PHL 225
Ethical Theory
S1 External 2016

Dept of Philosophy

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Unit Convenor
Mianna Lotz
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W6A Room 734
By appointment

Credit points
3

Prerequisites
12cp or admission to GDipArts

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description
The ethical theories of Aristotle, John Stuart Mill and Immanuel Kant have influenced contemporary ways of thinking about moral action and our moral relations with others. In the first section of the unit, we focus on Aristotle's conceptions of voluntary and involuntary actions, excuses, justifications and culpability, which ground contemporary understandings of moral and legal responsibility. We also discuss Aristotle's views on friendship, which resonate with contemporary views about the good of friendship and underpin much current philosophical discussion of friendship. In the second section, we discuss Mill's classic and influential defenses of individual liberty and freedom of speech, and we consider the application of his arguments to the issues of pornography and hate speech. In the final section, we discuss Kant's conception of the good will in the light of recent philosophical debates about whether Kant's moral philosophy requires us to be moral saints. We also discuss Kant's notion of respect for persons, which underpins recent discussions of the moral and political importance of both respect for others and self-respect.

Important Academic Dates
Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates

Learning Outcomes
On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:
Ability to demonstrate a sound understanding of the key concepts, principles and theories of Aristotle and Mill, as well as a selection of contemporary philosophers, specifically in relation to questions of individual responsibility and liberty;
Improved skills in analyzing and critically evaluating arguments and theories in the relevant literature;
Ability to identify, apply and develop the skills and concepts involved in ethical reasoning and argumentation;
Enhancement of skills in clear and rigorous thinking as well as oral and written expression.

**General Assessment Information**

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Completion of **ALL** assessment tasks is compulsory for passing this Unit.

**Assessment Tasks**

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Short Paper</strong></td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>5pm Fri 1 April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Written Discussion Responses</strong></td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>FIVE times across Semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Essay</strong></td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>5pm Fri 3 June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attendance/participation</strong></td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Short Paper**

**Due:** 5pm Fri 1 April  
**Weighting:** 25%

This task is designed to test your comprehension of the essential readings and to develop your ability to provide clear and precise exegetical analyses. It will also provide you with writing practice and feedback in preparation for the longer essays.

A word limit of 800 words applies.

Topics will be handed out one week prior to the due date, and Short Papers must be submitted electronically.

Marked short papers will be returned two weeks after submission.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Ability to demonstrate a sound understanding of the key concepts, principles and theories of Aristotle and Mill, as well as a selection of contemporary philosophers,
specifically in relation to questions of individual responsibility and liberty;
• Improved skills in analyzing and critically evaluating arguments and theories in the relevant literature;
• Ability to identify, apply and develop the skills and concepts involved in ethical reasoning and argumentation;
• Enhancement of skills in clear and rigorous thinking as well as oral and written expression.

Written Discussion Responses
Due: FIVE times across Semester
Weighting: 25%

Students must each pre-prepare and submit short responses (e.g. 200-250 words) to the ASTERISKED Discussion Questions for FIVE week's worth of topics, spread across the semester (i.e. do not choose five consecutive weeks). Discussion Questions will be posted online under each week's topic, at the start of each week (or earlier). NOTE: Discussion Questions are in sync with lecture weeks, i.e. will be addressing Week 2 Discussion Questions in Week 2, and you need to submit them in Week 2.

INTERNAL STUDENTS submit responses in hard copy at the end of their tutorial, and lead tutorial discussion in those weeks by sharing at least one of their prepared responses in class.

Wednesday tutorial students address all of the questions marked *W on the Discussion Sheet each week.

Friday tutorial students address all of the questions marked *F on the Discussion Sheet each week.

EXTERNAL STUDENTS post their contributions to their designated online discussion group forum by 12pm on Friday of the relevant week. You may choose EITHER the W* or the F* questions.

On successful completion you will be able to:
• Ability to demonstrate a sound understanding of the key concepts, principles and theories of Aristotle and Mill, as well as a selection of contemporary philosophers, specifically in relation to questions of individual responsibility and liberty;
• Ability to identify, apply and develop the skills and concepts involved in ethical reasoning and argumentation;
• Enhancement of skills in clear and rigorous thinking as well as oral and written expression.

Essay
Due: 5pm Fri 3 June
Weighting: **35%**

The essay allows you to engage with a topic in greater depth. This will develop your ability to express, analyse and organise key ideas clearly and systematically, and to provide a sustained argument in support of a chosen position.

A word limit of 1600 words applies.

Topics will be available in class and on the unit iLearn at least three weeks before the due date, and will be returned with comments approximately three weeks after submission. Submission will be electronic (via iLearn). Submission instructions will be provided in class and on iLearn.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Improved skills in analyzing and critically evaluating arguments and theories in the relevant literature;
- Ability to identify, apply and develop the skills and concepts involved in ethical reasoning and argumentation;
- Enhancement of skills in clear and rigorous thinking as well as oral and written expression.

**Attendance/participation**

**Due:** Continuous

Weighting: **15%**

**Internal students** must attend at least 75% of tutorials (including the four weeks of Discussion Leadership) in order to be eligible for the participation mark. You will be assessed on both your class attendance and your contribution to discussions (lectures, tutorials, and optional discussion board contributions).

**External students** must participate in online discussion in 75% of Discussion Board discussion (including the four weeks of Discussion Leadership).

Effective participation means that you are prepared and able to contribute to the learning environment of the tutorial/discussion. It does not mean that you must have all the answers. Examples of good participation include: asking questions that help you and others to understand better; identifying passages from assigned readings or questions from lectures that can be explored in class; making connections with other topics in or outside of the unit; listening to and reading your classmates' contributions, asking them questions, and contributing your own thoughts.

**NB:** It is your responsibility to ensure that your work and/or study commitments do not clash with your tutorial commitments for this unit of study.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Ability to demonstrate a sound understanding of the key concepts, principles and
theories of Aristotle and Mill, as well as a selection of contemporary philosophers, specifically in relation to questions of individual responsibility and liberty;

- Improved skills in analyzing and critically evaluating arguments and theories in the relevant literature;
- Ability to identify, apply and develop the skills and concepts involved in ethical reasoning and argumentation;
- Enhancement of skills in clear and rigorous thinking as well as oral and written expression.

Delivery and Resources

Delivery: Day, External

This unit will use: iLecture, iLearn

Times and Locations for Lectures and Tutorials: For current updates and to confirm lecture times and classrooms please consult the MQ Timetables website: http://www.timetables.mq.edu.au.

Lectures:
Wednesday 10am-11am W5C 232
Friday 10am-11am C5A 229

Tutorials:
Wednesday 11am-12pm W5C 312
Friday 11am-12pm W5A 202

Requirements:
Internal students attend 2 lectures and 1 tutorial each week.

Lectures start in the first week of semester, tutorials start in the second week.

Required and recommended resources:
All required readings are in the PHL225: Ethical Theory course reader available via Print On Demand from the bookstore. This contains the essential weekly readings for lectures and tutorials. All students are expected to read the essential readings. A list of additional readings is also provided for each topic, on the unit iLearn. Most journal articles are available electronically; additional books and book chapters covering all core areas of the unit, are available at the Reserve Loans desk in the Library.

Unit Schedule

PHL225 UNIT SCHEDULE AND READINGS

The following is an outline of the topics and the readings that will be covered week by week. The
listed essential readings are all in the PHL225 course Reader. These are the minimum required reading for the unit. The further readings will assist you to develop an expanded understanding of the issues discussed in lectures, and should be used for essay preparation. More detailed reading lists will also provided with the essay topics.

SECTION 1: ARISTOTLE

Week 1 (2 & 4 Mar): Unit Introduction; Introduction to Aristotle

Essential Reading:


Week 2 (9 & 11 Mar): Aristotle on voluntary/involuntary action; Nagel on moral luck

Essential Reading:

(i) Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book III.


Further Reading:


Week 3 (16 & 18 Mar): Aristotle and contemporary views of friendship

Essential Reading:

(i) Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books VIII, IX


Further Reading:


SECTION 2: MILL

Week 4 (23 March only due to Good Friday on 25 March): Mill on Liberty

*Essential Reading:*

(i) J. S. Mill: “Introductory” p, 126-140. (Note the famous passage on p. 135)

(ii) Chapter III “Of Individuality” pp. 184-204.

Week 5 (30 Mar & 1 Apr): Paternalism

*Essential Reading:*


*Further Reading:*


*** SHORT PAPER DUE: 5pm Fri 1 April ***

Week 6 (6 & 8 April): Contemporary Liberal Autonomy

*Essential Reading:*


*Further Reading:*


*** MID-SEMESTER BREAK: 11-25 April ***

Week 7 (27 & 29 April): Mill and Scanlon on Freedom of Thought and Expression

*Essential Reading:*

(i) J. S. Mill Chapter II “Of the Liberty of Thought and Discussion pp. 141-183 (The last few
pages are a good although brief summary.)


Further Readings:


Week 8: (4 & 6 May): Challenges to Freedom of Expression: “Hate Speech” and Pornography

Essential Reading:


Further Reading:


SECTION 3: KANT

Week 9 (11 & 13 May): Kant on Duty and the Good Will

Essential Reading:

(i) Immanuel Kant, Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, ed. Mary Gregor (CUP, 1997), Section I (‘Transition from Common Rational to Philosophic moral cognition’), [4:393-405]

Further Reading:


Week 10 (18 & 20 May): Kant on Duty and the Categorical Imperatives

Essential Reading:


**Week 11 (25 & 27 May): Kant on respect and dignity**

*Essential Reading:* (NB: the Kant pieces are short)

(i) Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Section II, 4: [pp. 430-440].

(ii) The Doctrine of Virtue: Introduction, Sections XI & XII [pp. 398-403];

(iii) Part 1, Ch. II (‘Man’s Duty to Himself Merely as a Moral Being’) [pp. 429-437];

(iv) Part II, Ch. 1. Section II (‘On Duties of Virtue Towards Other Men Arising from the Respect Due to Them’, [pp 462-468];

(v) Ch. II ‘On Ethical Duties of Men Toward One Another with Regard to their Condition’ [pp. 469-473].


*Further Reading:*


**Week 12: Non-teaching week** (Essay preparation and one-on-one consultation)

*** ESSAY DUE: 5pm Fri 3 June***

**Policies and Procedures**

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- [Academic Honesty Policy](http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html)
- [Assessment Policy prior to Session 2 2016](http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html)
- [Grading Policy prior to Session 2 2016](http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html)
- [Grade Appeal Policy](http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html)
- [Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public](http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/complaint_management/procedure.html)

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the Learning and Teaching Category of Policy Central.

**Student Code of Conduct**

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: [https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/)

**Results**

Results shown in *iLearn*, or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in eStudent. For more information visit [ask.mq.edu.au](http://ask.mq.edu.au).

**Student Support**

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit [http://students.mq.edu.au/support/](http://students.mq.edu.au/support/)

**Learning Skills**

Learning Skills ([mq.edu.au/learningskills](http://mq.edu.au/learningskills)) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- **Workshops**
- **StudyWise**
- **Academic Integrity Module for Students**
- **Ask a Learning Adviser**

**Student Services and Support**

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the Disability Service who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

**Student Enquiries**

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at [ask.mq.edu.au](http://ask.mq.edu.au)

**IT Help**

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit [http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/](http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/).

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy](http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.
Graduate Capabilities

Creative and Innovative

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

• Improved skills in analyzing and critically evaluating arguments and theories in the relevant literature;
• Ability to identify, apply and develop the skills and concepts involved in ethical reasoning and argumentation;

Assessment task

• Essay

Capable of Professional and Personal Judgement and Initiative

We want our graduates to have emotional intelligence and sound interpersonal skills and to demonstrate discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgement. They will exercise initiative as needed. They will be capable of risk assessment, and be able to handle ambiguity and complexity, enabling them to be adaptable in diverse and changing environments.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

• Ability to identify, apply and develop the skills and concepts involved in ethical reasoning and argumentation;
• Enhancement of skills in clear and rigorous thinking as well as oral and written expression.

Assessment tasks

• Written Discussion Responses
• Attendance/participation

Commitment to Continuous Learning

Our graduates will have enquiring minds and a literate curiosity which will lead them to pursue knowledge for its own sake. They will continue to pursue learning in their careers and as they participate in the world. They will be capable of reflecting on their experiences and relationships with others and the environment, learning from them, and growing - personally, professionally
and socially.

This graduate capability is supported by:

**Learning outcomes**

- Improved skills in analyzing and critically evaluating arguments and theories in the relevant literature;
- Enhancement of skills in clear and rigorous thinking as well as oral and written expression.

**Assessment task**

- Attendance/participation

**Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills**

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

**Learning outcomes**

- Ability to demonstrate a sound understanding of the key concepts, principles and theories of Aristotle and Mill, as well as a selection of contemporary philosophers, specifically in relation to questions of individual responsibility and liberty;
- Improved skills in analyzing and critically evaluating arguments and theories in the relevant literature;
- Ability to identify, apply and develop the skills and concepts involved in ethical reasoning and argumentation;
- Enhancement of skills in clear and rigorous thinking as well as oral and written expression.

**Assessment tasks**

- Short Paper
- Written Discussion Responses
- Essay
- Attendance/participation

Unit guide PHL 225 Ethical Theory
Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Ability to demonstrate a sound understanding of the key concepts, principles and theories of Aristotle and Mill, as well as a selection of contemporary philosophers, specifically in relation to questions of individual responsibility and liberty;
- Improved skills in analyzing and critically evaluating arguments and theories in the relevant literature;
- Ability to identify, apply and develop the skills and concepts involved in ethical reasoning and argumentation;
- Enhancement of skills in clear and rigorous thinking as well as oral and written expression.

Assessment tasks

- Short Paper
- Written Discussion Responses
- Essay
- Attendance/participation

Problem Solving and Research Capability

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Ability to demonstrate a sound understanding of the key concepts, principles and theories of Aristotle and Mill, as well as a selection of contemporary philosophers, specifically in relation to questions of individual responsibility and liberty;
- Improved skills in analyzing and critically evaluating arguments and theories in the
relevant literature;

• Ability to identify, apply and develop the skills and concepts involved in ethical reasoning and argumentation;

**Assessment tasks**

• Short Paper
• Written Discussion Responses
• Essay

**Effective Communication**

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:

**Learning outcomes**

• Ability to demonstrate a sound understanding of the key concepts, principles and theories of Aristotle and Mill, as well as a selection of contemporary philosophers, specifically in relation to questions of individual responsibility and liberty;
• Enhancement of skills in clear and rigorous thinking as well as oral and written expression.

**Assessment tasks**

• Short Paper
• Written Discussion Responses
• Essay
• Attendance/participation

**Engaged and Ethical Local and Global citizens**

As local citizens our graduates will be aware of indigenous perspectives and of the nation's historical context. They will be engaged with the challenges of contemporary society and with knowledge and ideas. We want our graduates to have respect for diversity, to be open-minded, sensitive to others and inclusive, and to be open to other cultures and perspectives: they should have a level of cultural literacy. Our graduates should be aware of disadvantage and social justice, and be willing to participate to help create a wiser and better society.

This graduate capability is supported by:
Learning outcomes

• Ability to demonstrate a sound understanding of the key concepts, principles and theories of Aristotle and Mill, as well as a selection of contemporary philosophers, specifically in relation to questions of individual responsibility and liberty;
• Ability to identify, apply and develop the skills and concepts involved in ethical reasoning and argumentation;

Assessment tasks

• Written Discussion Responses
• Attendance/participation

Socially and Environmentally Active and Responsible

We want our graduates to be aware of and have respect for self and others; to be able to work with others as a leader and a team player; to have a sense of connectedness with others and country; and to have a sense of mutual obligation. Our graduates should be informed and active participants in moving society towards sustainability.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

• Ability to demonstrate a sound understanding of the key concepts, principles and theories of Aristotle and Mill, as well as a selection of contemporary philosophers, specifically in relation to questions of individual responsibility and liberty;
• Ability to identify, apply and develop the skills and concepts involved in ethical reasoning and argumentation;

Assessment tasks

• Written Discussion Responses
• Attendance/participation

Changes from Previous Offering

Changes to assessment.

Changes since First Published

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