so, than good “answers”. More to follow on this issue.

## **IV. Important Information About the Course**

### **A. The Online Method**

This is an online (distance education) course. It will be found in its entirety at WebCT, which itself can be found at: <http://webct.iup.edu/webct/public/home.pl>

As is often noted, the convenience and flexibility of distance education carries with it the hazards of technological failure. The following is a plan for dealing with such failures as they occur. NOTE: Indiana University of Pennsylvania does not provide computers for this course or house call assistance. It is each student’s obligation to have access to the minimum computer configuration in order to take this course. That minimal configuration is a computer capable of running either Netscape 4.0 or Internet Explorer 4.0 (preferred) browsers or higher, a 28.8 bps or higher modem, and enough available hard disk space to download necessary plug-in software such as Adobe Acrobat Reader, RealPlayer, Shockwave or Flash. Students should familiarize themselves both with WebCT and with IUP’s Distance Education resources, which can be found at:

<http://www.iup.edu/distance/>. A list of student responsibilities can be found at <http://www.iup.edu/distance/admin/responsibilities.shtm> and should be reviewed carefully.

1. Should the WebCT software or server be unavailable for more than 12 hours, I will e-mail all students with a notification and readings.
2. Although students should use the dedicated e-mail of WebCT in normal circumstances, each student should also have a backup e-mail address that is available from their location (i.e., Hotmail, Gmail, etc.) to send and receive assignments. Students can use their university e-mail accounts through <http://webmail.iup.edu>, a web-based interface for the university e-mail system. Remember, my non-WebCT email address is [erubenst@iup.edu](mailto:erubenst@iup.edu) and should be used if there is a problem with WebCT.
3. All students should have a backup plan for a computer failure, such as computers available in local libraries, other SSHE universities, at local copy shops or other locations as a temporary measure.
4. All students MUST test their computer as soon as possible to verify that it is capable of interacting with WebCT, sending and receiving e-mail, reading PDF documents, downloading and listening to mp3 files.

### **B. Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the representation of another person's words and ideas as one's own. A student who plagiarizes all or part of an assignment can expect strong penalties, ranging from failure in that assignment to being recommended for a hearing before a judiciary body of the University. I recommend that you review the *IUP Academic Policy and Procedures* in the University Catalogue, found at <http://www.iup.edu/registrar/catalog/acapolicy/index.shtm>

Academic honesty is an essential component of intellectual development. And it is a vital element in the mission of this University. I will not tolerate any violations of this policy, and all violations will be prosecuted. If you have any questions about the policy or more generally about what counts as plagiarism, please do not hesitate to contact me.

### **C. Disabilities**

If you have any disability, obvious or not, that might affect your performance in this course, I want to help you and make any necessary arrangements. Students at IUP are encouraged to voluntarily contact Disability Support Services in the Advising and Testing Center. With student consent, DSS informs professors of student disabilities. You may prefer to contact me directly. Confidentiality is assured.

### **D. Additional Web Resources**

1) *WebCT*: All materials for this course are available here. I highly recommend that you check here regularly. You will need to use your IUP email account to access WebCT. IUP considers email an official form of correspondence, and thus you are responsible for regularly checking your IUP email account and the email account run through WebCT. The WebCT email account will be the primary email account I will use, except in event of server problems.

2) *JSTOR*: A link to this can be found through the Library's list of online resources. It provides searchable and downloadable articles from top journals in Philosophy.

3) *The Philosophers Index*: Available through WebSpirs, also through a link at the Library's page. It contains abstracts and bibliographies for every article and book published in Philosophy.

4) *Encyclopedia's and Online References in General*: As you are no doubt aware, there is much on the web that is of little value; this includes stuff posing as Philosophy. There are two Philosophy Encyclopedia's that are reliable, though: "Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy"; "The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy". Beyond that you are on your own. In particular, I urge you to *avoid* Wikipedia.

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## V. Detailed Course Outline

(Page numbers refer to Bonevac, D. *Today's Moral Issues: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives* (McGraw Hill, 2002).

- Week 1-2    *Introduction to Philosophy and Ethical Theories*  
              *Moral Theory 1: Utilitarianism*  
                  Act vs. Rule Utilitarianism  
Readings: John Stuart Mill pp.39-44.  
              Rawls: "Two Concepts of Rules" (Online pdf)
- Week 3-4    *Moral Theory 2: Kant's Deontology*  
                  Duty and Inclination  
                  Categorical and Hypothetical Imperatives  
                  The Humanity Formulation of the Categorical Imperative  
Readings: Kant, pp.33-38.  
              T. Hill, Jr. "The Humanity Formulation in Kant's Ethics (Online pdf)
- Week 5-6    *Ethics of Animal Rights*  
Readings: Singer, from *Animal Liberation*, pp.81-87.  
              Reagen, "The Case for Animal Rights", pp.89-94  
              Cohen, "The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research", pp.94-100.
- Week 7-8    *Ethics of The Environment*  
Readings: Hardin, from "The Tragedy of the Commons" pp.596-602.  
              Stroup and Baden, "Property Rights: The Real Issue", pp.589-595.
- Week 8-9    *Ethics of Abortion*  
Readings: Warren, "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion", pp.330-340.  
              Thompson, "A Defense of Abortion", pp.320-329.  
              Marquis, "Why Abortion Is Immoral", pp.347-357.
- Week 10-11 *Ethics of Euthanasia*  
Readings: Williams, "The Wrongfulness of Euthanasia", pp.366-368.  
              Rachels, "The Morality of Euthanasia", pp.369-375.  
              Dworkin, et al., "The Brief of the Amici Curiae", pp.376-381
- Week 12    *Ethics of Affirmative Action*

Readings: Powell, Majority Opinion in Regents of the University of California v. Bakke, pp.505-512.

Boxill, from *Blacks and Social Justice*, pp.531-536.

Week 13-14 *Ethics of Gender Equality*

Readings: Jaggar, "Sexual Difference and Sexual Equality", pp.570-5.

Littleton, "Reconstructing Sexual Equality", .580-3

MacKinnon, "Pornography, Civil Rights, and Speech", pp.205-7.

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## VI. Additional Bibliography

Aiken, W., LaFollette, H. (eds.) *World Hunger and Moral Obligation* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1977).

Baker, R., Elliston, F. (eds.) *Philosophy and Sex*. (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1984).

Boxill, B.R. *Blacks and Social Justice* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Alleheld, 1984).

Feinberg, J. (ed.) *The Problem of Abortion*. (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing, 1984).

MacIntyre, A. *After Virtue*. (London: Duckworth, 1981).

Singer, P. *Practical Ethics*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

Singer, P. (ed.) *A Companion to Ethics*. (London: Blackwell Publishers, 1993).

Singer, P. *Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for our Treatment of Animals*. (New York: Avon Books, 1975).

Smart, J.J.C., Williams, B. *Utilitarianism: For and Against* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

Steinbock, B. (ed.) *Killing and Letting Die*. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1980).

## **SAMPLE LESSON PLAN**

Eric M. Rubenstein

(Topic: Utilitarianism)

Below you will find:

- I. Instructions for this lesson/lecture (on the moral theory called “Utilitarianism”)
- II. Lecture Outline
- III. Study Guide

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### **I. Instructions**

- A. Read the chapter on Utilitarianism and John Stuart Mill pp.39-44. Then read the article by Rawls: “Two Concepts of Rules” (in the “Readings” folder on WebCT).
- B. Download the lecture (available as an .mp3 file on WebCT in the folder entitled, “Lectures” and also on my homepage.)
- C. Read the Lecture Outline either along with the lecture or afterwards.
- D. Consult the Study Guide to make sure you understand the major points.
- E. Prepare for a quiz on Utilitarianism

### **II. LECTURE OUTLINE: Utilitarianism**

#### **A. The Threat of Relativism as Motivation for an Ethical Theory**

To prevent relativism, one must be able to find a way to answer the questions: “Why are wrong actions wrong?” and “Why are right actions right?” that doesn’t just turn on what peoples/cultures’ opinions happen to be at a given time. Utilitarianism offers a promise of answering those questions- a way of grounding the objectivity of morality.

#### **B. A Distinction of Projects**

The question we are chasing now is “What is it that right actions have in common?”, or “What makes right acts right, in virtue of what are they morally right or wrong?”

But there is another question that has been asked. That is, “Why should I be moral?” For at first pass you might think that life would be better for YOU if you were immoral- so long as you could get away with it. So, people have wondered



about the motivation for being moral. Plato gave a famous argument for being moral- the conclusion of which was that despite what you might think at first, moral people are happier than immoral people. We are not going to pursue that answer. □□ Later in the course we will return to the question, though, of why we ought to be moral.

For the time being we will presume that people think they ought to be moral. That is something that as human being we ought to strive for- being good moral beings.

But having said that, we now need to ask- what does it take to be moral. That is, what things should I do and what things ought I not to do? That, of course, requires an account of what is in fact right and what is wrong- and WHY?!

### C. Mill's Utilitarianism

□ Mill will explain the nature of morality, and what makes a given action right or wrong, but he does so by first giving an account of what is good (regardless of whether what is good is something we think is also moral.)

In short, Mill's view goes like this.

What is good is pleasure.

What is right is that which maximizes what is good.

Therefore, what is right is that which maximizes pleasure.

□ Of course, there are lots of things to be addressed: □□ What counts as pleasure? Does this just mean crude sensory pleasures? And whose pleasure is important? Is it even true that what is good is pleasure? What is what is right that which maximizes the good? □

To answer these requires what is known as THEORY OF VALUE. That theory will then be used to give a THEORY OF MORALITY.

### D. Mill's Theory of Value:

According to Mill, there are 3 KINDS OF GOOD things. Anything that is good is either:

- a. good in itself
- b. good for its consequences
- c. good both in itself and for its consequences

What is it that is GOOD IN ITSELF? □□ Says Mill: Pleasure/Happiness

Everything that we think is good is so either because it is a pleasure or it ultimately has pleasure or happiness as a consequence. So, everything good is good because of its link with pleasure or happiness.

And, Mill argues, that shows that everything that is valuable is so because of its link with pleasure/happiness.

## E. The Theory of Right

Consider this crucial passage from Mill:

"The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals 'utility' or the 'greatest happiness principle' holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness; wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain and the privation of pleasure."

What he is saying is, in short:

The right action is the one (among options!) that produces the greatest amount of good.

In more detail:

According to Utilitarianism, faced with a moral decision of what is morally right is that which **AMONG THE OPTIONS AVAILABLE**, is the one that causes the most happiness. And since one of those options is the one that is **RIGHT** it is the one we **OUGHT** to do- for we **OUGHT** to do the **RIGHT** thing.

Consider an example: Should I lie to a person who is on their death bed, that things are going to be ok and they're are going to get better, if that is going to make them feel better, or should I tell them the truth and maybe make them feel worse? What is the best thing to do in those given circumstances? Mill's answer is the right thing to do is that which produces the most happiness.

Important, at this point: We are **NOT** asking: is it in general right to lie and asking whether lying in general produces more happiness than not lying. We are **NOT** asking what if everyone did that, etc. We will be concerned with those questions, but at a later time. For now we are looking at a theory which says that when it comes to deciding what is right or wrong we should look at **PARTICULAR ACTS** and their consequence.

As well, we are NOT asking- of a particular case whether it produces only happiness, or only the opposite of happiness- but whether an act on the whole produces more happiness than unhappiness- it doesn't have to be an all or nothing deal- an act might have happy and unhappy consequences, but the question is, of the given choices, which would produce more happiness in total. So, you add the good stuff to the bad stuff and see what the total is (think of perhaps as good as + and bad as -).

So, you can see that the circumstances of the act matter greatly. For in some cases what would be wrong would be right in other cases

#### F. Crucial Additional Points

a. This is NOT an egoistic theory: When Mill says that the right thing to do in a certain case is that which produces more pleasure than pain- who's pleasure and pain is he talking about? EVERYONE who is affected by the decision and its possible options. The term we will use here is that Utilitarianism is EGALITARIAN- everyone's happiness/pleasure that is affected by an action counts. We must consider how much happiness/unhappiness is caused in everyone that is affected- not just the person doing the action.

b. It is also known as a theory that is Consequentialist. Rightness lies in something other than the act itself. In Mill's view it lies in the CONSEQUENCES- and consequences with respect to pleasure/pain: there could be other consequentialist views- but Mill's is with respect to happiness.

c. It is also a theory that is Hedonistic. That means that it holds that what is valuable is happiness/pleasure. A different philosopher might think that what is good has to do with, for example, following God's will; or following one's family traditions. But for Mill, what is good is that which is pleasurable. And, as we've seen, what is RIGHT is that which maximizes that which is GOOD- in this case, pleasure or happiness.

d. Importantly, this doesn't mean that the pleasure has to be bodily pleasure- as in food, drink or sexual pleasure. Intellectual pleasures count too- and Mill thinks that they can be even greater than bodily pleasures.

#### G. Up Next

We've been discussing Mill's Utilitarianism. And we've got the basics of the

theory in place. What we will do next is explore the role that moral rules and commandments play in the theory. This will in turn allow us to understand how there can be TWO different versions of Utilitarianism- what is known as ACT Utilitarianism and also RULE Utilitarianism. That is what Rawls explores in the paper I want you to read.

The Study Guide below summarizes the above, and covers as well what is our next topic- the different versions of Utilitarianism.

### III. UTILITARIANISM: STUDY GUIDE

#### I. Utilitarianism in General

A. The Good: All things are good either because they are pleasures or are connected with pleasure.

B. The Right: What is right involves the maximizing of the Good, i.e. pleasure.

C. Utilitarianism is thus

1) *Consequentialist*: Moral rightness/wrongness is assessed in terms of consequences.

2) *Hedonistic*: What matters in moral assessment are consequences with respect to pleasure/pain.

3) *Egalitarian*: Everyone's happiness matters equally; it is a non-egoistic theory.

#### II. Two Versions of Utilitarianism

A) *Act Utilitarianism*: The proper level of moral assessment is at the level of acts. On this account, faced with a choice of options the right action is that which produces a greater net total of happiness than any of the other available options. On this version, an act that is moral in one case might be immoral in another.

**Moral Rules and Principles**: Utilitarianism assesses morality on a case by case basis. Moral rules, accordingly, are used merely as rules of thumb. They provide summaries of past actions and can be used to guide our decision making. However, the rules themselves don't tell what in a given case is right or wrong. That depends on the circumstances of the case.

B) *Rule Utilitarianism*: The proper level of moral assessment is at the level of rules. On this account, a moral principle or rule is the morally correct one if that rule produces a greater net total of happiness than other possible rules. Individual moral acts are right if they conform to that moral rule, wrong if they do not.

Moral rules do not have to be all or nothing. They may have exceptions or complexity built into them. But once the rule is 'in place', there can be no exceptions to it as stated. Caution, however, is required in articulating the exceptions in a rule. For the rule cannot be of the form, "Do x unless doing not-x would maximize happiness." That would collapse Rule Utilitarianism into Act Utilitarianism.

#### III. Which Version is Preferable?

A) **Advantage Act Utilitarianism**: If we care about maximizing happiness, shouldn't we maximize whenever possible, that is, in each case? Why bother to maximize happiness as RU does, knowing that some cases will not maximize happiness?

B) **Advantage Rule Utilitarianism**: Some kinds of happiness are possible

only if we are RU's. Could there be promises without RU? If not, and since a world with promises is better than one without, perhaps we need to be RU's. Additionally, could we prevent violations of people's rights with just AU?

C) How about this one?: Talk like a RU but act like an AU.

Sample Questions:

[Answers: 1) c; 2) d; 3) F; 4) T; 5) F]

1. Utilitarianism is concerned with maximizing the happiness of
  - a) only the agent.
  - b) no one.
  - c) all who are affected by an action.
  - d) None of the above.
2. For an Act Utilitarian, moral rules or principles
  - a) tell us always, without exception, what is right and wrong.
  - b) are useful rules of thumb for guiding our decisions.
  - c) are summaries of how particular actions tend to maximize happiness.
  - d) b and c.
3. The right action, according to a Rule Utilitarian, depends on the circumstances and the alternative actions available. (T/F)
4. If Act Utilitarianism is true, it might sometimes be morally permissible to commit murder. (T/F)
5. According to Utilitarianism, we should keep our promises and tell the truth, no matter what the result. (T/F)