

# **THE PUZZLE OF ETHICAL CONSENSUS IN POSTMODERN TIMES**

## **ET/TH 3EO3 ET/TH 6EO6**

**McMaster Divinity College**  
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**ext 23052**

**Winter 2011 (Term 2)**  
**Monday 7:00-8:50pm**

### **Course Description**

If the sense of postmodernism is correct that there is no actual right and wrong, good and bad, that ethics is solely a human creation, why do seven billion human beings not have seven billion different ethical systems? Why do we agree as much as we do? To explore that question we will examine ten approaches to ethics, asking each the theme question. Throughout we will consider the prospects for living together in a pluralistic world. The most widely held systems each have their own reasons why they think we can.

### **Course Objectives**

Knowing  
meet and evaluate ten major movements in the epistemology of ethics  
raise questions of particular interest to you

Being  
develop the habit of withholding judgment until you understand,  
and then evaluate with fairness and clarity

Doing  
recognize these approaches in life arguments and choices  
weigh the comprehensive coherence of each  
communicate your judgment in oral and written form  
test your discernment

### **Required Texts**

Assigned readings will be available through the Internet or McMaster University ejournals and ebooks. Recommended readings are selected from the Mills collection.

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

Twelve percent of the course letter grade from consistent and thoughtful participation in class

Thirty-six percent 1) provide at the start of an assigned class a film clip or novel/play reading of six minutes or less that clearly reveals someone making an ethical decision from the perspective to be discussed that day, 2) present the excerpt with needed context, and then 3) serve as a class resource on that perspective for the ensuing discussion

Twelve percent for first response to presented film clip and perspective. Assignment for presentation and response dates will be by sign up at the first class. We will use two different class

orders so that those who have a late choice for presentation date, will have an early choice for response date.

Forty percent comprehensive final exam April 11. The exam will consist of answering two of three essay questions.

### **Advanced Degree Students**

Advanced degree students will complete all course assignments at a second degree level. They will also present and respond twice rather than once, and write a research paper of 7500 words (along with the research paper include a list with page numbers of 5000 pages of readings beyond those required of all). The paper should be typed, single spaced, well presented, page numbered, and in a Word format (.doc .docx, Word for Mac). If that is not available a PDF is acceptable, although PDF does not lend itself to in-text feedback. You will be given in class an email address to send it to. A receipt will be sent in return. You are welcome to turn in the paper as soon as it is complete. It is due by 7 pm March 25. Beginning after 7 pm March 25 and then each additional day late the paper loses one letter gradation per day such as A to A- or B+ to B. All papers should be submitted according to the *Chicago Manual of Style* or the MacDiv Style Guide, which can be found on the web at: <http://www.macdiv.ca/students/documents/MacStyleGuideApr1508.pdf>

As an important part of clarity in your own mind and communication to others, please use standard English. Note the following checklist:

*Block quote any quotation more than three lines long. Block quotes are single spaced with indented margins and no quotation marks.*

*Use footnotes. They may be in any standard format provided all of the relevant information is included and you are consistent throughout the paper. The Chicago Manual of Style is the most widely used authority for works in theology and philosophy.*

*Book and journal titles receive italics. Article titles are placed in quotes.*

*Do not use no double negative.*

*Verbs has to agree with their subjects.*

*Make each pronoun agree with their antecedent*

*Do not write run on sentences since they are hard to follow and understand for those who are reading your thoughts and seeking to gain from your insights born of experience and careful reflection in this academic endeavor we rightfully treasure highly, as well we should.*

*About them sentence fragments.*

*Just between you and I, case is important too.*

*Try to not often, or maybe even never, split infinitives.*

*Ones apostrophe's should be used correctly.*

*Don't use contractions in a formal essay.*

*Corect speling iz eesencheal. Withot it yure righting iz hard to reed and givs the empresheeon that yu do not no wat yu ar doeeng.*

The evaluation proportions will be 12% participation, 12% presentations, 12% first responses, 24% exam, and 40% research paper.

## **Academic Honesty**

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence in the academic world that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on the transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College.

Students are responsible to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty at [www.macdiv.ca/regs/honesty.php](http://www.macdiv.ca/regs/honesty.php).

## **Gender Inclusive Language**

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

## **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment is a violation of the integrity of persons in the form of unsolicited, unwelcome, verbal or physical behavior, which discriminates on the basis of gender about a person's body, attire, gender, marital status or economic status. Among faculty, staff, and students, sexual harassment of any kind will not be tolerated.

## **Class Schedule**

Please study before each class the required reading. The recommended readings are helpful to all, but most important to those presenting. The first class hour each week we will illustrate and evaluate a way of doing ethics. In the second hour, I will introduce the ethical system that we will evaluate the next week.

### **January 3**

#### **Welcome, course premise, syllabus, and introduction to ethics as an individual creation**

Study before class *The United Nations Declaration of Universal Human Rights*  
<http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>.

Recommended works for further investigation include:

Porter, Burton F. *The Good Life: Options in Ethics*. Lanham : The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc., 2009. Available as e-book through Mills.

### **January 10**

Evaluating ethics as **an individual creation**

Presenter \_\_\_\_\_

First Response\_\_\_\_\_

Study before class Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Part Two “The Free Spirit” and Part Five “On the Natural History of Morals.” This reading is available at web sites such as <http://nietzsche.holtof.com/select.htm> and in Mills Library B3313 J43E5 2002.

Recommended works for further investigation include:

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human* B3313 M52N5413 1997 and *On the Genealogy of Morality* B3313 Z73E5 1998

Jean Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotions* B819 S2735 1957

Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* BJ1533 C8T5

Daigle, Christine. *Beauvoir and Sartre: The Riddle of Influence*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008. Available as e-book through Mills.

Dove, Craig M. *Nietzsche's Ethical Theory: Mind, Self and Responsibility*. London ; New York : Continuum, 2008. Mills B 3318 .E9 D68 2008.

Flynn, Thomas R. *Existentialism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. Available as e-book through Mills.

Hill, R. Kevin. *Nietzsche: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London; New York: Continuum, 2007. Mills B 3317 .H5355 2007.

Leiter, Brian and Neil Sinhababu. *Nietzsche and Morality*. Oxford: Clarendon Press ; New York : Oxford University Press, 2007. Available as e-book through Mills.

McBride, William Leon. *The Development and Meaning of Twentieth-century Existentialism*. New York: Garland, 1997. Mills B 819 .D45 1997.

Morris, Katherine J. *Sartre*. Malden: Blackwell, 2008. Mills B 2430 .S34 M645 2008.

Sedgwick, Peter R. *Nietzsche: The Key Concepts*. London; New York : Routledge, 2009. Mills B 3317 .S49 2009.

Solomon, Robert C. *Existentialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. Mills B 819 .E864 2005.

Southwell, Gareth. *A Beginners Guide to Nietzsche's 'Beyond Good and Evil'*. Chichester : John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2009. Available as e-book through Mills.

Webber, Jonathan M. *The Existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre*. New York: Routledge, 2009. Mills B 2430 .S34 W43 2009.

### **January 17**

Evaluating ethics as **social contract**

Presenter\_\_\_\_\_

First Response\_\_\_\_\_

Study before class Thomas Hobbes *Leviathan* chapter 14 “Of the First and Second Natural Laws.” This text is available at <http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/hobbes/leviathan-contents.html> and Mills JC153 H65.

Recommended works for further investigation include:

Bunce, R. E. R. *Thomas Hobbes*. New York: Continuum, 2009. Mills JC 153 .H66 B86 2009.

Finn, Stephen J. *Hobbes: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London; New York: Continuum, 2007. Mills B 1247 .F55 2007.

MacDonald Ross, G. *Starting with Hobbes*. London; New York: Continuum, 2009. Mills B 1247 .M33 2009.

Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. Mills JC571 N68.

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*. Mills JC578 R38 1999.

Kwong Loi Shun, *Confucian Ethics*. Mills BL1853 C66 2004.

Skinner, Quentin. *Hobbes and Republican Liberty*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Mills B 1248 .R47 S55 2008.

Springborg, Patricia. *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes's Leviathan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Mills JC153 .H659S67 2007.

Stout, Jeffrey. *Ethics After Babel: The Languages of Morals and Their Discontents*. Mills BJ1012.S848 1988. The 2001 edition has a helpful postscript by the author.

Young, Shaun P. *Reflections on Rawls: An Assessment of his Legacy*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2009. Available as e-book through Mills.

## **January 24**

Evaluating ethics as **evolutionary psychology**

Presenter \_\_\_\_\_

First Response \_\_\_\_\_

Study before class Jonathan Haidt, “The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment,” *Psychological Review* 108:4 (2001) 814-834.

Recommended works for further investigation include:

Baxter, Brian. *A Darwinian Worldview: Sociobiology, Environmental Ethics and the Work of Edward O. Wilson*. Aldershot; Burlington: Ashgate, 2007. Mills HM 628 .B38 2007.

Also available through Mills as an e-book.

Crawford, Charles. *Foundations of Evolutionary Psychology*. Hoboken: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2008. Available as e-book through Mills.

Joyce, Richard. *The Evolution of Morality*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007. Mills BJ1311 J69 2006.

Lumsden, Charles and E. O. Wilson. *Genes, Mind, and Culture: The Co-evolutionary Process*. World Scientific Publishing Company. Mills GN365.9 L85 2005.

Workman, Lance. *Evolutionary Psychology: An Introduction*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Mills BF 698.95 .W67 2008.

### **January 31**

Evaluating **natural law**

Presenter \_\_\_\_\_

First Response \_\_\_\_\_

Study before class Andrew F Reeve, "Incommensurability and Basic Values." *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 31 (1997): 545-552.

Recommended works for further investigation include:

Boucher, David. *The Limits of Ethics in International Relations: natural law, natural rights, and human rights in transition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. Mills JZ 1306 .B68 2009.

Boyd, Craig A. *A Shared Morality: A Narrative Defense of Natural Law Ethics*. Brazos, 2007. Mills BJ1012.B6135 2007.

Budziszewski, J. *Written on the Heart: The Case for Natural Law*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007. Mills K460.B83 1997.

Daston, Lorraine. *Natural Law and Laws of Nature in Early Modern Europe: Jurisprudence, Theology, Moral and Natural Philosophy*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2009. Available as e-book through Mills.

Gonzlez, Ana Marta. *Contemporary Perspectives on Natural Law: Natural Law as a Limiting Concept*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2008. Available as e-book through Mills.

Levering, Matthew. *Biblical Natural Law: a theocentric and teleological approach*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. Mills. BS 680 .L33 L48 2008.

Porter, Jean. *Nature as Reason: A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004. Mills K447.T45 P67 2005.

Traina, Christina L. H. *Feminist Ethics and Natural Law*. Georgetown University Press, 1999. Mills BJ1395.T73 1999.

Wolfe, Christopher. *Natural Law Liberalism*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Available as e-book through Mills.

## **February 7**

Evaluating **character ethics**

Presenter \_\_\_\_\_

First Response \_\_\_\_\_

Study before class Bina Gupta, "Bhagavad Gita as Duty and Virtue Ethics," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 34:3 (September 2006) 373-395.

Recommended works for further investigation include:

Chappell, T. D. J. *Values and Virtues: Aristotelianism in Contemporary Ethics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. Mills B 491 .E7V35 2006.

Also available as an e-book.

Kotva, Joseph H. *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics*. Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1996. BJ1231.K67 1996.

Lowery, Kevin Twain. *Salvaging Wesley's Agenda: A New Paradigm for Wesleyan Virtue Ethics*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2008. Mills BX 8495 .W5 L69 2008.

MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue: a Study in Moral Theory*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984. BJ1012.M325 1981B

Mikkelson, Douglas K. "Toward a Description of Dogen's Moral Virtues," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 34:2 (June 2006) 225-251.

Sandler, Ronald L. *Character and Environment: A Virtue-oriented Approach to Environmental Ethics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007. Mills GE 42 .S26 2007.

Russell, Daniel C. *Practical Intelligence and the Virtues*. Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. Mills BJ 1521 .R87 2009.

Smith, Tara. *Ayn Rands's Normative Ethics: the Virtuous Egoist*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. B945.R234 S65 2006. Also available as e-book.

Walker, Rebecca L. Philip J. Ivanhoe. *Working Virtue: Virtue Ethics and Contemporary Moral Problems*. Oxford : Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. Mills BJ 1518 .W67 2007. Also available as an e-book.

## **February 14**

Evaluating an **ethics of care**

Presenter \_\_\_\_\_

First Response \_\_\_\_\_

Study before class Roger Bergman, "Caring for the Ethical Ideal: Nel Noddings on Moral Education." *Journal of Moral Education* 33:2 (June, 2004): 149-162.

Recommended works for further investigation include:

Gilligan, Carol. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982. Mills HQ1206.G58 1982.

Hekman, Susan J. *Moral Voices, Moral Selves: Carol Gilligan and Feminist Moral Theory*. University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995. Mills BF 723 .M54 H46 1995.

The Unabomber's Brother at <http://lawweb.colorado.edu/news/showArticle.jsp?id=201>.

Noddings, Nel. *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984. Mills BJ1475.N176C 1984.

Puka, Bill. *Caring Voices and Women's Moral Frames: Gilligan's View*. New York: Garland, 1994. Mills BF 723 .M54 M66 v.6.

## February 21 Reading Week

### February 28

Evaluating ethics as **just being rational**

Presenter \_\_\_\_\_

First Response \_\_\_\_\_

Study before class John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*. available as e-book through Mills.

Recommended work for further investigation:

Bencivenga, Ermanno. *Ethics Vindicated: Kant's Transcendental Legitimation of Moral Discourse*. Oxford; New York : Oxford University Press, 2007. Mills B 2799 .E8 B37 2007.

Donner, Wendy and Richard Fumerton. *Mill*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2009. Available as e-book through Mills.

Guyer, Paul. *The Cambridge Companion to Kant and Modern Philosophy*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Mills B 2798 .C365 2006.

Kant, Immanuel. *The Critique of Practical Reason*. Mills B2773.E5P59 2002. Also available as e-book.

Hill, Thomas E. *The Blackwell Guide to Kant's Ethics*. Chichester; Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. Mills B 2799 .E8 B53 2009. Also available as e-book.

Weinstein, D. *Utilitarianism and the New Liberalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Mills JC 574 .W43 2007.

West, Henry R. *The Blackwell Guide to Mill's Utilitarianism*. Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 2006. Available as e-book through Mills.

### **March 7**

Evaluating **karma**

Presenter \_\_\_\_\_

First Response \_\_\_\_\_

Study before class Kaufman, Whitley R.P. Kaufman, "Karma, Rebirth, and the Problem of Evil," *Philosophy East & West* 55, no. 1 (January, 2005): 15-32.

Recommended works for further investigation include:

Chakraborty, Aparna. *Karma, Freedom and Responsibility*. New Delhi: Kaveri Books, 1998.  
Mills BL 2015 .K3C43 1998.

Prasad, Rajendra. *Karma, Causation and Retributive Morality: Conceptual Essays in Ethics and Metaethics*. New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research in association with Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, New Delhi, 1989. Mills BJ 1012 .P73 1989.

Prasad, Rajendra. *Varṇadharmā, ni ś kārṇa karma, and practical morality: a critical essays on applied ethics*. New Delhi: D.K. Printworld in association with Department of Special Assistance in Philosophy, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, 1999. Mills BJ 122 .P73 1999.

Keyes, Charles F. *Karma: An Anthropological Inquiry*. Berkeley : University of California Press, 1983. BL2015.K3 K361 1983

Reichenbach, Bruce. *The Law of Karma: a Philosophical Study*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990. BL2015.K3 R45 1990

Yifa, Venerable. *The Tender Heart: A Buddhist Response to Suffering*. New York: Lantern Books, 2007. Available as e-book through Mills.

### **March 14**

Evaluating **Islamic ethics**

Presenter \_\_\_\_\_

First Response \_\_\_\_\_

Study before class Abdullah Nooruddeen Durkee, "Islam is Salam," *Dialogue & Alliance* 16, no. 1 (2002): 62-86 and G. John Renard, "Muslim Ethics : Sources, Interpretations and Challenges," *Muslim World* 69 (1979): 163-177.

Recommended works for further investigation include:

Cook, M. A. *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Mills BJ 1291 .C66 2000. Also available as e-book.

Esposito, John. *Islam: the Straight Path*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. Mills BP161.2 E85 2005.

Hashmi, Sohail H. *Islamic Political Ethics: Civil Society, Pluralism, and Conflict*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002. Mills JC 49 .I766 2002.

Khare, R. S. *Perspectives on Islamic Law, Justice, and Society*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999. Mills KMC92.P47 1999.

Küng, Hans and Jürgen Moltmann. *Islam: A Challenge for Christianity*. London: SCM Press; Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994. Mills BP 172 .I788 1994.

Pope Benedict XVI, "Faith, Reason and the University," speech at University of Regensburg, September 12, 2006,

[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20060912\\_university-regensburg\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg_en.html)

Volf, Miroslav. *A Common Word: Muslims and Christians on loving God and neighbor*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. Mills BP 172.C536 2010.

## **March 21**

Evaluating **Christian ethics**

Presenter \_\_\_\_\_

First Response \_\_\_\_\_

Study before class Martin Luther, "The Freedom of a Christian." Full text available on the web at sites such as <http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/wittenberg-luther.html#sw-cclib>, also as a Mills ebook under the title *Concerning Christian Liberty*

Recommended works for further investigation include:

Atkinson, David J., David F. Field, Arthur F. Holmes, and Oliver O'Donovan, eds. *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics & Pastoral Theology*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1995. Mills BJ 1199 .N495 1995.

Garcia, Robert. *Is Goodness without God Good Enough? A debate on faith, secularism, and ethics*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009. Mills BJ47.I84 2009

Hauerwas, Stanley and Sam Wells. *Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2007. Available as e-book through Mills.

Mouw, Richard. *The God Who Commands*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990. Mills BJ1251.M67 1990

Outka, Gene. *Agape: An Ethical Analysis*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972.  
Mills BV4639.O95 1972.

Stassen, Glen and David Gushee. *Kingdom Ethics*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

### **March 25**

Advanced degree students paper due by 7 pm

### **March 28 Evaluating Pluralism and combinations of ethical systems**

Browning, Don, ed. *Universalism and Relativism: Making Moral Judgments in a Changing, Pluralistic, and Threatening World*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006.  
Mills BJ1500.R37 U55 2006.

Coleman, John A. *Christian Political Ethics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.  
Available as e-book through Mills.

Hawani, Raja. "Care Ethics and Virtue Ethics," *Hypatia* 18, 3 (Fall 2003) 161-192.

Madsen, Richard and Tracy B. Strong. *The Many and the One: Religious and Secular Perspectives on Ethical Pluralism in the Modern World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008. Available as e-book through Mills.

Mouw, Richard. *He Shines in All That's Fair: Culture and Common Grace*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001. BT761.3 M68 2001.

Ruland, Vernon. *Conscience Across Borders: an Ethics of Global Rights and Religious Pluralism*. San Francisco: University of San Francisco/Association of Jesuit University Presses; Bronx: Fordham University Press, 2002. Mills BJ 1188 .R85 2002.

Taylor, Daniel. "Deconstructing the Gospel of Tolerance" also titled "Are You Tolerant?" *Christianity Today* 43:1 (January 11, 1999) 43-52.

Vischer, Phil. "The Philosophical Implications of Talking Vegetables,"  
[www.yale.edu/faith/downloads/x\\_vischer\\_veggie.pdf](http://www.yale.edu/faith/downloads/x_vischer_veggie.pdf)

### **April 4**

**Last questions and review**

### **April 11**

**Comprehensive final exam**

*Congratulations on completing The Puzzle of Ethical Consensus in Postmodern Times.*

This syllabus is for information only and remains the property of the professor. The syllabus is prepared with the best information available, but the professor reserves the right to change the content and format of the course.