

## CAN WE RELY ON INTUITIONS IN ETHICS?

Junior Seminar

Fall 2008

### PROFESSOR

Elizabeth Harman

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Office: Marx 207

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:40-4:20pm

### MEETING TIME

There will be two sections of this junior seminar.

Section One: Fridays 11am-12noon

Section Two: Wednesdays 12:30-1:30pm

### COURSE OVERVIEW

Arguments in ethics often rely on intuitions about particular cases. Is this reasonable? Should we rely on our intuitions? Do different people have different intuitions? Do members of different cultures tend to have different intuitions? Do these differences show that we should not rely on intuitions? Do recent psychological and neurological experiments about our moral intuitions, and the role that emotion plays in them, show we should not rely on intuitions?

Course goals: The course has two major goals: to examine the questions above carefully, and to develop your skills at independent work.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

#### Grade Distribution:

20% Class presentations and class participation

20% Short papers

60% Final paper

An "F" on a paper or a presentation will result in an "F" in the course.

Class Presentations: Each student will give two or three class presentations. Each presentation should include a handout which is at most one side of a page, double-spaced. Each presentation should summarize the main claims from the reading for that day and raise some discussion questions about the reading. A presentation can also include an objection to the reading, or an original claim by the presenter about the topic in the reading.

Class Participation: Do the reading for each week thoroughly and carefully. Typically only one paper will be assigned, but you may have to read that paper more than once. Every student is expected to participate fully in each day's discussion, and every student is responsible to try to make this happen. This means that students are responsible to try to speak up if they tend to speak too little and to try to pick and choose their moments if they tend to speak a lot. Students should treat each other respectfully. And students should listen carefully to what others say and respond to what has been said.

Final Paper: The final paper for this class is a paper of 5,000-5,500 words (about 20 pages). This paper is due the second day of reading period; this is a University deadline.

Short Papers: There will be one paper of 1,200-1,400 words (about five pages) and one paper of 2,250-2,750 words (about ten pages) due during the semester. Of the three papers you will write during the semester, each longer paper may be a substantial revision and expansion of the last paper (or it may be a new paper). Each of the short papers is worth 10% of your grade.

Late Papers: To hand in a paper on time, you must place a hard copy of the paper in my mailbox in the philosophy department *and* email the paper to me. For the short papers, late papers will be penalized one-third of a letter grade for each day late (for example, from A to A-, from A- to B+, and so on). A paper that is handed in after the deadline but within 24 hours is one day late; a paper that is handed in more than 24 hours late is two days late; a paper that is handed in more than 48 hours late is three days late; and so on. Weekend days count. If you finish a late paper during the weekend, email it to me and hand in a hard copy on Monday (late papers count as handed in at the time of the email).

For the final paper, the deadline is a University deadline; I am not allowed to accept the final paper later than the deadline. (A dean's permission is required to get a late paper accepted.)

Extensions: Extensions will not be granted except under extreme circumstances.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is very serious. If I suspect plagiarism, I will refer the case to the University Committee on Discipline. If plagiarism is found to have occurred, this will result in an "F" on that assignment, and as a result, an "F" in the course. For an introduction to what constitutes plagiarism, please read the guide "Academic Integrity at Princeton," which is linked to from this page:

<http://www.princeton.edu/pr/pub/integrity/08/intro/index.shtm>. Consult me if you have any further questions.

## CALENDAR

This calendar is tentative. Readings may be removed, and readings may be added.

First week (Friday September 19 or Wednesday September 24):

- Anthony Appiah, "The Case Against Intuition," Chapter 3 of *Experiments in Ethics*. The paper is pp. 73-120; please skip the section "Folk Psychology Unplugged" (skip from top of 101 to top of 110)

Second week (Friday September 26 or Wednesday October 1):

- Philippa Foot, "The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect" *Oxford Review* 5, nos. 8-9 (1967)

Third week (Friday October 3 or Wednesday October 8):

- Tamara Horowitz, "Philosophical Intuitions and Psychological Theory" *Ethics* 108, No. 2 (January 1998), pp. 367-385.

Monday, October 13, 11:30am: Topic Proposal for First Paper Due

Fourth week (Friday October 10 or Wednesday October 15):

- Frances Kamm, "Moral Intuitions, Cognitive Psychology, and the Harming-Versus-Not-Aiding Distinction" *Ethics* 108 (April 1998)

Monday, October 20, 11:30am: First Paper Due (1,200-1,400 words)

Fifth week (Friday October 17 or Wednesday October 22):

- Shaun Nichols and Joshua Knobe, "Moral Responsibility and Determinism: The Cognitive Science of Folk Intuitions," *Nous* 41: 4 (2007) 663-685.

Sixth week (Friday October 24 or Wednesday October 29):

- Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*

*Fall Break: October 25-November 2*

Seventh week (Friday November 7 or Wednesday November 12):

- Ernest Sosa, "Experimental Philosophy and Philosophical Intuition" in *Experimental Philosophy*, Joshua Knobe and Shaun Nichols, eds., Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 231-240.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 12:30pm: Topic Proposal for Second Paper Due

Eighth week (Friday November 14 or Wednesday November 19):

- Joshua Greene, “The Secret Joke of Kant’s Soul”

Ninth week (Friday November 21 or Wednesday November 26):

- Peter Singer, “All Animals Are Equal”

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3, 12:30pm: Second Paper Due (2,250-2,750 words)

Tenth week (Friday December 5 or Wednesday December 3):

- S. Matthew Liao, “A Defense of Intuitions” *Philosophical Studies* 2008

Monday, December 15, 11:30am: Topic Proposal for Final Paper Due

Eleventh week (Friday December 12 or Wednesday December 10):

- Ben Eggleston, “Practical Equilibrium: An Approach to Moral Theory Selection”  
*unpublished manuscript*

Tuesday, January 6, 5pm: Final Paper Due (5,000-5,500 words)