5AANB006 Ethics II: Contemporary Ethical Philosophy

Academic year 2014/15 – Semester 1

Basic Information
Credits: 15  
Module Tutor: Dr Maria Alvarez (maria.alvarez@kcl.ac.uk)  
Office: 703; tel. ex. 2383  
Office hours Semester 1:  
Lecture time and venue: Mondays 13:00, strand K1.28, King’s Building  
Seminar time and venue: Consult your timetable

Module description (including aims)
The module will introduce students to various contemporary problems in moral philosophy, the ethical theories that address them and the historical and intellectual origins of these theories. The course will examine continuing debates about moral rationality, focusing on the relation between ethics, reason and the will, with special attention to the nature of moral reasons, the possible sources of motivation to act morally, and to the relationship between the will and moral responsibility.

Through the study of this module, students will acquire:
(i) an advanced understanding of the central claims, arguments, problems and solutions to be found in contemporary discussions of these topics.
In addition, the module will help students to
(ii) develop their abilities to interpret, synthesise and criticise complex texts and positions;
(iv) present and critically assess ideas in a clear and rigorous way;
(v) undertake, with appropriate guidance, independent work, including identifying and using appropriate resources.

Teaching Arrangements
1 hour weekly lecture and 1 hour weekly seminar
Assessment methods and deadlines

- **Formative assessment**: 2 essays X 1500 words each, **one essay from each part of the course**, to be submitted to your seminar tutor by email on:
  - 16.00 on **Friday 31st October** (1st essay).
  - 16.00 on **Friday 12th December** (2nd essay).

  Formative essays must be completed by the deadline in order to receive feedback (which you will receive by Nov 21st and Jan 9th respectively). This feedback is crucial for your summative assessment.

- **Summative assessment**: 2 essays X 2000 words each, **one essay on a topic from each part of the course**, to be submitted electronically via KEATS by **12 noon on Thursday 14th May 2015**.

  NB The summative essays will normally be a reworking of the formative essays, taking account of the tutor’s comments. However, although this is not recommended, students may, if they wish, submit essays on topics different from the topic of their formative essays for summative assessment.

Lecture Schedule

**Week 1** (Monday 22nd September): Introduction: Ethics, Reasons and the Will
- What is ethics? What is the connection between reasons, the will and ethics?
  Reading:

Part I – Ethics and Reasons

**Week 2** (29th September): What are Reasons?
- What are reasons and why do they matter to ethics?
  Reading:
  - Dancy, J. ‘Reasons for Action’ in his *Practical Reality*, OUP, 2000, Ch.1

**Week 3** (6th October): Moral Facts
- Are there moral facts? If not, what, if anything, makes ethical claims true?
  Reading:

**Week 4** (13th October): Reasons and Motivation
- What is the relation between moral reasons and motivation?
  Reading:

**Week 5** (20th October): Morality and Rationality
- What is the relation between morality and rationality?

Reading:

READ WEEK 27th – 31st October – NO LECTURES OR SEMINARS

Week 6 (3rd November): The Moral ‘Ought’
- Are there specifically moral reasons? If so, is there a distinctive moral ‘ought’?

Reading:

Week 7 Ethics and the Will
- What are the conditions for moral responsibility?

Reading:

Week 8 (17th November): Responsibility and Control
- What kind of control is required for moral responsibility and why?

Reading:

Week 9 (24th November): Moral Responsibility and Self-control
- What kind of freedom of the will is required for moral responsibility and why?

Reading:

Week 10 (1st December): Moral Responsibility and Luck
- How, if at all, does luck affect moral responsibility? And if it does, what kinds of luck affect moral responsibility?

Reading:

Further Reading and Essay Questions

In addition to the readings above, there will be further reading for each topic together with essay questions posted on KEATS. Please check KEATS regularly as useful material, including readings and lecture handouts, will be posted there.