Semester | FALL 2017
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Class code | PHIL.9040.001
Instructor Details | Professor Anthony Price (Birkbeck College, University of London)

Personal consultation by individual arrangement

Class Details | Ethics
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Prerequisites | None
Class Description | Introduces students to the fundamental theoretical questions of moral philosophy, with attention to both classic and contemporary readings. We will address questions such as: What is the nature of values? Is there such a thing as ethical knowledge? Why should we act morally? How do we decide what morality demands of us in a situation? Note that this is not a course is what is sometimes called ‘applied ethics’.

The course format will be classes involving informal instruction and discussion, with a focus upon the close reading of texts.

Desired Outcomes | A better understanding of the nature of the right and the good, ethical character and moral decisions, and the methods of philosophy in acquiring this understanding.

Assessment Components | A one-hour midterm test (start of Session 5); an essay of up to 1,500 words (to be submitted soon after Session 11); an essay of up to 2,000 words (to be submitted soon after Session 15). (NB An overrun of up to 10% is fine; more than that must be avoided.) The final grade will be determined by the midterm test (10%), the short essay (35%), and the longer essay (55%). (NB You must not write the test and your 1st essay on the same topic, nor your 1st essay and your 2nd essay on the same topic; you may, if you wish, write the test and your 3rd essays on the same topic. Essays must be submitted through Turnitin, and should be formatted in Word, not pdf.) Each student will get a grade no lower than that determined by these inputs and in this proportion; but in some cases a higher grade may be awarded to take into account such factors as improvement, contribution to class, and the like. Grades are lowered 2% by the administration in the case of each unexcused absence. Failure to submit or fulfil any required course component results in failure of the class.

Assessment Expectations | **Grade A:** Mastery of the issues and literature, and an ability to make some original contribution.

**Grade B:** Good grasp of issues and literature, but little or no attempt at own contribution.

**Grade C:** Some but uncertain grasp of the issues.

**Grade D:** Failure to grasp issues but some attempt made.

**Grade F:** Not even trying.

Supplemental Texts(s) (not required to purchase as copies are in NYU-L Library)


Otherwise, use further texts in RSL – prescribed are only 16 out of 82 selections.

Other optional reading is accessible electronically (either open source, or via London or New York university libraries), or will be made available

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP) ([http://plato.stanford.edu](http://plato.stanford.edu)); consult index for whatever author or topic interests you. (Be very careful of less reliable sources, such as Wikipedia – though that is fine for background information.)

On how to read a philosophy article, see [http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html](http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html)

On writing a philosophy essay, see [http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html](http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html)

On philosophical terms and methods, see [http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/vocab/index.html](http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/vocab/index.html)

Additional Required Equipment

None

### Session 1
Introductory

### Session 2
Reason and Motivation
RSL ch. 1: Hume
Optional: Wiggins, chs 2-3

### Session 3
Harman against Objectivism
RSL ch. 4
Optional: Wiggins, ch. 12 (difficult)

### Session 4
Why be moral?
RSL chs 15-16: Plato, Foot
Optional: Wiggins, ch. 1

### Session 5
Midterm Test (one hour)
Psychological Egoism
RSL ch. 19: Feinberg

### Session 6
Pleasure, Desire, Value
RSL chs 30, 33: Nozick, Kraut

### Session 7
Being Responsible for one’s Actions
RSL ch 37: Galen Strawson
Optional: M. McKenna & D.J. Coates, ‘Compatibilism’, *SEP*, § 1 (with its sub-sections)

### Session 8
Holding People Responsible for their Actions
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<tr>
<th>Session 9</th>
<th>Aristotelian Naturalism</th>
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<td>RSL ch. 66: Aristotle</td>
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<th>Session 10</th>
<th>Utilitarianism</th>
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<td>RSL chs 29, 48: Mill</td>
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<th>Session 11</th>
<th>The Categorical Imperative</th>
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<td>RSL ch. 55: Kant</td>
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<td>Optional: RSL ch 56, Korsgaard; Wiggins, chs 4-5</td>
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<td>Submission of 1st essay for assessment by midnight, Thursday, November 16</td>
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<th>Session 12</th>
<th>Problems in Deontology</th>
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<td>RSL ch. 61: Thomson</td>
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<th>Session 13</th>
<th>Particularism</th>
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<td>RSL chs 80 &amp; 82: Daney, Dworkin</td>
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<td>Optional: RSL ch. 81, Little</td>
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<th>Session 14</th>
<th>Unfinished Business</th>
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<td>Submission of draft of 2nd essay (optional) by midnight, Thursday, December 7</td>
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<th>Session 15</th>
<th>Retrospect</th>
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<td>Submission of 2nd essay for assessment by midnight, Thursday, December 14</td>
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**Classroom Etiquette**

- Food and drink should only be consumed in class with caution (be careful to leave no traces).
- Mobile phones should be set on silent and should not be used in class except for emergencies.
- Laptops may be used freely to serve the purposes of the class.
- Please kindly dispose of rubbish in the bins provided.

**Required Co-curricular Activities**

None

**Estimated Travel Costs**

n/a
London is rich in philosophical occasions; students will be given information, or told where to find it on the internet.

Anthony Price is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, Birkbeck College, University of London. He has published four books, and many papers, mostly on Greek ethics and moral psychology, but also within contemporary ethics. See his Birkbeck webpage http://www.bbk.ac.uk/philosophy/our-staff/visiting-professors/professor-anthony-price