

University of St Andrews

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

## **PY1011 MORAL AND POLITICAL CONTROVERSIES**

MODULE GUIDE Semester 1 2016-17

### **Module Coordinator and lecturer:**

Dr Lisa Jones, email: [lj14@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:lj14@st-andrews.ac.uk), Room G06, Edgecliffe.  
Office hours: Mon & Thurs 3-4 (or email to arrange an appointment).

### **Co-lecturers:**

Dr Theron Pummer, email: [tgp4@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:tgp4@st-andrews.ac.uk), Room B08, Edgecliffe.  
Office hours: Mon 11:15-1:15 (or email to arrange an appointment)  
Dr Ben Sachs, email: [bas7@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:bas7@st-andrews.ac.uk), Room B09, Edgecliffe.  
Office hours: Mon & Tue 4-5 (or email to arrange an appointment)

### **Module description:**

Philosophy has often been said to begin with the question 'how ought we to live?' This module introduces students to fundamental questions and problems in moral philosophy (How should we live? What ought we to do? What is it to be a good human being?) and in political philosophy (How should we live together?). It provides an accessible and comprehensive introduction to the philosophical significance of some of the most pressing moral and political problems of today, as well as a guide to the rival theoretical approaches used to reflect upon these issues. In moral philosophy we will look at both applied ethics (exploring particular moral issues, such as our obligations to those in severe need, and our treatment of non-human animals) and normative ethics (exploring theoretical approaches to tackling such issues, for example: utilitarian, Kantian and virtue ethics). In political philosophy, we will explore central concepts such as liberty, equality, and democracy, and consider the extent to which we should give up some of our freedom in exchange for the protection of the state.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of this module, students should have gained a good critical understanding of the complexities of the moral and political questions addressed, and of various approaches that have been taken in moral and political theorising. Students will be able to analyse and evaluate critical discussion of these issues in recent and contemporary literature; to formulate and articulate their own views on these issues, and provide a rational defence of these views in written work and in discussion. To these ends, the requirements of the module are: attendance at all classes, completion of required reading and preparation for both lectures and seminars, including participation in seminar discussions, and completion of all formal assessment.

**Lectures:** 5:00 pm, Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and some Fridays in the Buchanan Lecture Theatre, Union St.

**Tutorials:** One tutorial per week, starting in week 2. Sign up to a group via the MMS system (sign-up will open immediately after the first lecture).

**Assessment:** Continuous assessment = 50% [see below for details]  
2-hour examination = 50%

NB: you must pass both of the above elements, in order to pass the module overall.

**Reassessment** (for fails with grades 4.0 or above): 3-hour examination = 100%

**Marking and grading** is on the University 20-point scale. For a full description of marking bands and grade classification, see the Philosophy Undergraduate Handbook, online at: <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/philosophy/current/ugrad/>

**Module Requirements:**

- Adequate reading, regular attendance at tutorials and lectures, submission of coursework, and completion of the exam are compulsory requirements of this module.
- Those with three or more unauthorised absences from tutorial meetings will fail the module with a grade of 0X, which does not permit re-assessment.
- Students are required to submit all coursework and to pass *both* assessment elements of the module (continuous assessment and the examination) in order to pass the module as a whole. Failure in one of these elements will lead to failure of the module overall.
- Reassessment will be permitted for those who fail the module with an overall grade of 4.0 or greater. Any fails of 3.9 or below will not be entitled to reassessment.

**Recommended Texts:**

There is no single course text for this module; most readings that are required for lectures and tutorials are available in electronic form, or in hard copy, from the library.

There is an **online reading list** [ORL] for this module that contains links to/information for the required texts, and to many of the other texts you'll be encouraged to read, as further optional reading suggestions. Pay attention to the *lecture and tutorial schedule* below to see what you need to read, when.

Texts referred to often in the schedule include Hugh LaFollette's *Ethics in Practice*, and Russ Shafer-Landau's *Ethical Theory*, both of which are accessible as e-books via the library. Another text to which you'll need to have ready access is James Rachels' *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (now in its 8<sup>th</sup> edn.) – unfortunately, there is no electronic access to this book so you may wish to purchase it. The library has some copies of the 7<sup>th</sup> edn. on short loan. Again, see the online reading list.

Another online source that is often referred to here is the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu/> [hereafter, *SEP*]. You can search within the encyclopedia yourself for the relevant entries recommended here.

## LECTURE and TUTORIAL SCHEDULE, with readings:

<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Intro to moral thinking, and some life &amp; death problems</b>
12/9	L1: Introduction to ethics and moral thinking [L] Reading: Hugh LaFollette, Introductory matter, pp. 1-15 in his <i>Ethics in Practice</i> [available as an e-book – see ORL]
13/9	L2: Moral thinking about killing: abortion [L] Reading: Mary Anne Warren, 'On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion', in LaFollette, <i>Ethics in Practice</i> [e-book – see ORL]
15/9	L3: Global poverty: are we obliged to help those in severe need? [L] Reading: Peter Singer, 'Famine, Affluence and Morality', in LaFollette, <i>Ethics in Practice</i> , also in Shafer-Landau, <i>Ethical Theory</i> [both available as e-books – see ORL]

No tutorials in week 1.

Tutorial task for week 2: Write a critical summary (roughly 500 words) of Singer, 'Famine, Affluence and Morality' and take this along to your tutorial to discuss. Can Singer's argument be defeated?

<b>Week 2</b>	<b>What motivates morality?</b>
19/9	L4: Does morality come from God? Or from 'natural law'? [L] Reading: James Rachels, 'Does Morality Depend on Religion?' in his <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</i>
20/9	L5: Egoism and morality [L] Reading: James Rachels, 'Ethical Egoism' in his <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</i>
22/9	L6: Me & others: is morality a social contract? [L] Readings: James Rachels, 'The Idea of a Social Contract' in his <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</i> ; also John Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i> – read the extract in LaFollette, also in Shafer-Landau [e-books].
23/9	<b>Study Skills Session: Essay-researching &amp; -writing advice</b> [L]

Tutorial task for week 3: write some critical notes on Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (extract), and some reflections on the idea that morality is grounded in the need for cooperation with others – do you think this is an adequate explanation of morality? Take your notes along to your tutorial to discuss.

<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Utilitarianism</b>
26/9	L7: Intro to Utilitarianism: is morality about maximising goodness? [TP] Readings: James Rachels, 'The Utilitarian Approach' and 'The Debate over Utilitarianism' in his <i>The Elements of Moral Philosophy</i> Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, 'Consequentialism' in <i>SEP</i> [see ORL] (optional)
27/9	L8: Mill's Hedonistic Utilitarianism [TP] Readings: J. S. Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , Chapters 2 & 4 [see ORL] Roger Crisp, 'Hedonism Reconsidered' [see ORL]
29/9	<b>NO LECTURE (to allow for the 'Knox Lecture' in School III, 5.15pm)</b>
30/9	L9: Mill cont./Problems for Utilitarianism [TP]

Readings: Frances Kamm, 'Non-consequentialism, the Person as End-in-itself, and the Significance of Status', *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 1992 [see ORL]  
 Brad Hooker, 'The Demandingness Objection' [see ORL]  
 (optional)

Tutorial task for week 4: write up notes outlining what you take to be the most serious objection to hedonistic utilitarianism, and the best possible response to that objection. Take your notes along to your tutorial.

- Week 4: (Kantian) deontology; & moral status of non-human animals**
- 3/10 L10: Introduction: Non-consequentialism [TP]  
 Readings: Frances Kamm, 'Non-consequentialism, the Person as End-in-itself, and the Significance of Status', *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 1992 [ORL]  
 Shelly Kagan, 'Doing Harm' chapter 3 of *Normative Ethics* [ORL]  
 (optional)
- 4/10 L11: Kantian deontology [TP]  
 Readings: Thomas Hill, 'Kantian Normative Ethics', in David Copp (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory* [ORL]  
 Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (Preface and Sections 1 & 2) [ORL] (optional)  
 Robert Johnson, 'Kant's Moral Philosophy' in *SEP* [ORL]  
 (optional)
- 6/10 L12: Kantian deontology: criticisms [TP]  
 Readings: Shelly Kagan, 'Kantianism for Consequentialists' in I. Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* edited and translated by Allen W. Wood [ORL]  
 C. Broad, *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, Chapter 5 [ORL] (optional)
- 7/10 L13: The moral status of non-human animals [LJ]  
 Reading: Peter Singer, 'All Animals Are Equal' in LaFollette, also in Shafer-Landau [e-books, ORL]

Tutorial task for week 5: (a) write up notes outlining what you take to be the most promising formulation of Kantian deontology, and the most serious objection to it; (b) write notes on the following discussion questions: *do we have moral obligations towards non-human animals? On what basis?* Take all these notes along to your tutorial.

- Week 5: How far do our moral obligations extend?/Virtue ethics**
- 10/10 L14: Obligations to future generations [LJ]  
 Readings: Derek Parfit, 'The Non-Identity Problem', Chapter 16 of his *Reasons and Persons* [ORL];
- 11/10 L15: Intro to Aristotle and Ancient Greek Virtue Ethics [TP]  
 Readings: Roger Crisp, Introduction to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* [version edited by Crisp - available as an e-book, see ORL]  
 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*: Book 1, Ch. 7; 2.1-6; 6.1; 6.12-13; 10.7-8 (optional)  
 Rosalind Hursthouse, 'Virtue Ethics' in *SEP* [ORL] (optional)
- 13/10 L16: Virtue ethics – contemporary versions [TP]

- Readings: Rosalind Hursthouse, 'Normative Virtue Ethics', in Roger Crisp (ed.), *How Should One Live?* [available as an e-book, see ORL]  
 Roger Crisp, 'A Third Method of Ethics?' (optional) [ORL]
- 14/10 L17: Virtue ethics – problems [TP]  
 Readings: Thomas Hurka, 'Against Virtue Ethics', Chapter 8 of his *Virtue, Vice, and Value* [available as an e-book, see ORL]  
 John Doris, 'Persons, Situations, and Virtue Ethics' (optional) [ORL]

Study task for week 6: write notes for yourself on the following discussion questions, based on your reading and lectures this week: *Why should we care, morally, about people who will exist in the future? What is the most promising formulation of virtue ethics, and is it more plausible than consequentialism and (Kantian) deontology?* There are no tutorials in week 6, but you should make these notes to consolidate your learning from lectures. Feel free to meet with other students from the module this week to discuss your notes.

**Week 6: NO CLASSES – Independent Learning Week**

Tutorial task for week 7: write up notes outlining what you take to be the most promising formulation of virtue ethics, and whether it is more plausible than consequentialism and (Kantian) deontology. Take these notes along to your tutorial.

- Week 7: The State's Role in Promoting Good Lives**
- 24/10 L18: Character, Deed, Outcome: which matters most? [L]  
 Readings: none
- 25/10 L19: The Harm Principle [BS]  
 Reading: John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, Ch. 1 [ORL]
- 27/10 L20: Paternalism [BS]  
 Reading: Sarah Conly, *Against Autonomy*, Ch. 1 [ORL]

Tutorial task for week 8: Most of the contemporary western democracies restrict consumer access to recreational drugs and pharmaceuticals, will shut down restaurants that cannot pass a sanitary inspection, and have laws that require motorcycle users to wear a helmet. Taking these and other, similar laws into account, is it fair to say that these states have embraced coercive paternalism? Write down your thoughts on this question.

- Week 8: Democracy**
- 31/10 L21: Does Democracy Protect Liberty?—Part 1 [BS]  
 Reading: Isaiah Berlin, 'Two Concepts of Liberty', in Isaiah Berlin, *Liberty* [ORL]
- 1/11 L22: Does Democracy Protect Liberty?—Part 2 [BS]  
 Reading: Quentin Skinner, 'A Third Concept of Liberty' [ORL]
- 3/11 L23: Constitutionalism and Democracy [BS]  
 Reading: Jeremy Waldron, 'A Rights-Based Critique of Constitutional Rights' [ORL]
- 4/11 L24: Preferences, Values, and Rule by the Majority [BS]

Reading: Cass Sunstein, 'Preferences and Politics' [ORL]

Tutorial task for week 9: Here's an objection to Sunstein:

"Yes, there may be all sorts of problems with allowing policy to be determined by people's preferences. But since the alternative is allowing policy to be determined by the preferences or values of politicians alone, we should go ahead and appeal to people's preferences despite the drawbacks of doing so."

Write up your thoughts on whether this is a good objection.

**Week 9: The Challenge of Cultural Diversity**

- 7/11 L25: The Equality of Citizens in the Eyes of the Law [BS]  
Reading: Iris Marion Young, 'Polity and Group Difference: A Critique of the Ideal of Universal Citizenship' [ORL]
- 8/11 L26: Feminism and Multiculturalism [BS]  
Reading: Susan Moller Okin, 'Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?' [ORL]
- 10/11 **L27: NO PHYSICAL LECTURE - LECTURE WILL BE PUT ONLINE ON MMS**  
Liberalism and Multiculturalism [BS]  
Reading: Brian Barry, 'Liberalism and Multiculturalism' [ORL]

Tutorial task for week 10: Think about and write up some notes on the following issue, taking into consideration what Okin and Barry would say about it: Should western nations allow the wearing of burkas in public?

**Week 10: The State's Role in Promoting Distributive Justice**

- 14/11 L28: Libertarianism [BS]  
Reading: Robert Nozick, 'Distributive Justice' Chapter from *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, pp. 149-82 [ORL]
- 15/11 L29: Liberalism [BS]  
Reading: Liam Murphy and Thomas Nagel, *The Myth of Ownership*, §VII of Ch. 2 and §VIII-IX of Ch. 3 [ORL]
- 17/11 L30: Marxism [BS]  
Reading: G.A. Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality*, §2a-2f of Ch. 2 [ORL]

Tutorial task for week 11: Think about Nozick's Wilt Chamberlain example. Nozick believes that contracts have a special moral status, such that people have a natural absolute right to what they contract for. Murphy and Nagel, by contrast, think that it's up to society to decide whether to put in place a legal system that gives people an absolute right to what they contract for. Write up some thoughts on who has the upper hand in this debate.

**Week 11: Round-up and Review**

- 21/11 L31: Round-up of moral themes/issues [L]  
22/11 L32: Round-up of political themes/issues [BS]  
24/11 L33: Final thoughts and exam guidance [L]

**Week 12: Revision Week - no lectures or tutorials**

## About Tutorials:

As the schedule above shows, tutorials begin in week 2 and will take place weekly. The tutorial sign-up will be via MMS. Select a group according to your availability.

### What are tutorials for?

Tutorials are small-group classes that provide an opportunity for you to discuss the issues raised in your lectures and reading, and to make sure you've fully understood them. Studying philosophy is as much about *learning to philosophise* – actively engaging in discussion and argument – as it is about absorbing factual material. It is in the tutorials that you will actually be *doing philosophy*. Tutors will guide and facilitate the discussion, and may arrange for students to present summaries or lead the tutorial. It is essential that you complete the preparatory tasks outlined above in the schedule, and take your notes along with you to the tutorial class. Be ready to discuss – exchanging ideas with others is how philosophy is done.

## Continuous Assessment (Coursework)

Coursework counts for 50% of your overall grade for this module. This is further broken down into 2 essays of 25% weighting each:

- Essay 1 is due for submission on **Monday 24 October** (start of week 7)
- Essay 2 is due for submission on **Friday 18 November** (end of week 10)

Each essay should be submitted via MMS by 23:59 on the date given above.

Essay 1: write an essay of no more than 1500 words on ONE of the following questions:

1. Critically assess Peter Singer's view regarding our moral obligations to the global poor.
2. Outline one common objection to utilitarianism. Do utilitarians have an adequate reply to that objection?
3. Critically discuss Kant's attempt to derive the distinction between perfect and imperfect duties from the universal law formulation of the categorical imperative.

Essay 2: write an essay of no more than 1500 words on ONE of the following questions:

4. Earlier this year the U.K. government made, and then abandoned, plans to introduce a sugar tax. What would Mill have said about the justifiability of that tax? What would Conly have said about it? What *should* one say about it?
5. Mill might object to Waldron's anti-constitutionalism by saying that it increases the likelihood of a tyranny of the majority. Construct an objection along these lines on Mill's behalf and discuss whether it successfully undermines Waldron's position.

### Important guidance for essays:

Note that it is your responsibility to submit your work on time, and to submit a legible, non-corrupted document. Failure to submit on time will mean your mark incurs lateness penalties. Instructions for submission of essays, as well as advice on writing philosophy essays, and details of lateness penalties, can be found in the *Philosophy Handbook for Undergraduates*

<http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/philosophy/docs/1516/undergraduate.pdf>

Coursework is marked anonymously, and submitted work should be identified only by your matriculation number. **Do not** put your name anywhere on your coursework.

On the first page of your coursework, you should include: your matriculation number, the module name and number, your tutor's name, the title of the essay/exercise, and the following statement:

'I hereby declare that the attached piece of written work is my own work and that I have not reproduced, without acknowledgement, the work of another'.

You must attach a bibliography of all your sources to each essay; in addition, all quotations from and paraphrase from other sources must be clearly acknowledged. See the *Philosophy Handbook for Undergraduates* for guidance.

Failure to properly acknowledge sources could lead to you being charged with plagiarism – this is a serious academic offence that is punished accordingly. It is entirely your responsibility to ensure you follow good academic practice, and in particular to avoid academic misconduct (plagiarism). See University guidelines at: <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/students/rules/academicpractice/>

You must provide a word-count at the end of every essay. Do not exceed the stated word limit – penalties will be applied for work exceeding the word limit in accordance with penalty scheme A (1 mark per day Lisa, I think this is a misprint, or part thereof). See <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/media/teaching-and-learning/policies/penalties.pdf>. The word-lengths specified for each essay include everything *except* the bibliography (i.e., the word-count includes footnotes, quotes, etc.)

Assessed coursework will normally be returned – electronically, via MMS – within three weeks of submission.

Remember, you must gain a pass in the 50% coursework element in order to pass the module overall.

### **Exam**

The remaining 50% of the module grade will come from the mark you receive for the exam. The exam will take place during the December exam diet (timetable to be announced by the Exams Office). You will be required to answer three questions, in 2 hours. Further advice regarding exam preparation will be given in the final lecture of the semester.

**Remember: no matter how well you've done in the coursework element, you must also gain a pass in the exam in order to pass the module overall.**