

PH1522 How Should One Live?

Team-Taught Course
Sample (Partial) Syllabus for Spring 2025

Department of Philosophy
University of Aberdeen

Course Coordinator & Lecturer (3/10 weeks): Dr Eilidh Beaton

Course Description

What does it mean to live a good life? How do we determine what is good or bad, right or wrong? Are some ways of living better or worse for us?

In this introductory ethics course, we will look at some central philosophical approaches to answering these questions. Traditions we may engage with include virtue ethics, Chinese ethics, deontology, consequentialism, and feminist ethics. These approaches make radically different recommendations about how to live, from developing a good character, to roaming freely and being open to alternative perspectives, to following fundamental moral rules, to bringing about good overall outcomes, to acting responsibly in relations of interdependence with others. Assessing the merits and shortcomings of these divergent accounts will be one of our key tasks in this course.

Along the way, we will read the original work of some of the most important scholars in the history of moral philosophy, such as Plato, Aristotle, Confucius, Kant, and Mill. We may also explore some engaging contemporary texts, like influential work in feminist ethics.

Throughout the course, students will be encouraged to think deeply, discuss complex ethical topics openly and charitably, and explore their own views about how to live a good life.

Partial Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Required Reading
Week 7	Utilitarianism	John Stuart Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , Chapter 2 – What Utilitarianism Is.
Week 8	Alienation and the Sophisticated Consequentialist	Peter Railton, 'Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality', <i>Philosophy & Public Affairs</i> 13:2 (1984), 134-171.
Week 11	Isn't it All Relative Anyway?	David Enoch, 'Why I am an Objectivist About Ethics (And Why You Are Too)', in <i>The Ethical Life: Fundamental Readings in Ethical and Moral Theory</i> ed. by Russ Shafer-Landau (2014),

		192-205. Available here .
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Further Reading

Week 7 – Utilitarianism

Primary Sources

- Jeremy Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* – see especially chapters 1, 3, 4.
- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, whole book.

Secondary Sources

- Ursula K. Le Guin, 'The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas'. Available [here](#).
- Julia Driver, 'The History of Utilitarianism', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2022 edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, available [here](#).
- Alan Ryan, *The Philosophy of John Stuart Mill* (London: MacMillan, 1970).
- John Skorupski, *John Stuart Mill* (London: Routledge, 1989).
- David Lyons (ed), *Mill's Utilitarianism: Critical Essays* (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997).

Week 8 – Alienation and Consequentialism

- Julia Driver, 'Chapter 4, Contemporary Consequentialism', in her *Ethics: The Fundamentals* (Malden MA: Blackwell, 2007).
- Russ Shafer-Landau, 'Chapter 10, Consequentialism: Its Difficulties', in his *The Fundamentals of Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).
- Roger Crisp, 'Chapter 6, Integrity', in his *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Mill on Utilitarianism* (London: Routledge, 1997).
- Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, 'Consequentialism', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2023 edition), ed. by Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman.

Week 11 – Relativism vs Objectivism

- Richard Joyce, 'Moral Objectivity and Moral Relativism', supplement to 'Moral Anti-Realism', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2022 edition) ed. by Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman. Available [here](#).
- Gilbert Harman, 'Ethics and Observation', in *Ethics: Essential Readings in Moral Theory* ed. by George Sher (New York: Routledge, 2012), 159-163.
- J. L. Mackie, 'The Subjectivity of Values', in *Ethics: Essential Readings in Moral Theory* ed. by George Sher (New York: Routledge, 2012), 181-194.