

# Moral Philosophy

## Preliminaries

**1. Logistics** Tutorials will take place in even-numbered weeks. For each tutorial I would like you to write an essay of around 1,500 words. Please email me your essay by 9.00 on the day of the tutorial at the latest, so that I have a chance to read it in advance. When emailing me your essay, I would appreciate it if you could include your name in the name of the document.

**2. Reading** For each topic I have listed six or seven texts to read. Aim to read a majority of the texts listed for a given topic in time for the tutorial; do not worry if you do not have time to read all of them. I recommend approaching the texts in roughly the order I have listed them. It is important that as you read you take high-quality notes from which you will later be able to revise. You will be better-off in the long-run reading fewer texts slowly while taking high-quality notes than reading more texts quickly without taking high-quality notes.

**3. Writing** I recommend reading Rachel Fraser's helpful guides "Essay Writing Instructions" and "What Not to Do" before writing your first essay, available here: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1V-fuU89qX-JZAXVu3V3zWS1dQNz0bjQd>.

---

## Week 2: Act-Utilitarianism vs. Rule-Utilitarianism

QUESTION: EITHER Was Mill a rule-utilitarian? OR Are rule-utilitarians guilty of 'a form of superstitious rule-worship' (J.J.C. Smart)?

\*\*\*

John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (any edition), Chs.1-3.

Roger Crisp, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Mill on Utilitarianism* (London: Routledge, 1997), Ch.5 'What Utilitarianism Is'.

J.O. Urmson, 'The Interpretation of the Moral Philosophy of J.S. Mill' in *Philosophical Quarterly* Vol.3 no.10 (1953), pp.33-39.

J.J.C. Smart, 'Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism' in *Philosophical Quarterly* Vol.6 no.25 (1956), pp.344-354.

John Rawls, 'Two Concepts of Rules' in *Philosophical Review* Vol.64 no.1 (1955), pp.3-32.

Brad Hooker, 'Right, Wrong, and Rule-Utilitarianism' in Henry R. West (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Mill's Utilitarianism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp.233-248.

Richard Arneson, 'Sophisticated Rule Consequentialism: Some Simple Objections' in *Philosophical Issues* Vol.15 no.1 (2005), pp.235-251.

## Week 4: Happiness and Well-Being

QUESTION: EITHER Was Mill a hedonist? OR Is hedonism a plausible theory of well-being?

\*\*\*

John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (any edition), Ch.2 'What Utilitarianism Is'.

Roger Crisp, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Mill on Utilitarianism* (London: Routledge, 1997), Chs.2&3.

Isaiah Berlin, 'John Stuart Mill and the Ends of Life' in his *Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp.218-251.

Elizabeth Anderson, 'John Stuart Mill and Experiments in Living' in *Ethics* Vol.102 no.1 (1991), pp.4-26.

Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), Appendix I.

Guy Fletcher, *The Philosophy of Well-being: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2016) Chs.1-3.

Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (London: Duke University Press, 2010), esp. 'Introduction' and Ch.2 'Feminist Killjoys'.

## Week 6: Non-Utilitarian Values

QUESTION: 'Utilitarianism cannot account for the importance of integrity.' Discuss.

\*\*\*

John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (any edition), Ch.5 'On the Connection Between Justice and Utility'.

Roger Crisp, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Mill on Utilitarianism* (London: Routledge, 1997), Chs.6&7.

Bernard Williams, "A Critique of Utilitarianism" in J.J.C. Smart and Bernard Williams, *Utilitarianism: For & Against* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp.75-150.

Peter Railton, "Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality" in *Philosophy & Public Affairs* Vol.13 no.2 (1984), pp.134-171.

Elizabeth Ashford, "Utilitarianism, Integrity, and Partiality" in *Journal of Philosophy* Vol.97 no.8 (2000), pp.421-439.

Nikhil Venkatesh, "Against Commitment" in *Philosophical Studies* Vol. 179 (2022), pp.3511-3534.

Julia Driver, "Consequentialism and Feminist Ethics" in *Hypatia* Vol.20 no.4 (2005), pp.183-199.

## Week 8: Is Utilitarianism Self-Defeating?

QUESTION: Is act-utilitarianism self-defeating?

\*\*\*

Bernard Williams, *Morality: An Introduction to Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), Ch.10 'Utilitarianism'.

Peter Singer, 'Is Act-Utilitarianism Self-Defeating?' in *Philosophical Review* Vol.81 no.1 (1972), pp.94-104.

J.L. Mackie, 'The Disutility of Act-Utilitarianism' in *Philosophical Quarterly* Vol.23 no.93 (1973), pp.289-300.

Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), Chs.1&2.

Eric Wiland, 'On Indirectly Self-Defeating Moral Theories' in *Journal of Moral Philosophy* Vol.5 no.3 (2008), pp.384-393.

Nikhil Venkatesh, 'Is Act-Consequentialism Self-Effacing?' in *Analysis* Vol.81 no.4 (2021), pp.718-726.