Philosophy 268z  
Contemporary Kantian Ethical Theory  
Fall 2008

Instructor:  
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Description:  
A study of some important recent work on Kant's ethics and Kantian ethics by Thomas Hill, Jr., Andrews Reath, Arthur Ripstein, Stephen Engstrom, and Barbara Herman, all of whom will visit the seminar.

Course Admissions Policies:  
Participation in this course is by permission of the instructor. The course is not open to undergraduates, either as enrolled students or auditors. Permission to enroll will be extended to philosophy graduate students; in other cases the decision will depend on the size of the course and the student's background in philosophy. No one who has not studied Kant's ethics should enroll in this course. Graduate students who wish to audit the course must commit to attending regularly, participating in discussions, and asking questions of the visitors.

Readings from:  
Stephen Engstrom, “Universal Legislation as the Form of Practical Knowledge.” in manuscript.


Barbara Herman, “The Sources of Moral Content.” In manuscript.

I have not ordered the books at the bookstore. Readings will be posted on or available through the course website and on reserve in Robbins Library. If you are auditing the course and wish to access the readings through the web site, you must supply us with your Harvard e-mail address or ID so that we can add you to the class list. If you are auditing and are not a Harvard student, you can get an “XID” for this purpose. Please contact Natalya Palatnik to be added to the class list.

**Written Assignments:**

i) *Questions for the speakers.* All students, both auditors and enrolled students, are required to post questions for the speakers to the “Questions for Visiting Speakers” section of the course website, no later than 8:00 p.m. on the Wednesday before the speaker’s visit.

ii) *Weekly 2-3 page papers.* Every enrolled student is required to hand in 2-3 double-spaced pages of writing *(absolutely no more)* each week. These short papers will be due by 5:00 p.m. each Wednesday, and must deal with the readings for the forthcoming Friday. You should hand them in by sending them to me as e-mail attachments; please be sure that your name is on both the paper itself and in the title of the file. Apart from that requirement, the topic is entirely up to you: you may summarize the material, give a reading of a difficult passage, criticize one of the arguments, or defend the author against a possible criticism - anything as long as it concerns the reading for the week in question. These papers will not be graded, but you must turn all of them in order to pass the course.

iii) *Seminar Paper.* A seminar paper of 15-20 pages is due on Monday, January 12, by 5:00 p.m.

Students seeking an extension on any of the papers should ask me *before* the date on which the paper is due.

**Schedule:**

Please note: Students who take this course are expected to be familiar with Kant’s ethical writings. Nevertheless, for many weeks our visitors have suggested readings from Kant that are particularly pertinent to the material we are studying in those weeks, and which you may wish to review. I have listed these as recommended readings.
September 19: Organizational Meeting

September 26: Thomas Hill, Jr.

Respect, Pluralism, and Justice: Kantian Perspectives, Chapter 2, “A Kantian Perspective on Moral Rules”

Human Welfare and Moral Worth, Chapter 5, “Reasonable Self-Interest”

October 3: Thomas Hill, Jr. Visit

“Treating Criminals as Ends in Themselves”

“Kantian Virtue and ‘Virtue Ethics’”

October 10: Andrews Reath

Agency and Autonomy, Chapter 5: “Autonomy of the Will as the Foundation of Morality”

“Autonomy, Taking One’s Choices to be Good, and Practical Law: Replies to Critics”

Recommended Reading: I have posted the critical comments to which Reath is responding on the website:

Thomas Hill, Jr., “Legislating the Moral Law and Taking One’s Choices to be Good”

Samuel J. Kerstein, “Autonomy and Practical Law”

Jens Timmerman, “Agency and Imputation: Comments on Reath”


October 17: Andrews Reath Visit

Agency and Autonomy, Chapter 7: “Agency and Universal Law”

“Formal Principles and the Form of a Law”


October 24: Arthur Ripstein

Force and Freedom: Kant’s Legal and Political Philosophy, Chapter 2: “The Innate Right of Humanity”

Recommended Readings in Kant: The Doctrine of Right, 6:229-239

Force and Freedom: Kant’s Legal and Political Philosophy, Chapter 3: “Private Right I: Acquired Rights”

Recommended Readings in Kant: The Doctrine of Right, 6:245-258
October 31: Arthur Ripstein Visit
*Force and Freedom: Kant's Legal and Political Philosophy*, Chapter 8: “Public Right II: Roads to Freedom”
Recommended Readings in Kant: *The Doctrine of Right*, 6:311-318; 324-326

November 7: No Class

November 14 Stephen Engstrom
"Universal Legislation as the Form of Practical Knowledge"
*The Form of Practical Knowledge* II.1-4
Recommended Readings: *The Form of Practical Knowledge: A Study of the Categorical Imperative*, Preface
Recommended Readings in Kant: *The Metaphysics of Morals* 6:211-214

November 21 Steve Engstrom Visit
*The Form of Practical Knowledge: A Study of the Categorical Imperative*, II.5-9
*The Form of Practical Knowledge: A Study of the Categorical Imperative*, III

December 5 Barbara Herman
*Moral Literacy*, Chapter 10, “The Will and Its Objects”
*Moral Literacy*, Chapter 11, “Obligatory Ends”

December 12 Barbara Herman Visit
“Reasoning to Obligation” *Inquiry* 2006, Volume 49, No. 1
“The Sources of Moral Content” in manuscript

Final Paper due Monday, January 12