



UNSW
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

**Arts and
Social Sciences**

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES & LANGUAGES

ARTS2383

**Reason and Passion in Ethics:
An Introduction to Modern Moral Theory**



Lorenzo Lotto, *Allegory of Virtue and Vice* (1505).

National Gallery of Art, Washington DC.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lorenzo_Lotto_-_All%C3%A9gorie_de_la_Vertu_et_du_Vice_1.JPG

SEMESTER 2, 2013

Lectures (weeks 1-12): Thursdays 9-11, Mechanical Engineering Bldg. 403

Tutorials (weeks 2-13): (check for your tutorial time) Thursdays Morven Brown G4

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1. COURSE STAFF

Convener

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Consultation times: Tuesdays 2-3, and by appointment*

*For day-to-day issues, consult with the lecturer and tutor for this course, Ben Cross

Lecturer, and Tutor:

Benjamin Cross

Room 353 Morven Brown Building (for consultation)

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Consultation times: TBD

The best way to reach either of us is by email. Please feel free to drop by during regular consultation times without an appointment to discuss anything related to the course. If you are unavailable during regular consultation times, or have an urgent matter, please contact one of us by email to schedule an appointment. Also note that your primary source of contact is the course lecturer.

2. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to moral theory in the Western tradition. We will be examining canonical works in the history of modern moral philosophy: David Hume's *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751), Immanuel Kant's *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) as well as parts of the "Doctrine of Virtue" in his *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797), and John Stuart Mill's *Utilitarianism* (1861/1863). We will also look at some contemporary replies.

Six credits.

3. COURSE AIMS

Students taking a second-year course in philosophy should have acquired fundamental skills in analysing arguments and critically interpreting texts. In this course, students will develop these skills further, through study of some of the dominant positions in moral theory. The course aims to introduce students to varieties of moral cognitivism such as deontology and utilitarianism, as well as forms of varieties of moral non-cognitivism, such as moral sentimentalism and expressivism. We will study some of the canonical sources of modern moral theory in texts by Hume, Kant, and Mill, and also consider how they have shaped the conceptual landscape of contemporary ethical theory.

This course aims:

- To develop and consolidate students' understanding of the specific nature of philosophical inquiry, through close analytic and historical study of a pivotal text in the discipline; [LO 1 and 3]¹
- To provide an opportunity to reflect upon the distinct nature of philosophical inquiry; [LO 2]
- To develop students' appreciation of some of the central concepts in philosophy, principally in ethics, such as: rights, duty, freedom, choice, virtue, and moral law; [LO 4]

¹ See appendix for the coding of learning outcomes and graduate attributes for this course and this discipline.

To develop skills in reading, writing, and researching philosophy; in the context of this course, the aim is to begin to develop more advanced critical reasoning skills as well as to sharpen skills in writing critical philosophical essays, in order to prepare students for third year courses in the discipline and in the humanities more broadly; [LO 4 and 5]

This course aims:

- To develop and consolidate students' understanding of the specific nature of philosophical inquiry, through close analytic and historical study of a pivotal text in the discipline; [LO 1 and 3]
- To provide an opportunity to reflect upon the distinct nature of philosophical inquiry; [LO 2]
- To develop students' appreciation of some of the central concepts in philosophy, such as: substance, cause, and freedom; [LO 4]
- To develop skills in reading, writing, and researching philosophy; in the context of the capstone, our aim is to introduce students to more advanced research skills and develop independent research skills in philosophy to enable capable students to go on to work at the Honours and Postgraduate level; [LO 4 and 5]

4. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the completion of this course students will be able to:

- reflect upon the distinctive nature of philosophical inquiry [LOs 1 and 2];
- explain and evaluate canonical texts in the history of philosophical ethics (moral theory) [LOs 3 and 4]
- compose clear and succinct analytical essays [LO 5; GAs 4, 5];
- appreciate, through group discussions, how reasoned enquiry promotes respect for a diversity of points of view [GAs 6 and 7]; and
- communicate complex ideas in a clear and concise manner [LOs 3, 5; GAs 4, 5, 6, and 7].

5. LEARNING AND TEACHING RATIONALE & STRATEGIES

This course is structured around weekly lectures and tutorials. While lecture and tutorial will be held at distinct times, lectures will be designed to offer as much back-and-forth exchange between lecturer and students as possible. In tutorial, you are strongly encouraged to help set the topics for discussion, by asking questions or making comments related to the lecture or the readings.

Throughout the semester, emphasis will be placed on close and careful interpretation of philosophical texts. *It is therefore mandatory that you bring your copy of the assigned text with you to each class meeting (both lecture and tutorial).*

6. COURSE EVALUATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Student evaluative feedback on this course is welcomed and is gathered periodically, using among other means UNSW's Course and Teaching Evaluation and Improvement (CATEI) process.

Student feedback is taken seriously, and continual improvements are made to the course based in part on such feedback. Significant changes to the course will be communicated to subsequent cohorts of students taking the course.

7. REQUIRED COURSE TEXTS

The following course texts are all required; they are available at the UNSW Bookstore.

- David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*. Edited by J.B. Schneewind. Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1983. [ISBN-13: 978-0915145454]
- Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Translated by James W. Ellington. Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 19983. [ISBN-13: 978-0872201668]
- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*. Second Edition. Edited by George Sher. Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 2001. [ISBN-13: 978-0872206052]

In addition, other required readings will be available electronically, as noted in course schedule below.

1. J.L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. Chapter 1, "The Subjectivity of Values" (selections). London: Penguin Books, 1990.
2. John McDowell, "Values and Secondary Qualities." In John McDowell, *Mind, Value, and Reality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.
3. Philippa Foot, "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives." *Philosophical Review* 81 (1972): 305-316.
4. Christine Korsgaard, "Skepticism about Practical Reason." *The Journal of Philosophy* 83 (1986): 5-26.
5. John M. Taurek, "Should the Numbers Count?" *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 6 (1977): 293-316.
6. Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1 (1972): 229-243.

Students seeking resources can also obtain assistance from the UNSW Library. One starting point for assistance is:

<http://info.library.unsw.edu.au/web/services/services.html>

8. ASSESSMENT

Further details on all of these assignments will follow. An overview is provided here.

Please also note that it is UNSW policy that all students must attend 80% of classes; failure to do so is grounds for failing the course. Please also note that failure to complete any essential component of the course (e.g., taking a test, or submitting your final paper, or participating in at least 50% of the required threaded discussions) is grounds for failing the entire course with a UF grade.

The due dates for all assessments are noted in the course schedule. Here is a brief description of each assessment task:

8.1 Threaded Discussions on Moodle.

For nine weeks of the semester, students will be required to participate in an online discussion via Moodle. (See Course Schedule, §14 below, for details on when participation is required.)

This exercise serves several ends: (a) it will prepare students for discussion in class; (b) it will help students to deepen their understanding of the material; (c) it will enable students to receive ongoing feedback both from the instructors and from their peers; (d) it will help students learn to express themselves succinctly and clearly in difficult matters.

The threaded discussions will be marked. **Overall, this component will be worth 27% of your final grade.** Details will be provided in a separate assignment sheet, but some general rules are as follows. A question will be posted by me to start the discussion. Then:

1. **Students will be required to make two posts per week: one before the lecture, one after the lecture.** Failure to make two posts will result in no points being awarded for that week.
2. Posts can be between 100-500 words.
3. Three points are possible each week: 0 points if someone fails to comply with the rules for the assignment, or offers only a perfunctory response that does not indicate any engagement with the reading; 1 point for complying with the rules, but with a post that is rushed and poorly thought out; 2 points for complying with the rules and offering a solid response; and 3 points for complying with the rules and making an outstanding contribution to the discussion.
4. Your mark assesses the combined strength of both of your posts; it is normal for one of the posts to be somewhat more involved than the other.

Students must also contribute to the discussion at least five weeks of the semester. **Failure to do so will result in no points being awarded for this component of the course** (and which in turn provides grounds for failing the entire course).

This assessment task bears on learning outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and graduate attributes 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7.

8.2 Tests

There will be three tests in this course, covering each of the units for this course. The first two tests will have a combination of short-answer and in-class essay writing; the third test will have only short-answer or only in-class essay (TBD). **The first test (administered on 29 August) will be worth 14% of your grade for the course; the second test (administered on 26 September) will be worth 14% of your grade for the course; the third test (administered on 31 October) will be worth 10% of your grade for the course.** Tests must be taken when scheduled; you must have a valid excuse for missing class (see §8 below) in order to make up the text. Failure to comply with this entails receiving a 0 for the test.

All tests bears on learning outcomes 1 and 4, and graduate attributes 1, 2, and 3.

The first and second tests additionally bear on learning outcome 3 and graduate outcomes 4 and 5.

8.3 Essay

You will be required to write an extended essay, of 2500 words, for this course. It is due on 1 November. **It will be worth 35% of your final grade for this course.**

The purpose of this assignment is to develop interpretive, analytical, and critical skills. The essay will emphasize close, critical, and engaged reading of assigned texts, and will require you to deal with both interpretive and philosophical problems. Topics and specific instructions will be provided in tutorial on 26 September. You will turn in this assignment using Turnitin on Moodle. No hard copy is required.

This assessment task bears on learning outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and graduate attributes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

8.4 GENERAL ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION INFORMATION

This pertains to your ESSAYS only.

- The cut off time for all assignment submissions in the School is 4pm of the stated due date.

- Assignments are to be submitted on Turnitin via Moodle. A second electronic copy can be emailed by 4pm on the due date to assessment@unsw.edu.au. All emailed assessments sent to assessment@unsw.edu.au will receive an electronic acknowledgement.
- **IMPORTANT NOTE:** Electronic copies emailed to assessment@unsw.edu.au will not be marked. Only Turnitin submissions will be marked/assessed. The second electronic copy will be used as evidence of assignment submission during appeal and dispute cases. Students have no recourse if a soft copy is not submitted. Therefore it is essential that students keep the electronic record of their sent assignment.

8.5 Assignment Return

Any work that is submitted via Moodle will be marked and returned via Moodle. Any work submitted on paper (for this course, only your tests) will be returned to you in tutorials, whenever possible. Your long essay will have marginal comments throughout, and a paragraph of written response at the end, together with the grade. Feedback will be provided on the online discussion forum, and typically also with the marking of each week's posts. Please feel free to drop by office hours, or schedule an appointment, to discuss assessment expectations or comments on your written work.

8.6 Assignment Extensions

Since one of the principal aims of the online discussion forum is to prepare students for lecture and for in-class discussion, no extensions will be accepted for this component of the course. One post is due before lecture, another after lecture.

Requests for an extension to the submission date can be made for the essay only. Such requests must be made on the appropriate form and *before the submission due date*. Requests must demonstrate exceptional circumstances, which warrant the granting of an extension, and *must be accompanied by supporting documentation*. If medical grounds preclude submission of assignment by due date, contact should be made with the lecturer as soon as possible. A medical certificate will be required for late submission and must cover the dates for which extension is requested.

The same guidelines apply for missing a class during which a test was administered: a make-up test can be administered only if the student can demonstrate exceptional circumstances, as explained in the paragraph above.

In general, the following are examples of grounds for granting an extension for an assignment: *serious* illness, or a death in the family. The following are examples of invalid reasons: a cold, lots of other work, or end-of-the-term travel plans.

To apply for an extension please log into myUNSW and go to My Student Profile tab > My Student Services channel > Online Services > Special Consideration

8.7 Late Submission of Assignments

Late work (i.e. any work required for assessment that has not been given an extension) will be subject to a 10% penalty per day (including weekends) of the maximum marks available for that assignment. For example: you turn in an assignment that was due on Tuesday on Thursday instead. Let us also suppose that this assignment would have merited a grade of 80, had it been turned in on the assigned due date. The adjusted grade would be 60.

Assignments received more than 7 calendar days after the due or extended date will not be allocated a mark (i.e., will receive a 0).

9. ATTENDANCE

To successfully complete this unit you are required to attend minimum 80% of classes. If this requirement is not met you will fail the unit. The roll will be closed 5 minutes after the start of each tutorial meeting. Attendance in lecture will be noted as well.

10. ACADEMIC HONESTY AND PLAGIARISM

Students seeking information on plagiarism should visit the following web site:

<http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/plagiarism/index.html>

11. OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

UNSW's Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Policy requires each person to work safely and responsibly, in order to avoid personal injury and to protect the safety of others.

Any OHS concerns should be raised with your immediate supervisor, the School's OHS representative, or the Head of School. The OHS guidelines are available at:

http://www.ohs.unsw.edu.au/ohs_policies/index.html

12. STUDENT EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

Students who have a disability that requires some adjustment in their learning and teaching environment are encouraged to discuss their study needs with the course convener prior to, or at the commencement of the course. Alternatively, the Student Equity and Diversity Unit can be contacted on 9385 4734. Further information is available at:

<http://www.studentequity.unsw.edu.au>

13. GRIEVANCES

All students should be treated fairly in the course of their studies at UNSW. Students who feel they have not been dealt with fairly should in the first instance attempt to resolve any issues with their tutor or the course convenors. If such an approach fails to resolve the matter, the School of Humanities and Languages has an academic member of staff who acts as a Grievance Officer for the School. This staff member is identified on the notice board in the School of Humanities and Languages. Further information about UNSW grievance procedures is available at:

<https://my.unsw.edu.au/student/atoz/Complaints.html>

14. OTHER STUDENT INFORMATION

myUNSW is the single online access point for UNSW services and information, integrating online services for applicants, commencing & current students and UNSW staff. To visit myUNSW please visit either of the below links:

<https://my.unsw.edu.au>

<https://my.unsw.edu.au/student/atoz/ABC.html>

15. COURSE SCHEDULE

MEETING	READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS
Week 1 1 August	Course Introduction	<i>Optional welcome thread on Moodle.</i>
Week 2 8 August	<u>Unit 1: Hume and Moral Non-Cognitivism</u> Hume, <i>Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • §§I-IV (pp. 13-38) 	Threaded discussion 1 (Moodle).
Week 3 15 August	<u>Unit 1: Hume and Moral Non-Cognitivism</u> Hume, <i>Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • §§V-IX and Appendices (pp. 38-106) 	Threaded discussion 2 (Moodle).
Week 4 22 August	<u>Unit 1: Hume and Moral Non-Cognitivism</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mackie, <i>Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong</i>. Ch 1 “The Subjectivity of Values” (selections). • McDowell, “Values and Secondary Qualities”. <p><i>These readings are available as PDFs on Moodle.</i></p>	Threaded discussion 3 (Moodle).
Week 5 29 August	TEST on UNIT 1. The test will be administered in the <i>lecture</i> period.	TEST 1
Week 6 5 September	<u>Unit 2: Kant and the Moral Imperative</u> Kant, <i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preface and Part I (4:387-405) 	Threaded discussion 4 (Moodle).
Week 7 12 September	<u>Unit 2: Kant and the Moral Imperative</u> Kant, <i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part II (4:406-445) 	Threaded discussion 5 (Moodle).
Week 8 19 September	<u>Unit 2: Kant and the Moral Imperative</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philippa Foot, “Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives.” • Christine Korsgaard, “Skepticism about Practical Reason.” <p><i>These readings are available as PDFs on Moodle.</i></p>	Threaded discussion 6 (Moodle).
Week 9 26 September	TEST on UNIT 2. The test will be administered in the <i>lecture</i> period.	Final essay topics distributed and assignment discussed in tutorial.
BREAK WEEK!		

<p>Week 10 10 October</p>	<p><u>Unit 3: Utilitarianism</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Stuart Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> (all; pp. 1-64) 	<p>Threaded discussion 7 (Moodle).</p>
<p>Week 11 17 October</p>	<p><u>Unit 3: Utilitarianism</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John M. Taurek, “Should the Numbers Count?” • Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality.” <p><i>These readings are available as PDFs on Moodle.</i></p>	<p>Threaded discussion 8 (Moodle).</p>
<p>Week 12 24 October</p>	<p><u>Unit 3: Utilitarianism</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selections from J.C.C. Smart and Bernard Williams, <i>Utilitarianism: For and Against</i> • Barbara Herman, “The Scope of Moral Requirement” <p><i>These readings are available as PDFs on Moodle.</i></p>	<p>Threaded discussion 9 (Moodle).</p>
<p>Week 13 31 October</p>	<p>No lecture. Tutorials only. <u>Test 3</u> will be taken during <u>tutorial</u>.</p>	<p>TEST 3 in tutorial.</p>

Appendix. Code to Learning Outcomes and Discipline Specific Graduate Attributes

Learning outcomes (LO) in Philosophy capstone

- LO 1: Development and consolidation of students' understanding of the nature of the discipline of philosophy.
- LO 2: Development of students' ability to reflect on the distinct nature of philosophical inquiry.
- LO 3: The ability to explain and evaluate a central text in philosophy.
- LO 4: Comprehension of a variety of concepts, theories, and modes of philosophical analysis.
- LO 5: Development of skills in reading, writing, and researching philosophy.

Discipline-specific Graduate Attributes (GA)

- GA 1: Ability to read and interpret texts sensitively and carefully, especially appreciating the importance of intellectual tradition.
- GA 2: Ability to evaluate and critically analyse beliefs, ideas, and information using a range of techniques of philosophical reasoning
- GA 3: Appreciation of the importance of reasoned enquiry and an ability to apply tools of philosophical analysis to a range of issues including those in contemporary debates
- GA 4: Ability to present coherent and persuasive arguments
- GA 5: Skills of effective communication
- GA 6: Appreciation of, and respect for, diversity
- GA 7: Respect for ethical practice and social responsibility