## Problems of Philosophy

*Philosophy 1*

*Fall 2006*

### Schedule

**ETHICS**

**Friday, 1 September**

**FAMINE AID**

Is there such a thing as moral argument? If so, how does it work?


**Monday, 4 September**

**SINGER’S PRINCIPLE**

Singer gives different formulations of his moral principle. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?

*reading:* Singer.

**Wednesday, 6 September**

**WHAT ARE WE RESPONSIBLE FOR?**

Are we required to do more than our share? What if people die when we don’t?


**Friday, 8 September**

**ABORTION AND THE RIGHT TO LIFE**

Most of the debate about abortion concerns whether fetuses have the right to life. Thomson proposes a different way of thinking about it. Suppose a fetus did have a right to life, just like an adult. Would that prove that abortion is wrong?


**Monday, 11 September**

**THOMSON’S ANALOGY**

Why might someone dispute the analogy with the violinist? How does Thomson respond?

*reading:* Thomson.

**Wednesday, 13 September**

**IS THERE A RIGHT TO ABORTION?**

Suppose a fetus doesn’t have a right to use its mother’s body. Does it follow that there is nothing wrong with abortion? Does it follow that there is a right to abortion? Note that those are slightly different things.

*reading:* Thomson.

**Friday, 15 September**

**MORAL LUCK**
Problems of Philosophy

Accidents play an important role in moral guilt. Does that make any sense?


**Monday, 18 September**

**MORAL LUCK II**

Continued discussion of moral luck.

**Reading:** Nagel, 24–38.

**Wednesday, 20 September**

**MORAL REALISM**

Where do the moral rules come from? Many cultures give a religious answer called theological voluntarism: the moral rules are given to us by a supernatural being. Plato asks whether that makes sense.

**Reading:** Plato, *Euthyphro*, 6e-11b.

**Friday, 22 September**

**NO CLASS**

**Reading:** None.

**Monday, 25 September**

**MORAL RELATIVISM**

Another answer to the question of where the moral rules come from: they are social practices that vary from one culture to another. The American Anthropological Association used this explanation of the origin of moral rules to oppose the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is the explanation of their position.


**Wednesday, 27 September**

**OBJECTIONS**

Is there an argument from the truth of moral relativism to the conclusion that we should be more tolerant than we might otherwise be?


**Friday, 29 September**

**RELATIVISM AND TOLERANCE**

Would the truth of relativism at least undermine the reasons for intolerance? If so wouldn’t that amount to moving from the truth of moral relativism to conclusions about tolerance?

**Reading:** Williams, *Morality*, pp. 20–25.

**Monday, 2 October**

**RELATIVISM AND TOLERANCE II**

Can moral relativists take other cultures seriously?

Epistemology

Wednesday, 4 October

WHAT DOES KNOWLEDGE INVOLVE?
What does Descartes think it takes to know something? Is this standard the right one?
Reading: René Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy (Cambridge University Press, 1996), First and Second Meditations, pp. 12–23.

Friday, 6 October

SKEPTICISM
In the Second Meditation, Descartes finds something that he knows. Notice the split between the things he is certain of and those that are still open to doubt.
Reading: Descartes, First and Second Meditations, pp. 12–23.

Monday, 9 October

DOUBTS ABOUT CAUSES
Begin with Hume’s psychological theory: impressions, ideas, and the association of ideas. Then, the problem: what is the idea of necessary connection?

Wednesday, 11 October

DOUBTS ABOUT CAUSES II
Continued discussion of Hume’s denials that we understand the necessary connection between cause and effect
Reading: Hume, pp. 134–47.

Friday, 13 October

NECESSARY CONNECTION
Hume’s positive story. What is our idea of necessary connection?

Wednesday, 18 October

CRITICISM
Why can’t we say that A caused B without thinking that any other A would also have to cause B?

Friday, 20 October

MIRACLES
The first part of Hume’s discussion of miracles.
Reading: Hume, pp. 169–74.

Monday, 23 October

MIRACLES II
What is the relationship between the two parts? Did Hume show that we don’t have reason to believe in miracles in the first part? If so, what is the second part for?
reading: Hume, pp. 174–86.

Wednesday, 25 October
CRITICISM
More attention to the arguments in the second part.

Broad's criticism of Hume's argument.

Friday, 27 October
CRITICISM II
Does Hume's argument prove too much?

Monday, 30 October
ARGUMENTS FROM DESIGN
Can we infer a benevolent God from the apparent design of the world?

Wednesday, 1 November
DESIGN II
More discussion of arguments from design

Metaphysics

Friday, 3 November
IDENTITY
Why is the continued identity of a thing a problem?
How did Locke address it?

Monday, 6 November
MAN AND PERSON
How does Locke distinguish between man and person?
reading: Locke, pp. 332–8.

Wednesday, 8 November
PERSONAL IDENTITY
The cases Locke gives in favor of his view of personal identity. The cobbler and the prince. Socrates waking and Socrates sleeping. Etc.

Friday, 10 November
DISCUSSION OF LOCKE
Objections from the floor.

Monday, 13 November
REVISIT THE CASES
Let’s take another look at the body-switch cases.


**Wednesday, 15 November**

**Are We Bodies?**

Does Williams’s argument show that persons are bodies?

**Reading**: Williams, “The Self and the Future”.

**Friday, 17 November**

**Are People Special**

For most things, there need not be a determinate answer to questions about whether some object has survived some changes. Sometimes, there is no saying one way or the other. Is something similar true of us?

**Reading**: Williams, “The Self and the Future”.

**Monday, 20 November**

**The Branch Line Case**

Could I survive being “duplicated” or not?


**Wednesday, 22 November**

**The Combined Spectrum**

Given what I’m made of, how could it be the case that questions about my identity over time must have determinate answers?


**Monday, 27 November**

**What Is Death?**

Given what death is, how could it be a bad thing?

**Reading**: Nagel, pp. 1–10.

**Wednesday, 29 November**

**Death II**

Continued discussion of Nagel.

**Reading**: Nagel, pp. 1–10.

**Friday, 1 December**

**Immortality**

Would immortality be a good thing?


**Monday, 4 December**

**Immortality II**

Continued discussion.

**Reading**: Williams, “The Makropoulos Affair”.

**Wednesday, 6 December**

**Wrapping Up**

Concluding discussion.

**Reading**: None
Materials

The appropriate editions of *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* may be purchased at the Huntley Bookstore. Check under “Philosophy 33”. Everything else will be available in a xeroxed reader from King's Copies, 865 W. Foothill, 625-2002, kingsclaremont@yahoo.com. All readings will be on reserve in the Honnold-Mudd Library.

Comments on lectures and announcements will be posted on the web at the Sakai site for this course.

Instructor

My name is Michael Green. My office is 207 Pearsons. My office hours are Mondays and Wednesdays, 4–5 and Fridays 2–4. My office phone number is 607-0906. I have decided that my life will be much better if I only answer email once a day. I will reply, but if you need an answer quickly, you're probably best off calling or dropping by my office.

Assignments

Grades will be based on four assignments: two papers, a mid-term, and a final exam. All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course. Late papers will be accepted without question. They will be penalized at the rate of one-half of a point per day, with grades based on the College’s twelve point scale. Exceptions will be made in extremely unusual circumstances. Please be mindful of the fact that maturity involves taking steps to ensure that the extremely unusual remains extremely unusual.