**Ethics**

In philosophy, we are concerned not only with what actions are morally right and morally wrong, but what makes actions morally right or wrong. The key is to understand the sort of reasoning that we employ in ethical decision making. Students will generally approach this question from one of two dismissive stances: (1) that there are no reasons behind ethical decisions, that it is merely a matter of personal preference, or (2) all ethical questions are cut and dry and that there is an absolute means of determining all answers, often through adherence to religious doctrines. In this section, we will proceed through three steps. The first is to undermine the barriers to rational moral deliberation. The second is to look at the five different factors we do appeal to deciding what is the morally best way to act. Third, we will look at cases in an effort to be more clear and careful in being able to explain why we hold certain choices to be the right ones.

We will look at five approaches to moral deliberation:

**Virtue ethics**: What is morally right is what makes us the best person we could be

**Deontology**: What is morally right is what follows from absolute moral duties

**Utilitarianism**: What is morally right is what generates the best balance of pleasure over

pain when everyone is considered equally

**Rights-based Ethics**: What is morally right is that which is in accord with everyone’s

rights

**Care Ethics**: What is right is what is in accord with the best interest of those with whom

we have special relationships

Important Vocabulary

*Morally necessary*: status of an action one is morally obliged to carry out

*Morally permissible*: status of an action one is morally free to choose or not choose

*Morally impermissible*: status of an action one is obliged to avoid

*Ethical system*: a definition of moral terms that allows us to determine an act’s moral status.

*Ethical subjectivism*: the moral system by which an act is morally permissible for an individual if and only if that individual thinks it is

*Cultural relativism*: the moral system by which an act is morally permissible in a given culture if and only if it is approved of by the culture

*Ethical egoism*: the moral system where an act is morally necessary if it brings about the best consequences for the agent

*Psychological egoism*: the view that human beings can only act out of self-interest, no other motivation for human action is possible

*Virtue*: a positive human attribute

*Categorical Imperative*: the rule that generates the ethical rules which must be obeyed independently of situation.

*Hypothetical Imperative*: a statement of the advantage in a situation that would lead one to prefer an action, that is a sentence of the form “You should do x, in order to get y.” Contrasts with the categorical imperative which states simply that “You should do x.”

*Utility*: the consequences of an action, the effects that one’s action has on others both positive and negative.

Pedagogical Goals for the ethics module:

In this module, students will:

* + Explore and reflect upon the ways they reason about moral questions
  + Learn the five major ethical systems and how to apply them to moral issues
  + Improve their ability to express the reasons behind moral decisions
  + Approach ethical disagreements in a way that is more likely to generate thoughtful discussion and open-minded consideration of alternative views

Resources

Accessible readings that would help in preparing to lecture:

Simon Blackburn, *Being Good: A Short Introduction to Ethics*. Oxford University Press.

Bernard Williams. *Morality: An Introduction to Ethics*. Cambridge University Press.

**Ethics Day 1: Introduction to Ethics**

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| **Content:**  1. Reflection on the use of reason in moral discourse  2. Ethical statuses | **Method:**   1. Class discussion (15 minutes) 2. Mock debate (35 minutes) |

***Instructor’s Introduction:*** Today’s objective is to get students to begin to realize that moral deliberation involves the use of reason. Many students will approach ethics with the misconception that ethical choices are simply a matter of personal preference, that there is nothing to think about carefully when approaching moral dilemmas. We want to begin by having students frame debates over simple moral issues in terms of reasons for their position.

***Goals and Key Concepts:***

1. Students should be able to express reasons in support of a moral claim.
2. Students should understand that there are better and worse reasons for making a moral decision.
3. Students should be able to explain the difference between an act being morally permissible and being morally necessary.

**1. Introducing Ethics**

WRITE THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES ON THE BOARD:

The principal is alive.

It is morally wrong to set your friend’s little brother on fire for fun.

ASK THE STUDENTS: Are these sentences true? (Yes, they both are.) How do we know the first one is true? How do we know the second one is true? (Write down the reasons given.) What is the difference between these sentences? (We know what we mean by the property “is alive,” but what do we mean by the property “is morally wrong”? What is it that makes an act morally right or morally wrong? How do we test this?)

**2. Modeling Ethical Discourse**

Divide the students into six groups. Each group is to elect a spokesperson. Randomly assign each group one of the three actions below and whether they are arguing that the act is morally acceptable or not.

1. You lie to your best friend to get him/her to a surprise party
2. Someone at a party has been drinking and intends to drive, so you take the keys from his/her jacket pocket and hide them
3. Someone is sick and you have special permission to carry medicine for yourself that would help the person, in violation of rules you give the person some of your medication

Give the groups five minutes to come up with the strongest case they can in support of their position. Then bring up the opposing spokespeople and give each two minutes to make their case. After both have spoken, put it to a vote (members of the groups in play do not vote). Go through all three actions.

Once the voting is over, consider whether the class was evenly split on these questions or whether there was general consensus. Could it be possible to be in a state of moral doubt concerning any of them, that is, not be sure which is the right thing to do? Have you ever been in moral doubt about anything? How do we resolve this? What would count as good reasons to make up your mind about a moral question?

**3. Ethical Status**

When we judge an action, we tend to think in terms of an act being either “morally right” or “morally wrong.” Actually, we need to think in terms of three moral statuses. An act is morally necessary if we are morally bound to do it. To do the right thing, you need to do this. An act is morally permissible if we are free to choose to do it if we wish. It is not morally problematic to do it, but also not morally problematic not to do it. An act is morally forbidden if we may not do it.

Ask the students to name actions that clearly fit into each category.

**Ethics Day 2: Subjectivism and Egoism**

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| **Content:**   1. Ethical subjectivism 2. Psychological egoism | **Method:**   1. Dialogues, discussion (35 minutes) 2. Lecture and discussion (15 minutes) |

***Instructor’s Instruction:*** Before we begin a rigorous discussion of the ways in which we provide reasons for moral claims, we need to undermine several views that many students hold which entail that there are no reasons for moral choices, only simple preferences. These are ethical subjectivism and psychological egoism. Subjectivism is the view that an act is morally acceptable *for me* if I think it is. There are no meaningful ethical statements beyond one’s own beliefs. Psychological egoism is the view that human beings can only act in their own self-interest, that we are programmed selfish computers.

Both of these are flawed positions, but there is an insight that they are connected with an insight that needs to be brought out. Ethical questions often do not have neat, simple answers and we must in the end to have a realistic picture of ethical deliberation in which thoughtful, caring people can disagree about hard moral questions. Open-mindedness and tolerance of difference of belief is a good thing, but it does not, as many believe lead to subjectivism or egoism.

***Goals and Key Concepts:***

1. Students should understand and be able to critique ethical subjectivism, ethical egoism, and psychological egoism.
2. Students should have a sense that not having a clear, easy answer to a problem does not mean that the problem does not have an answer.

**1. Ethical Subjectivism**

Select four students. Have two read one dialogue and two read the other.

Dialogue 1:

A: Chocolate ice cream is so much better than strawberry.

B: Actually, I like strawberry better.

A: But the chocolate is sweeter and creamier.

B: It’s too sweet and I love the bits of fruit in the strawberry ice cream, it gives it a chunkier

consistency that I prefer and you get these bursts of strawberry flavor. It’s like these little nuggets of tasty goodness.

A: Yeah, and those nuggets get stuck in your teeth – unlike with smooth, creamy chocolate.

B: But that’s the fun, you get to continue to savor them, saving them for later.

Dialogue 2:

A: I think that it is unfair to make high school students complete community service projects

as a graduation requirement. We are in school to learn and if we do that well enough, we should be given the diploma.

B: But you are a member of the community and therefore you have the moral duty to help

out. Your school is funded by tax dollars from the community and it is only fair, then, that you do something to give back to the community that is supporting you.

A: I never asked for their help. They have no right to tell me what to do or not do with my

free time. It is my life not theirs. If I choose to do community service, that’s a very nice thing and I hope lots of people choose it, but it needs to be a choice and not a mandate which they have no right to issue.

B: It is not a question of rights, it is a question of responsibilities and when the society gives

you what they’ve given you, you are now responsible for helping that society. You acquire a debt, a duty to help. They not only should be able to require you to do community service, it would be wrong not to because it would allow people to shirk their responsibility to the greater good.

What is each person claiming in each of these dialogues? (In the first dialogue, A is NOT arguing that chocolate is better than strawberry, but rather that A likes chocolate more than strawberry.) While all four of the people give reasons for their choices, would it be possible for rational reasons to make you change your favorite flavor of ice cream? Are questions of taste preference open to reason or do some things simply taste better to you than other things? Now, is it possible that you could change your mind about a moral question because someone gave you a better reason than you had? Ethics is unlike taste in that it is open to reason.

To claim that ethics is like taste is hold the position called **ethical subjectivism**. Ethical subjectivism is the view that an act is morally right or wrong *for me* if I believe it is. There are two important elements of this definition. First, it is a relativist definition, that is, it makes morally permissibility, necessity, and impermissibility different for each person. There are no universal ethical statements that must hold for everyone.

Second, it means that it is impossible for anyone to be mistaken about a moral claim. Write the following sentences on the board:

* When I was a little kid, I didn’t like asparagus, but I do now.
* When I was a little kid I thought it was o.k. to hit people when I was angry, but now I realize that it is wrong.

In the first case, were you wrong about asparagus as a kid? No, it didn’t taste good to you in a way it does now. In the second case, were you wrong? Yes, you’ve come to realize something. Your moral belief was wrong and has been corrected, probably for good reason.

Ethical subjectivism makes moral doubt impossible. You cannot wonder whether an act is morally permissible or not if any random decision would simply settle the matter. We often feel deep anxiety about hard moral decisions. If we could simply settle it by deciding to believe whenever is right is the option that wins a coin flip (heads it’s morally o.k., tails it isn’t), then there would not be the sense that some ethical questions are really tricky.

While ethical subjectivism is wrong, it often comes from noble motives, the desire to be open-minded and tolerant. Being open-minded and being tolerant are both good things, but neither actually lead to ethical subjectivism. Open-mindedness means that while you have a view and good reason to believe it, you will still listen to the reasoning behind opposing views and if they show that your reasons turn out not to be good ones and offer better reasons, then you would be willing to change your mind. Open-mindedness starts by admitting that while you are a thoughtful, caring person, you might have it wrong and want to think hard about different sides of the question. Indeed, ethical subjectivism is not open-minded in that because moral necessity, permissibility, and impermissibility are a matter of personal preference on the view, we need never listen to anyone else. Contrary to common belief, ethical subjectivism is closed-minded because you don’t have to open your mind at all to anyone else’s proposed reasons.

Being tolerant doesn’t mean that one cannot have a view on moral issues and believe that one has universally true beliefs. Tolerance means that you will admit that certain points are not fully determined and that there can be thoughtful, caring people who disagree about some difficult points. But it does not mean that all ethical questions are wide open. There are better and worse reasons and to some questions clearly wrong answers. Tolerance does not mean that one has to allow mass murder to be morally acceptable for the mass murderer if the mass murderer believes it to be. We will need to make sure that there is room in ethics for thoughtful, caring people to disagree, but this does not mean that there are no universal moral truths.

**2. Egoism**

Ethical subjectivism should be distinguished from two brands of egoism. **Ethical egoism** is the view that an act is morally right for me if it brings about the best consequences for me. Like ethical subjectivism, it is a relative definition, making moral permissibility, necessity, and impermissibility differ from person to person, but unlike ethical subjectivism, moral status is not a matter of preference but of objective fact in the world. We look at the consequences of the act and determine whether they were helpful or harmful to you.

While ethical egoism is an ethical view because it determines the moral status of an act, **psychological egoism** is a view that makes ethics impossible. Psychological egoism is the view that human beings can only act in their own self-interest. On this view, **altruism**, acting for the sake of another, is impossible as we can only do what is best for us.

Play the psychological egoist’s game. Ask the class for any act. See if you can find some way in which it benefits you. The psychological egoist concludes from this advantage that this must be the true motivation for the act.

Change the game. Take any act and figure out some cost or disadvantage you get from having done it. What else couldn’t you do because you did this? Could our motivation always be self-destructive since we can always find a way that each act keeps us from other goods?

Twist the game. Pick a person in the room. For each act, figure out a way in which the act could be said to have benefitted this person. Could everyone in the world’s motivation for every action be to act in this person’s best interest? Can’t we make exactly the same case for this absurd view as we can for psychological egoism?

**Ethics Day 3: Cultural Relativism**

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| **Content:**   1. Cultural relativism 2. Ambiguity of “right” and “wrong” | **Method:**   1. Lecture (25 minutes) 2. Pair and share (25 minutes) |

***Instructor’s Instruction:*** Cultural relativism is the view that moral permissibility, necessity, and impermissibility are a function of social approval or disapproval. On this view, cultural expectations are the same thing as morality. We will not only need to address its problems to move on to consider non-relative moral systems, but we will need to distinguish between different meanings of the words right and wrong (legal, cultural,…) to help make conversations in the coming days more rigorous.

***Goals and Key Concepts***:

1. Students should understand and be able to critique cultural relativism.
2. Students should be able to differentiate cultural norms, laws, and moral precepts.
3. Key concept: **cultural relativism**.

**1. Cultural Relativism**

Cultural relativism is the view that an act is morally permissible for a society if and only if that society allows it (morally necessary if the society requires it and impermissible if the society forbids it). Like ethical subjectivism, cultural relativism is a relative notion, that is, there are no universal ethical claims, but they are relativized to something. For ethical subjectivism, the moral status of an action is relativized to each individual where for cultural relativism moral status is relativized to a society and therefore covers all actions by all members of that society.

Cultural relativism suffers from the same sort of problems that we found with ethical subjectivism due to its relativistic nature. If cultural relativism was right, then it would be impossible for a culture to wrong about what practices are morally acceptable, necessary, or impermissible. But cultural practices change over time, sometimes for moral reasons. This would be impossible if cultural relativism was correct.

Consider the following sentence:

* It is raining, but I believe it isn’t raining.

There is clearly a problem with such a claim. If you assert that something is the case then surely you believe it. To refuse to believe something that you know to be true is dishonest or irrational. In either case, such a speaker is not to be trusted.

But now consider the following sentence spoken by a Southern abolitionist before the Civil War:

* My society approves of slavery, but I believe it is not morally permissible.

This sentence surely is not nonsense, indeed we would find the speaker to be praiseworthy. But if cultural relativism was true, then social approval would be the same thing as being morally permissible. That would mean that the above sentence would mean exactly the same thing as:

* Slavery is morally permissible, but I believe it is not morally permissible.

That sentence does not mean the same thing as the one above, so social approval and moral permissibility must be different things.

Indeed, if cultural relativism were true, then it would be impossible to challenge socially accepted acts on moral grounds. Yet, we do it all the time.

Ask the student for practices from today or the past that are socially accepted, but morally questionable or acts that are socially frowned upon, but morally permissible or necessary.

**2. The Ambiguity of the words “Right” and “Wrong”**

One of the impediments to good ethical discussion is the fact that we have several different meanings for the words “right” and “wrong.” This is one of the reasons we prefer to use the clunky phrases “morally permissible,” “morally necessary,” and “morally impermissible.” It keeps us from confusing the concepts with others that are different, but similar.

What makes things even more confusing is that we use the same words “right” and “wrong” to cover these different meanings. What we want to do here is to elaborate some of these different senses of right and wrong and see how they are independent.

A claim is factually right if what it says about the world is true and factually wrong if what it says about the world is false. This is clearly different from moral notions, there is nothing unethical about answering a question on a math test incorrectly…as long as it was your own work, of course.

But there are also two normative senses of right and wrong that are different from, but often confused with, ethical concepts. First is legally right or legally wrong. Laws are made by a legislative process. It may be a single monarch or dictator who makes rules at his own whim. It may be a representative Democracy in which laws are made by elected legislators for the good of the people or because of bribes paid to influential party members. It may be a direct Democracy where people vote out of a sense of duty or in their own selfish self-interest. In all of these cases, one may have laws that require citizens to act in ways that are morally permissible or morally impermissible. We hope that our laws don’t forbid us from doing things that are morally necessary, but there are plenty examples of such ethically problematic legislation and we praise people who have the ethical courage to brave the legal sanctions in opposing such rules. Consider, for example, Rosa Parks.

A second, different sense is socially right and socially wrong. All cultures have norms, expectations for behavior that are enforced in a number of ways. Consider what would happen if a young man chose to wear a skirt to school. People would give strange looks. There would be comments. It might be tougher to get a date. Social conformity is enforced in a number of different ways and we all know what happens to us if we do something strange.

But strange is not necessarily wrong. Sometimes it is harmless, other times it constitutes a stand against problematic social practices. Sometimes we see through harm that we do to others because it is so normal. In these cases, it often takes someone who is willing to look unusual to make us question we should be doing something that everyone does without thinking.

Ask students to get together in pairs and come up with acts that are morally permissible or necessary, but are, or at some time were, legally and/or socially wrong and acts that are morally impermissible, but are legally and/or socially right. Come back together and report out the lists.

**Ethics Day 4: Divine Command Theory**

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| **Content:**  1. Divine Command Theory  2. Problems of Consistency and Interpretation  3. *Euthyphro* | **Method:**  1. Lecture (5 minutes)  2. Lecture, Pair and Share (25 minutes)  3. Lecture (20 minutes) |

***Instructor’s Instruction:*** Divine Command Theory is the view that an act is morally necessary if God commands it and morally impermissible if God forbids it. While the moral codes of most religions are wonderful guides to life, problems arise when the claim is made that appeals to sacred texts means that no need for serious ethical deliberation remains. Even if one looks to one's religous beliefs as a guide to right and wrong, one still needs reasons for making the choices one does. We will exmaine several of the problems with the argument that appeal to God's will makes thinking carefully about ethics unnecessary.

***Goals and Key Concepts***:

1. Students should be able to explain and critique Divine Command Theory.
2. Key concepts: **Divine Command Theory**

**1. Divine Command Theory**

Divine Command Theory assumes the existence of a God or gods and assets that morally acceptable human behavior is that which is in line with the Divine Will. An act is morally necessary if God or the gods command it. An act is morally permissible if it pleases God or the gods. An act is morally impermissible if God or the gods forbid it.

It is certainly true that not killing, not stealing, honoring one's parents, and not bearing false witness would contribute to making a life morally well lived. Seeing other beings as your brother and acting as your brother's keeper is to be morally exemplary. The Sermon on the Mount should be seen by believers and non-believers alike as inspirational in terms of living ethically. While appeals to belief are a fine starting point for thinking about hard ethical problems, such appeals do not dispell the philosophical problems beneath them. We still need reasons to support our choices and these reasons require philosophical thought.

**2. The Problems of Consistency and Interpretation**

The first problem with Divine Command Theory is that if moral permissibility, necessity, and impermissibility derive from God's desires, then for anyone to know how to act, one would have to know the mind of God. No one has direct access to the mind of God, so the idea that every single choice we make in terms of how we act would have to be based upon a moral measuring rod we cannot see makes it impossible to live a moral life.

The move that Divine Command Theoriests make in the face of this problem is to appeal to sacred texts. Our Holy Books, they argue, may be seen as ethical instruction manuals. But these books are not the mind of God, they are sets of words and for words to have meaning, they must be interpreted. Consider laws of the state. Legislators craft laws and when they are enacted, form rules for behavior as dictated by the government. But inevitably a situation will arise where the law clearly applies, but it is not clear exactly how in the particular context. Or, there may be a situation where one law says that one outcome should be the case, where a second law dictates a different resolution. In these cases, we take the matter to judges who consider the law and the circumstance to decide the case. This decision requires the judge to interpret the law, to say what it means in a circumstance that was not clearly discussed by the framer of the law. no one can think of every possible case, so we need to appeal to someone to tell us in an unbiased way what the law should mean in this unforeseen context.

This sort of concern will arise any time you are dealing with a set of abstract rules that you are trying to apply to messy, complicated life. This includes rules found in sacred texts. Rules that are generally applicable will always find circumstances where it is not entirely clear how the rule applies. This requires interpretation of the rule and there will always be competing possible interpretations. How do we decide between these competing interpreations? Reason.

Note that these interpreations are the work of humans. Divine Command Theoriests want to put the entire moral weight of decisions in the realm of Divine, but when the moral rubber hits the real life road, things are not always clear and easy.

Consider the eighth commandment, "Thou shalt not steal." Few would argue with this as a legitimate moral precept. There are clear cases of theft and we do condemn them. But what precisely does it mean to steal something? Suppose you see a hundred dollar bill hanging out of someone's pocket and you grab it and put it in your pocket. Stealing? Sure. What if you see it fall underneath the person's chair and you pick it up? Suppose you see it under the chair, but didn't see it fall? All pretty clearly stealing. Suppose you find it in the parking lot of a mall on Christmas eve and while there are people everywhere, no one is looking for it and you have no idea whose it is. Suppose it is in a library with only a handful of people. Suppose it was dropped by someone you know stole it himself. Are these examples of theft? Would it make a difference if it was a nickle instead of a hundred dollar bill?

The concept of theft at the time of the writing of the Old Testament was to take something that belonged to someone else so that they no longer had it. But what of downloading music or copying CDs or DVDs? The people who had it still have everything they had before. The Church employed scribes whose job it was to do nothing but copy books. This was thought of as a great thing. Now it is plagiarism or piracy. The notion of intellectual property is purely a modern one. Should we reinterpet the biblical notion to include it or does that change it?

The idea here is that there is no doubt that one should not steal. It is just that what is meant by stealing gets tricky when we look at hard cases. For this, we need to go back to our ethical discourse based on reason, faith-based belief in the truth of sacred texts doens't completely answer the question, there is still need for thinking.

Divide the students into eight groups. Give each group one of the following commandments and the associated context. Ask them to think of the strongest argument that the commandment does apply to the situation and the strongest argument that it does not.

1. "Honor your father and mother." A child has a parent who is dying of lung cancer and asks the child to go to the store and purchase cigarettes for them. You want to honor your parent, do you go?
2. "Thou shalt not steal." You are a remote control airplane enthusiast and a friend of yours has a new design that will revolutionize the hobby. He has applied for a patent which will likely be granted, but has not yet. This design, once patented will make him rich and famous. For your own pleasure, getting no money or fame, copy it for one of your own airplanes. No one will ever see it and it will not disadvantage your friend in any way. Did you steal his design?
3. "Thou shalt not murder." Someone you care about deeply is dying of a very painful terminal disease. The person has only one day left and there is absolutely no chance for a cure or chance that the prson will live beyond that day. You have a slow acting poison that puts the victim into a coma and causes death in almost a day. If you give the person the poison, she will die from the poison rather than the disease. Is it murder to give the poison and rid the pain for that one day?
4. "Thou shalt not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor." Your neighbor has just bought an incredible sports car, the one that you've always wanted. Seeing it in person makes you work harder, be more responsible, and save your money instead of spending it on things you didn't need anyway. You want your own, not your neighbor's, but seeing that sportscar is motivation for you. Are you coveting your neighbor's possession?
5. "Honor your father and mother." After a family wedding, your father has had too much to drink and asks you to throw away something that you know he would want kept if he had not been drinking. If you are to honor your parent, do you throw it away?
6. "Thou shalt not commit adultery." A wife walks in to find her husband sitting and kissing another woman, but nothing else has happened between them. The husband was seriously considering doing more than kissing. Is this adultery?
7. "Thou shalt not steal." You are a professional musician and you hear someone who is only a hobbyist and has no interest in being a professional noodling around on a chord progression. You take that chord progression and put lyrics, a bridge, and a guitar solo to it and turn it into a big hit. Did you steal the song?
8. "Thou shalt not murder." You are wlaking by a swimming pool when you see someone fall in whom you know cannot swim. You could easily pull him out with little effort. Is it murder if you don't?

Bring the class back together and have them report out, asking the class to comment on their thoughts.

**3. The Circularity Problem and Euthyphro's Problem**

Further problems for the Divine Command Theory arise from the attirbution of moral properties to God or the gods. If one wants to assert that the Divine Being whose will lies at the foundation of ethics is a moral being Himself or theirselves, then there are logical problems that surface.

To say that God is omnipotent, or all-powerful, is to say that there is nothing that can be done that God cannot do. There is thus an external measuring stick by which to make sense of the claim of omnipotence. But to say that God is all-good in the moral sense of good would likewise require that there is an external conception of good of which God is the ultimate example. But Divine Command Theory defines goodness as that which follows the will of God, that is, God's desires define what our moral notions mean. Hence, there is no external measure to make sense of claims of God's goodness.

Think back to ethical subjectivism. Because the ethical subjectivist defined moral goodness for the person in terms of that person's own beliefs about what is permissible, necessary, or impermissible, no one could ever act immorally because everyone always acts from his or her own beliefs. Ethical subjectivism renders ethics trivial. Right and wrong no longer really mean anything. in the same way, the Divine Command Theorist has given us a version of ethical subjectivism where God is the only subject. Just as we could never in principle condemn an act as morally improper if ethical subjectivism were true, so too we could never in principle condemn an act of God if Divine Command Theory were true. God's acts are neither morally acceptable nor unacceptable because God, as the one who determines right and wrong, they are morally acceptable by definition. But then, it renders any claim that God is a morally good being, that is, He always makes the right choice a trivial result. The fact that he chooses it makes it right by definition, so it is meaningless to say that God is good if Divine Command Theory is true.

A similar concern appears in Plato's dialogue *Euthyphro*. In this dialogue, the main character, Socrates, is about to enter the court having been charged with crimes when he sees a young man he knows, Euthyphro. He asks Euthyphro why he is at the courthouse and Euthyphro responds that he is there to charge his father with murder for killing a slave. This would be a shocking act of impudence to the Greeks, something bizarre and unheard of.

Socrates asks Euthyphro what happened and Euthyphro explains that the slave did something that angered his father who as a punishment bound and gagged him and threw him in a ditch. The father went about his own work, forgetting about the slave. When he eventually remembered and went to the ditch, the slave was dead of exposure to the elements.

Socrates comments that it is an unusual thing that Euthyphro is doing and Euthyphro says that he is doing the moral thing. Socrates asks him how he knows it is moral and Euthyphro responds that he knows what morality is. Socrates, impressed that someone so young would know something so deep and elusive, asks a series of questions to try to get Euthyphro to tell him what morality is. Eventually, Euthyphro answers with the heart of Divine Command theory, that a morally good act is one that pleases the gods. Socrates then poses dilemma, do the gods (or God) like it because it is good, or is an act good because the gods (or God) likes it?

If you were to hold that the gods (or God) likes it because it is good, then its goodness is prior to God's preference. There is some reason why it is good and the gods (or God) prefers it for that reason. In this case, it is the reason that is important, not God's Will. The Divine preference is the result of something else and it is that something else that then determines whether an act is good or not. As such, ethics is not concerned with the gods (or God), but rather with that something else. This is not a good result for those who want the Divine to be an essential element of ethics.

On the other hand, if you were to say that an act is morally permissible or necessary because it pleases the gods (or God), then there is absolutely no reason why one act is morally necessary instead of another. If the gods (or God) preferred that we torture infants, then that would be good. "But, of course," one might say, "the gods (or God) would never will such a thing." Why not? "Because it is immoral." But you cannot say that without then moving to the other horn of the dilemma, that is, saying that there is an external reason why it is good and that means that it is good independently of God's will and that is exactly what this horn of the dilemma denies. So, if you can explain why any act is morally necessary or morally impermissible, if you can give reasons why someone should believe that you should or should not do some given action, then you cannot accept this horn of the dilemma.

Plato is arguing in the *Euthyphro* that the Divine Command Theorist either has to give up the core of their moral approach that the divine Will is the basis for determining the moral status of an action or has to give up the idea that we can mke any sense of ethics, that ethics is anymore than completely arbitrary and there is no reason why we should not murder other than that is just how God wants it and tomorrow, if he chose, it could go the other way. Neither of these seem attractive options. The only other path is to say that ethical status is the result of reasons and to think carefully about what sorts of reasons should count.

**Ethics Day 5: Ethical Systems**

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| **Content:**  1. What is an ethical system?  2. What are the elements of a moral situation? | **Method:**  1. Lecture, Pair and share (25 minutes)  2. Discussion, lecture (25 minutes) |

***Instructor's Instructions:*** This lesson turns us away from impediments to ethical discourse to the structure of it. When you look at the ways we argue for the moral permissibility or necessity of an action, we appeal to different aspects of the moral context. Philosophers have developed moral systems that correspond to each of the elements. This class is meant to give the general overview of what an ethical system does and bring out intuitions relating to the moral relevance of each part of the ethical context of an action.

***Goals and Key Concepts***:

1. Students should be able to explain the purpose of an ethical system.
2. Students should be able to enumerate the elements of the ethical context of an action and explain why they are morally relevant.
3. Key concepts: **Ethical system**

**1. Ethical Systems**

For centuries, philosophers have tried to find that one thing that we need to consider in order to determine whether an action is morally permissible, morally necessary, or morally impermissible. Different philosophers have seized on different elements and developed them into what we call **ethical systems**. An ethical system is really just a definition of basic moral notions, but it can be thought of as a machine with a slot on one side and three lights on the other: one red, one yellow, and one green. You put an action in the slot and one of the lights goes on: green if the action is morally necessary, yellow if it is morally permissible, and red if it is morally impermissible. Different philosophers have put forward different ethical systems that they have claimed give the correct and complete means of determining the moral status of any action.

There are two primary concerns for ethicists: (1) of all the systems proposed, are any of them perfect? Do any of the boxes light up the proper light for every action? (2) If we open up the box, what is the mechanism inside? How do we go about determining the moral status of an action?

Divide students up into pairs. Present them with the following situation:

Jennifer wanted to go to the prom with Roberto, but he was going out with Samantha for several weeks and during that time asked her. After weeks of not having a prom date, when Jim asked Jennifer, she agreed, but never wanted to go with him. Jim is extremely enthusiastic about it, much more so than Jennifer, who finds Jim uncomfortable to be around, and this difference will likely cause tension between them all night. Additionally, Jennifer knows that Robin, who is still dateless, was really hoping that Jim would ask her, but Jim is lukewarm about that prospect. Things between Jennifer and Robin have been chilly because she agreed to go with Jim knowing that Robin wanted to. Today, Roberto and Samantha have broken up and are not going to the prom together. Roberto has texted Jennifer and asked her to go with him. What should Jennifer do?

Ask each pair to figure out what is the morally proper action for Jennifer in the situation and to figure out what part of the context they looked to when making this decision.

Reassemble the class and have each group report out, keeping track of the reason why Jennifer should have done what they prescribe. Ask the class if these reasons hold universally. Is there ever a situation in which the morally correct thing to do would be to refuse to follow the reason given, for example, for those who say that she made an agreement or contract, is there ever a case in which the morally necessary thing to do is to break a contract, for those who say that the overall consequences of ditching Jim and going with Roberto will be better for everyone, ask whether the ends always justify the means or are there cases where the right thing doesn't bring the most pleasure. For those who say that she should concoct some story that would excuse her from going with Jim to save his feelings and her friendship, ask whether there are times when one has to turn away from what would be best for people you care about to do the right thing.

**2. Elements of the Moral Situation**

There are five important elements of the moral situation that get used as the primary feature of the major ethical systems: (1) who did it?, (2) what was done?, (3) what happened as a result of doing it?, (4) to whom was it done?, and (5) how did it affect the agent's relationships with other people? Each of these elements is relevant to determining whether the act was morally necessary, permissible, or impermissible.

*Who did it?*

One of the things we often ask people who are about to do something we know is wrong is "What kind of person would that make you?" Who we are ethically is a function of what we do. Our actions define our moral character. We are only generous if we give to others. We are only hard-working if we actually work hard. We are only thoughtful if we do consider others. You cannot call yourself brave if you do not do difficult things in the face of challenges. So, one of the things we need to consider when looking at a situation and determining how to act is what that act would mean in terms of our character. Aristotle gives us an ethical system called **virtue ethics** which is based upon consideration of "who did it, " that is, what effect does the action have upon the agent's character.

*What was done?*

When judging the moral status of an action, surely the first place to look is at the act itself. Being blue is a property internal to blue jeans, perhaps moral necessity, permissibility, or impermissibility is a characteristic of the act itself. Lying is wrong, not because of the person it hurts or what it means about the character of the liar, but because there is something in lying that is inherently problematic, it is the act that is wrong and we need look no farther than the act to determine it. Immanuel Kant gave us an ethical system called **deontology** in whih there are absolute moral duties and an act is morally necessary if we have a duty to do it and morally impermissible if we have a duty not to. There are absolute moral rules and we need to follow them regardless of the situation.

*What happened as a result of doing it?*

We live in a world with other beings who are affected by our actions. When we act, we change other people's lives, we bring them pleasure or pain, we open up opportunities for them or shut off possibilities from them. The choices we make in behaving one way or another could make the world a better place or a worse place. Jeremy Bentham championed an ethical system called **utilitarianism** according to which the moral status of an action is detemrined by the results of that action. Since we change the world by acting or choosing not to act, our choices need to be guided by a desire to make this the best possible world for everyone.

*To whom was it done?*

If you want to look at whether an act was morally permissible or not, surely you need to look at the person to whom it was done. Oliver Wendell Holmes famously said that the right to swing my fist ends at my neighbor's nose. What we can and cannot do is constrained by the rights of others. **Rights-based ethics** contends that we have freedom to do whatever we choose as long as it does not infringe upon the rights of others.

*How did it affect the agent's relationships with other people?*

Human beings are not disconnected ethical atoms bouncing aournd in the world independent of each other. We have relationships and with them come moral responsibilities. Parents have to care for children. Friends have to be thoughtful of each others needs. Romantic relationships come with the responsibility to look out for the happiness of the other partner. Advocates of **care-based ethics** contend that part of being human is having and fostering these deep interpersonal relationships and the needs of those we care about will mean that we will have moral obligations to do or not do certain things.

Reconsider the previous prom date scenario and determine the five elements of the moral situation and discuss what effect each should have on determining the proper way to act.

**Ethics Day 6 Aristotle's Virtue Ethics**

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| **Content:**  1. Background on Aristotle  2. Virtue Ethics in the *Nicomachean Ethics*  3. Application | **Method:**  1. Lecture (5 minutes)  2. Lecture, reflective writing (35 minutes)  3. Group work (10 minutes) |

***Instructor's Instructions:*** This lesson discusses Aristotle's virtue ethics as he sets it out in book II of *Nicomachean Ethics*. After giving some background on Aristotle's life, his ethical system is examined, and then students will apply it to cases.

***Goals and Key Concepts***:

1. Students should be able to explain and apply Aristotle’s virtue ethics to situations.
2. Key Concepts: **Virtue, Vice, Happiness, Character**

**1. Background**

Aristotle was born in Macedonia in 384 B.C.E., the son of king's physician. He was sent to Athens in 402 to study at the Academy, the school of Plato. While he learned from Plato, he did not agree with everything Plato taught. For Plato, reality was not to be found in the material world, but in the eternal, unchanging, perfect world of forms, the ideas of which material things are imperfect representations and which are seen with the eye of the mind through thought. For Aristotle, reality was to be found in the world. And so, after Plato's death, he left Athens and began his scientific work, examining natural phenomena and searching for their causes.

As this work progressed, he was summoned back to Macedonia by the new king, Phillip, where he was made scientific advisor to the king and personal tutor of his son Alexander (later to known as alexander, the Great).

He left Macedonia and returned to Athens where he opened his own school, the Lyceum. Here he studied and lectured on topics across the intellectual spectrum. He wrote dialogues, plays meant to examine scientific and philosophical issues, but none of them have survived. All that we have of Aristotle's works are rough lecture notes. But in them, we find the beginning of virtually every major field of study from astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology, psychology, and logic, to ethics, political science, and literary theory.

**2. Virtue Ethics and the *Nicomachean Ethics***

Aristotle's work on ethics is in two books, the most well-known of which is the *Nicomachean Ethics* (his father was named Nicomachus). Here we find Aristotle's account of what has come to be known as **virtue ethics**.

*Overview of Book I*

Ethics is the study of what it is for a human to live the good life. Aristotle's teacher Plato had a view in which all truth was derived from a single concept of the good. The form of good is the highest, most exalted concept that the human mind could glimpse and all that is real, true, or just partakes of the form of the good.

Aristotle objected that this singular notion of the good was wrong. we must draw a distinction between "good for" and "good in itself." Something that is good for something else is a means, but the goal of the good life is something that is an end. One does not live the good life to get something else, the good life is the ultimate human goal.

So, what could be this end in itself? It is not wealth or power. They are both means. We need money in order to buy things or power to command others to do things, so lives seeking wealth and power are not going to be fulfilling lives that allow us to be the complete humans we could be. It is not fame and adoration. These come from other people. The good life is one that allows us to make real the perfect possible self within ourselves. That actualization of our potentisal comes from our own doing, not from the way others regard us. It is not physical pleasure. That, Aristotle says, is a life for cattle. Animals can experience bodily pleasure and a life seeking it is beneath humans, it does not actualize our human potential, but lowers us to the level of an animal.

The only true good for itself with regard to human life is happiness. You may ask someone why she is working for money or why he is exercising so hard and they may reasonably say that it is a step towards acheiving happiness. But if you asked that person what they wanted all that happiness for, it would rightfully elicit only an odd stare. Happiness is its own end, not a means for something else.

But what brings true happiness to a human being is a matter of human nature. We have very particular types of minds that make us uniquely human. A part of it is similar to plants in that it controls growth and functions like respiration. Another part is similar to animals which gives us perception, locomotion, and bodily appetites. But humans alone have a rational part to their minds and it is in reaching our rational potenital that true human happiness is found. That characteristic that brings us closer to the potentially perfect being we have within us is called a **virtue**. Characteristics that take us away from our perfect potential selves are called **vices**.

Ask students to take a couple of minutes and write down those words that describe their perfect selves. Imagine that you are everything you could be, that you have actualized all of your potential. What adjectives would you use to describe yourself?

*Book II*

*Section 1*

Human virtues are common to all people. They belong to us all because we are members of a species and all species have an internal striving, a common sense of perfection that all members are trying to realize. But while these virtues are common to all of us, they are not naturally within us. We will not become virtuous if left on our own. Virtues must be taught and practiced, like a craft, like a musician learning his or her instrument. We must observe them in others and then replicate them in our own actions at which point they become a part of our character by becoming habitual.

*Section 2*

In book I, Aristotle distinguished between parts of the rational mind. One part deals with abstract reasoning, for these the virtues are to be found in the extreme – it is always better to be smarter, to have better problem solving skills, to have more knowledge of the world. Here in book II, section 2, he looks at the virtues of the practical part of the mind and these virtues are to be found as the mean between two extremes. To much or too little constitutes a vice, but the mean is just right. If you run from all danger, you are cowardly. If you rush into all dangerous situations, you are rash. The brave person is the one who takes the middle path. To overindulge in bodily pleasures is to be intemperate. To abstain from all bodily pleasures is to be a boor. the temperate person knows when to say when.

*Section 3*

When someone has been properly trained in the ways of virtue, then being virtuous will be pleasurable and s/he will experience vice as painful. Similarly, when one has a corrupted character, when one embodies vice regularly, virtuous acts will seem uncomfortable. We want to train ourselves to acquire habits of virtue because then we will derive pleasure from doing the right thing.

*Section 4*

Our acts determine our character. Virtuous acts will lead to a virtuous character, to our become more like the perfect person we could be, but only if they are done properly. To affect one's character, a virtuous act must be done (1) with the knowledge of the virtue which is embodied, (2) it must be the person free choice to do them, and (3) it must be done willingly, not grudgingly, done because it is known to be right, not from a sense that one is doing it only because it is expected.

*Section 5*

Virtues are not feelings. Feelings happen to us, actions happen from us. Everyone gets angry. One cannot be praised or blamed for that. Virtue is to be found in what one does when one is angry.

*Section 6*

There are some vicious actions that do not have a mean, for exmaple, murder, adultery, or theft. While in general the moderate pathis always the best one, it should not be taken to imply that murdering half the people you meet is virtuous because it is halfway between murder everyone or no one.

*Section 7*

We can find a significant number of virtues by considering the mean between two extremes:

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| **Deficient** | **Virtuous** | **Excessive** |
| selfish | generous | wasteful |
| cowardly | brave | rash |
| vulgar | magnificent | ostentatious |
| pusillanimous (timid) | magnanimous | vain |
| self-depricating | truthful | boastful |
| inirascible | mild | irascible |
| disconnected | honorable | self-aggrandizing |
| boor | witty | buffoon |
| ingratiating, quarrlesome | friendly | flattering |
| spiteful | empathetic | envious |

Have students find other virtues that come from moderation.

**3**. **Application**

Reconsider the prom date example from last class:

Jennifer wanted to go to the prom with Roberto, but he was going out with Samantha for several weeks and during that time asked her. After weeks of not having a prom date, when Jim asked Jennifer, she agreed, but never wanted to go with him. Jim is extremely enthusiastic about it, much more so than Jennifer, who finds Jim uncomfortable to be around, and this difference will likely cause tension between them all night. Additionally, Jennifer knows that Robin, who is still dateless, was really hoping that Jim would ask her, but Jim is lukewarm about that prospect. Things between Jennifer and Robin have been chilly because she agreed to go with Jim knowing that Robin wanted to. Today, Roberto and Samantha have broken up and are not going to the prom together. Roberto has texted Jennifer and asked her to go with him.

What would Aristotle say for Jennifer to do? If Jennifer did ditch Jim, what would Aristotle say his reaction and further action should be?

**Ethics Day 7 Kant's Deontology**

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| **Content:**   1. Background on Kant 2. Deontology 3. Application | **Method:**   1. Lecture (5 minutes) 2. Lecture/Discussion (30 minutes) 3. Pair and Share (15 minutes) |

***Instructor's Instructions:*** Reading Kant is very difficult, but his moral system is not. Kant argues that Aristotle's virtue ethics do not account for what we mean by moral necessity, permissibility, and impermissibility. For that, we must account for the act itself in terms of moral duties. Kant provides us with a rule-based system in which all moral rules derive from a single super-rule, the Categorical Imperative.

***Goals and Key Concepts***:

1. Students should be able to explain Kant’s critique of Aristotle’s virtue ethics.
2. Students should be able to explain and apply Kant’s deontological ethics.
3. Students will be able to critically compare the results of different ethical systems.
4. Key concepts: **Deontology, Law, Duty, Hypothetical Imperative, Categorical Imperative**

**1. Background on Kant**

Immanuel Kant was born in 1724 and lived his whole life in the city of Königsberg, which was in East Prussia during Kant's time, but the area is now part of East Russia and is known as Kaliningrad (both mean "King's Town" in German and Russian, respectively). Kant lived a very structured life. He had every day scheduled to the second. He would take a walk every day at precisely the same time. take precisely the same route. Even walk precisely the same number of steps. It was said that you could set your watch by the time he passed by your door.

Kant began his career as a scientist, writing on meteorology and physics. His interest moved to philosophy and his writings completely revolutionized almost every aspect of the field. His thought about epistemology, the study of knowledge, reshaped thought and influenced thinkers including Albert Einstein. His thought about aesthetics, the philosophy of art, form the basis of that field. His work on ethics were extremly imfluential and reflects his rigid lifestyle.

**2. Deontology and *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals***

*First Section*

Kant begins by attacking Aristotle. He contends that being virtuous does not necessarily make one moral. for that, one needs a good will. Indeed, without a good will, virtues make one even more evil.

Ask students to name famous villians both real and fictitious. Write down their names. Ask for descriptions of them. note how many of Aristotle's virtues apply to them – for example, brave, temperate, patient, smart, and resourceful.

What is important for Kant is that a good will is entirely independent of the results of the action. One acts with a good will is when someone wants to do the right thing solely because it is the right thing regardless of the consequences of the action. Lying is wrong because it is lying. One should tell the truth even if it hurts someone because acting with a good will means telling the truth in order to do the right thing.

There are absolute moral laws. "Duty is the necessity of an action done out of respect for law." the key to acting in a morally proper way is acting in accord with duty, that is, following the moral rules solely for the sake of following the rules.

There are four kinds of actions:

* Those acts which violate duty
* Those acts which are in accord with duty, but for which the agent receives some reward
* Those acts which are in accord with duty, but for which the agent avoids some penalty
* Those acts which are in accord with duty, but for which the agent receives no reward or suffers a penalty

It is only the last sort that are of any moral value because it is only in that case that we can know that the agent acted with a good will. Even if the act just makes you feel good for having done the right thing or if you would have gotten in trouble for having acted differently, that is enough to make the act of no moral value since that is a reward or avoidance of a penalty.

Circumstances make no difference in the moral worth of the action. It does not matter how dire the situation is, rules are rules. Kant writes, "When I am in distress, may I make a promise with the intention of not keeping it?" Ask the students to come up with situations in which they would make a promise with no intention of keeping it. Is Kant right that it is the action alone and not the consequences of the action that should be considered in determinnig whether the act is morally permissible, morally impermissible, or morally necessary.

*Second Section*

Ethical rules are imperatives. An imperative is one of the four types of sentence. Ask students if they know the four sorts of sentence: declarative (statements), interogative (questions), exclamatory (exclamations), and imperative (commands).

Kant distinguishes between two kinds of imperatives. Hypothetical imperatives are sentences of the form: You should do X, if you want Y. Categorical imperatives are sentences of the form: You should do X. Because Kant argues that ethics has nothing to do with consequences, ethical rules cannot be hypothetical imperatives, but must be categorical.

Where do these rules come from? For Kant, while ethical rules are of the form of categorical imperatives, there is a special rule the capital C, capital I Categorical Imperative which is the source of all other rules. Kant gives four different formulations of the Categorical Imperative, but we'll just look at the two that are generally held to be the most important.

Categorical Imperative1: Always treat people as ends not means.

People are not tools, they are beings with projects, plans, hopes, and dreams. It is wrong to use other people to get what you want. You need to think of them as people worthy of consideration for their own needs, not just onjects to be manipulated for your own.

Categorical Imperative2: Act so that the maxim that your action obeys should be a

universal law.

When deciding what to do, take the potential action and remove all of the context. Don't worry about who, where, when, what would happen as a result, nothing. Boil it down to the bare action itself and ask whether "Always do X" or "Never do X" should be the unversal law. Once you've figured out which one should be the universal law, then it becomes universal, you must follow it all the time.

**3**. **Application**

Pair students up and ask them to consider the following situations. Ask them to apply the second version of the Categorical Imperative and determine what would be the operative moral law. What would Kant say to do? What would Aristotle say to do? Which gives the better reason?

1. A friend is very excited about a new haircut that looks horrible on him/her. Your friend asks you what you think of it. What do you say? Would it be any different if it was an outfit that the friend was trying on, but had not yet bought?

2. A friend has just bought a CD and after listening to it, you love it. Your friend lends it to you. Is it o.k. to put it on your iPod?

3. A friend asks you to look over his college essay. You are very busy with your own work and don't have the time to do a good job. Should you agree to do it?

4. You forgot to do the reading for philosophy class and have time over lunch. You realize that you've forgotten your book, but see a friend's copy and you know that he will not be using it before class because he will be in class the entire time. He will not be around to ask if you could borrow it and you will get it back to him in class. Do you borrow the book?

5. You are approached by a homeless person and asked for money. The person says that he needs it for a cup of coffee. You doubt that it will really be spent for coffee, do you give him the money?

**Ethics Day 8 Utilitarianism**

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| **Content:**   1. Background on Bentham 2. Utilitarianism 3. Mill’s Objection to Bentham’s Hedonism 4. Application | **Method:**  1. Lecture (5 minutes)  2. Lecture/Discussion (20 minutes)  3. Lecture/Discussion (15 minutes)  4. Application (10 minutes) |

***Instructor’s Instructions:*** Jeremy Bentham’s utilitarianism is a consequentialist view, that is, moral right and wrong are a function of the consequences of an act. We saw one consequentialist view in ethical egoism that looked only at the consequences for the one acting. Utilitarianism, on the other hand, is the democratic version that treats the consequences for all people equally. This lesson sets out the system and then examines what is meant by utility. Finally, students will apply the system and compare its results to those of systems we have already discussed.

***Goals and key concepts***:

1. Students will be able to explain and apply Bentham’s utilitarianism.
2. Students will be able to critically compare the results of competing ethical systems.
3. Key concepts: **Utilitarianism, Utility, the Principle of Utility, Intensity, Duration, Certainty, Propinquity, Fecundity, Purity, Hedonism**

**1. Background on Jeremy Bentham**

Jeremy Bentham was born in 1748 in London where he was a writer, teacher and political radical espousing views that were revolutionary for the time including giving women all the same rights as men, eliminating spanking and other forms of corporal punishment from the schools, making cruelty to animals illegal, and abolishing slavery and the death penalty.

He was instrumental influencing in founders of University College, London who were students ofd devotees of his. Unlike its church-based counterparts Cambridge and Oxford Universities, admitted students regardless of race, religion, or political viewpoint. Believing that one ought always act in a way that best benefits society, upon his death, Bentham donated his body to science. It was dissected for medical students, but the head and skeleton saved. His remaining remains were stuffed with hay, dressed in his clothes, seated upon a chair, and encased in a glass box where he remains to this day at University College. Indeed, a camera trained on the remains of Bentham regularly updates the image that may be seen on-line.

**2**. **Utilitarianism and *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation***

*Chapter 1: Of the Principle of Utility*

Human beings (though not only humans) experience pleasure and pain. This is the fact that underlies all of ethics. The way we act has consequences for others, that is, causes them pleasure or pain. The **utility** of an act is the net amount of pleasure and pain that it causes when we consider absolutely everyone affected.

Bentham contends that ethics is therefore based upon the **Principle of Utility** which is that one ought to always act to maximize overall utility. In other words, the morally correct action is that which brings the greatest balance of pleasure over pain when everyone affected is considered.

When applying the principle of utility, everyone counts equally. It doesn’t matter if you are the king or a servant, your pain or pleasure is considered equally. Not that degree is irrelevant. It is the amount of pain or pleasure that gets tallied, not whose it is. That includes non-humans as well. Since animals can feel pleasure and pain, their utility must be considered as well.

So, when trying to decide what to do, the utilitarian approach is to calculate the overall utility for all of the options – pain being considered negative pleasure. You then pick the option that has the greatest balance of pleasure over pain, that is the one with the best overall (or least worst) consequences.

Because the utilitarian locates moral acceptability or impermissibility in the consequences of an act and not the act itself, a significant result is that there cannot be blanket prohibitions of any category of action. One could always concoct some artificial example in which it would be outweighed by the consequences on the other side. Ask students if there are any acts that are so heinous – slavery, torture – that they should be morally banned regardless of context.

*Chapter 4: Value of a Lot of Pleasure or Pain, How to be Measured*

Bentham realizes that when calculating the amount of pleasure or pain, that there are several aspects to the experience that must be considered. Pain is not like a carton of eggs in which one could simply count up the number in the carton. One needs to consider the intensity, duration, certainty, propinquity, fecundity, and purity.

**Intensity** is the measure of the strength of the feeling. Is something incredibly painful or just mildly uncomfortable? That difference needs to be considered.

**Duration** is a measure of how long the pleasure or pain lasts. Do you pull the band-aid off slowly causing a lower intensity of pain for longer or just rip it off causing a much more intense pain for just an instant and then it is over?

**Certainty** measures how likely the pleasure or pain is to occur. Because you are making your utilitarian calculation before the event, you cannot always be certain of the actual consequences. How probable is it that the pleasure or pain you are considering will actually occur?

**Propinquity** measures how close in time the pleasure or pain will be. Is it a case of immediate or delayed gratification? The further removed a pleasure or pain is from the event that causes it, the more likely it is for an intervening cause to affect it one way or the other.

**Fecundity** is a measure of the likelihood of something to give rise to more of the same. Is it a moral gift that keeps on giving, a joy that will put you in a place to experience even more joys or is it a permanent hurt that will give rise to other pains down the line?

**Purity** is the contrary notion that considers how likely a pleasure is to give rise to a later pain (you reap what you sow) or how likely a pain is to give rise to a later pleasure (no pain, no gain).

When you consider all of these factors together, you get a sense of the actual utility of an act for a person. When you tally it up for all people (and non-people) affected, you get the net or overall utility of the act. You then select from among all possible acts, the one that maximizes overall utility.

**3**. **Mill’s Challenge to Bentham’s Hedonism**

**Hedonism** is the view that pleasure and pain are the only measures relevant to the determination of the moral status of an action. Bentham is a hedonist because his version of utilitarianism is based solely upon the consequences of an action in terms of pleasure and pain and for him, all pleasures and all pains are equivalent. It is only the amount that is morally germane, the nature of the source is irrelevant.

Bentham’s follower James Mill had a son who became a famous philosopher, John Stuart Mill. Mill also was a utilitarian, but his version differed in several respects from that of Bentham. One of those differences was to move away from a pure hedonism. Mill argues that more intellectual pleasures are inherently more valuable than more physical bodily pleasures. It isn’t purely the amount, but the type of pleasure that matters. He writes,

“It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, are of a different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the question (*Utilitarianism*, [Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001], p. 10).”

Ask students, “He says that smart people, those who have experienced both types will prefer the pleasures of the intellect, making them more valuable. Is this true? Are pleasures of the mind more valuable than pleasures of the body, or is this just the bias of a smart person?”

**4**. **Application**

Ask students to pair up and reconsider the five cases from the last lesson, this time deciding what a utilitarian would say to do in each. In what cases is the utilitarian approach more reasonable and in which cases is it not? Report out on each case.

**Ethics Day 9 Rights-based Ethics**

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| **Content:**  1. Background on social contract theory  2. Hobbes' theory of the social contract in *Leviathan* | **Method:**  1. Lecture (10 minutes)  2. Lecture and group work (40 minutes) |

***Instructor’s Instructions:*** The notion of rights is everywhere in the way we talk about ethics, for example, human rights, women’s rights, animal rights. Some talk of rights is political, but some of it is moral. The idea that all people have certain inalienable rights and are appropriated others by a social contract is implicit in much of our thoughts about morality. Rights are like fences around your yard, they keep a moral distance around you within which you are free to do as you choose without fear of external interference. Rights-based ethics or social contract theory uses rights as the central mechanism in determining when an act is morally permissible. Hobbes' account of the arising of the social contract from a state of nature will be used as a motivation for seeing the rights as a guarantor of moral order.

***Goals and key concepts***:

1. Students will be able to explain what a right is and the difference between alienable and inalienable rights and how alienable rights are granted under a social contract.
2. Students will be able to explain Hobbes' argument for the creation of a social contract.
3. Key concepts: **Rights, Social Contract, Alienable, Inalienable**

1. Background on Rights and Social Contract Theory

Perhaps no other concept has been more active in creating a more moral and equitable society than the notion of rights. Civil rights, womens rights, and human rights are concepts that have led to the liberation of minority groups that had long suffered oppression. But as historically powerful as the concept is, the idea of rights is actually a morally weak notion. My rights allow me a range of freedom to do as I choose and keep you from being able to do certain things to me, but they never force either of us to do anything. In other words, having rights will make certain actions morally impermissible and others morally permissible, but never morally necessary. In this way, rights are tied to notions of liberty, but not to obligations and responsibilities.

Social contract theory is an ethical system based upon the distribution of rights among those in a society. Rights are specified and granted by an agreement that governs the society, the social contract, that works the way a constitution works for a governmental system. When one is born into or joins the society, one then becomes party to the social contract. You do not have to actively sign on, but simply being a part of the society indicates an implicit acceptance of the social contract.

Violations of rights granted under the social contract open the agent up to sanction from the society. This sanction may be a nasty look, disapproving comments, loss of privileges, or expulsion from the society.

The social contract is different from cultural relativism in that cultural relativism bases moral rightness and wrongness on approval of the cultural. Social contract theory bases it upon the distribution of rights.

2. Hobbes' Social Contract and the State of Nature in *Leviathan*

*Book I, Chapter 13*

A basic fact of human life is that all of us are potentially in danger from the rest of us. No matter how tough you think you are, through sneaking up or through the use of weapons, anyone can threaten anyone else.

In the state of nature, where there is no society, no order, when people try to get what they need and what they want, there will be others who also want it. This causes conflict and since everyone is in danger from everyone else, it gives rise to a state of war each against the other. In the state of nature, there is no art, no science, no property, nothing that enriches life. Life in the state of nature is "poor, solitary, nasty, brutish, and short."

*Chapter 14*

**The right of nature** is the right to that which will aid one in surivial. You have the right to anything that will help you preserve your life. **The law of nature** is that all people must seek that which will help them survive and avoid that which will is likely to end their lives. In the state of nature, eveyrone has the right of nature, and since everything could potentially help you survive, so the right of nature gives everyone the right to everything. This gives rise to conflict, the state of constant war that is the state of nature. But being in this state of war makes it more likely that one's life will be ended.

This leads to **the fundamental law of nature** that one should seek peace. But peace is unattainable as long as everyone possesses the right of nature. But if anyone surrendered their right of nature unilaterally, it would mean that he would be easy prey for everyone else. Therefore, in seeking peace, we look for a way in which everyone mutually surrenders their right of nature. This gives rise to the **second law of nature** wherein everyone should be willing to surrender their right of nature in the name of peace inasfar as others do.

One may surrender one's rights in two ways. First, one can renounce a right, that is, simply give it up. Alternatively, one may transfer a right, that is, give it to someone else. A **contract** is the mutual transferring of rights. If the rights are to be transferred at different times, then when one person has transferred the right to the other, but the other has yet to reciprocate, there is a **pact** or **covenant** between them. And the second person has an **obligation** to the first.

Some rights can be transferred, those are called **alienable rights**. Others are possessed by all people and may not be transferred no matter what the offer. These are called **inalienable rights**. hobbes' claims that all people have the inalienable right to defend themselves from that which endangers one's life.

Ask students to name rights that are alienable and others that are inalienable.

*Chapter 15*

The **third law of nature** is that all people must keep their contracts and fulfill their covenants. If contracts are not fulfilled, then the other party will take their rights and this is a slippery slope back to the state of nature. **Justice** is the fulfilling of contracts and **injustice** is the breaking of contracts.

Since it is sometimes in people's short-term interest to break their contracts, some means of enforcement is required, that is, there must be some sort of universally respected authority to guarantee that covenants will be satisfied. For this, there must be a large-scale structure involving all people who agree to a single distribution rights. This is the social contract. It gives particular rights to particular individuals, certain rights to all people, and has all people transfer certain rights to one or a small group of people who then have the power to use those rights against the people as punishment for injustices commited.

Divide students into groups. Ask them to write out a social contract for the classroom that accurately reflects the rights of each member, the rights of the authority overseeing the classroom society, and the sanctions which the authority has the right to enact in the face of injustices observed. What rights in the classroom are alineable and what rights in the classroom are inalienable? Report out from the groups.

Ask students what could be done to reshape the social contract in the classroom if some thought it unfair or not maximally beneficial?

**Ethics Day 10 Care Ethics**

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| **Content:**  1. Care vs. contract  2. Care Ethics  3. Moral Deliberation  4. Application | **Method:**  1. Lecture, Discussion (15 minutes)  2. Lecture (15 minutes)  3. Discussion (5 minutes)  4. Pair and share (15 minutes) |

***Instructor’s Instructions:*** Care ethics is a completely different approach to ethics, one that considers the moral weight of personal relationships. When we care about people, it gives us special moral obligations that we do not have towards other people.

***Goals and Key Concepts:***

1. Students will be able to explain the difference between care and contract and how that difference leaves a hole in traditional ethical theory.
2. Students will be able to explain how ethical decisions are made according to care ethics.
3. Key concepts: **Care, Contract.**

**1. Care and Contract**

Psychologist Carol Gilligan, in her book *In a Different Voice*, criticized the traditional picture of ethical development put forward by psychologists sigmund Freud and Lawrence Kohlberg. The picture of ethics they used was based on the systems we have studied. Gilligan argued that morality as they paint it is based on the sort of relationships that one finds in the work-a-day world. Deontology and rights-based ethics are modeled on law as one might find it in the courtroom. Utilitarianism is ethical accounting that seems like what one would see in the business world.

All of these notions of morality are based on how one would be expected to treat a random person. But what about the ways we relate to people we care about? Friends? Family? Surely, we should treat them differently. When we have a relationship like these, it comes with special sorts of moral responsibilities. It would never do to treat these people like strangers. the relationships come with special ethical standing.

There is a difference, Gilligan argued, between those relationships based on contract and those based on care. A contractual relationship, as Hobbes points out, requires two people to freely enter into a covenant that they believe to be mutually advantageous. When one person meets his end of the bargain, he has freed himself from the relationship. He no longer has to do anything for the other person, has no never again has to have anything to do with him. If he wants to enter into another contract, he may, but there is no expectation. By acting, he has released himself from the relationship.

But care is different. Ask the students what care means?

But when you are dealing with a care-based relationship, you are not part of it for self-interest. Unlike a contract that you enter into for personal gain, when you care about someone you are interested in their needs. Parents do not help their children with the idea that they are going to be repayed for their efforts, they do it because theyc love their children and want what is best for them.

As such, when you act in a care-based relationship, you do not free yourself from the relationship, but more deeply embed yourself in it. Think of the case of a guy who is interested in a romantic relationship with with someone who has no interest in him. If he sends gifts, say chocolates, she will refuse them, not because she does not like chocolate – she may love chocolate – but because by accepting them she will have allowed her suitor to have deepened a relationship she does not want.

Consider different sorts of relationships. Prompt with student-teacher, band members, business partners, doctor-patient, clergy-congregant, team-members, landlord-tenent. Ask for others relationships. Are they contractual or care-based?

**2. Care Ethics**

Since care-based relationships are different from contractual relationships, the ethical dimensions will be different as well. Suppose you are driving to an interview for a summer internship that is very important to you. You cannot be late. The weather is horrible and you pass someone who is broken down on the side of the road. You can see that the person does not have a cell phone and knowing the road, you know that there is not likely to be another car for a very long time. But you are running a little late. If you don't stop, you'd probably feel a little bad driving away – and well you should. But now suppose that the person in the car was your best friend since childhood and he or she sees that it's you. Do you stop? Would you feel different driving away if you didn't?

Care-based relationships come with special ethical obligations. In more mundane cases, it means looking out for the best interests of those you care about. Sometimes that means doing for the person you care for and in some cases it means not doing. Does a parent who cares about her son give him everything he asks for or does she do more for him when she makes him work for it? The key is that care-based relationships it is the best for that person.

And when you care for someone, their needs morally come before those of folks you do not care about. If a woman sees two children drowning at opposite ends of a pool and one of them is her child, which does she save? Suppose there are three children drowning, two at one end and hers at the the other. Doesn't she still go to the rescue of her won child? Utilitarians would argue that you need to do that which has the best overall consequences, but the care-based ethical system contends that sometimes the greater good needs to be sacrificed for the local good if there is a pre-existing care-based relationship.

On this view, an act is morally permissible if it deepens the relationship, if it expresses care in such a way that the other person gets more of a sense that you are there for him/her. An act is morally impermissible if it undermines the relationship, if it conveys to the other person that you do not care or care less for him/her. A act is morally necessary if the relationship depends upon it, if not doing it would sever the relationship.

**3. Moral Deliberation**

Now that we’ve set out all five of the ethical systems that correspond with the different elements of the ethical context, we can now see more clearly how it is we go about discussing moral issues. The opposing viewpoints will either be contending that different systems emphasize the most important factor in that situation or they will agree on the system that is most important in the context, but disagree on the result it gives. As a result, we can now see that ethical disagreement is not an attack on someone’s character and that moral doubt is not a lack of conviction, but rather that hard moral questions come from the fact that there will often be different elements in the ethical system that *are* both important, but whose correlated systems give different results.

It also shows where the insight that leads people towards ethical subjectivism comes from and its proper place. Moral problems are often difficult because we do see the importance of different elements of the moral context and there is no easy way to determine which of the factors ought to be ranked above the others. People on different sides of a complex moral debate will have good arguments based on different ethical systems. How do we make that final decision which to use? On the basis of reason, not mere preference, but the reasons will be often better or worse, sometimes seemingly equally good in opposing directions. Good, thoughtful, caring, decent people can thus have reasonable disagreements about which element is to be considered paramount in different cases, that is people who are trying to do the right thing can reasonably disagree concerning what the right thing is.

There is no system above the system that gives easy, straightforward answers to the hard questions. The hard questions are in fact hard and what our new understanding about ethics does is not reduce them to simple calculations, but allow us to see exactly what it is that makes them so hard. We have not resolved the difficulties, but rather, gained deep insight into the source of the difficulties.

**4. Application**

Consider these cases determining what each of our systems would say to do. Which one gives the best reason to act?

1. Suppose an experimental drug is available that would extend the life of people suffering from a debilitating disease. It does not make the life any easier, the symptoms still persist and the suffering that accompanies them increase over time, but they will not die as soon. Your beloved grandmother has the disease, do you try to get her in the study that would get her the drug?

2. Your boyfriend/girlfriend’s birthday is coming up. There is a fairly expensive gift that he or she would like and you’ve been saving for months without his or her knowledge. A friend comes back from a trip to sub-Saharan Africa and tells you about a school there that educates the orphans of AIDS victims. If left to their own, their future is bleak, but this school has an amazing track record of turning around lives and opening doors for them to live long lives of fulfillment and contributing much to their community. He tells you that the school is in financial trouble and that the amount they need just happens to be the amount you save. Do you buy the present or save the school?

3. A family member has lung cancer in large part because of smoking. He knows that the disease will likely kill him if he continues to smoke. Yet, he enjoys smoking so much that he refuses to stop. You could take his cigarettes and destroy them and he’d never catch you because his lack of lung capacity makes him slow of foot. Do you destroy his cigarettes?

**Ethics Day 11 Ethics Championship**

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| **Content:**  1. Application of ethical theories | **Method:**  1. Competitive group presentations |

***Instructor’s Instructions:*** This will be a set of debate-like competitions in which groups try to make the strongest case in discussing a moral issue using a prescribed ethical system.

***Goals and Key Concepts:***

1. Students will hone their ability to think within the framework presented by an ethical system.
2. Students will work on critical thinking skills, abilities to analyze ethical situations, and express complex ideas clearly and convincingly.

Divide the class into ten groups and give each a number 1-10. Those in groups 1-5 will be presenting on case1, while 6-10 will be presenting on case 2. Groups 1 and 6 will argued from the virtue ethics approach, 2 and 7 from the deontological point of view, 3 and 8 will be utilitarians, 4 and 9 will be social contractarians, and 5 and 10 will adopt a care ethics perspective.

Present the cases, allow the groups to meet for 5 minutes. In that time, the group must select a spokesperson and develop the strongest possible case using their assigned ethical system. After five minutes, the class is reassembled.

Start with case 1. Each group’s spokesperson presents their case for no longer than two minutes. After all five groups have presented, those working on the other case vote. The vote should **not** be based upon what you would or would not do, but solely upon who makes the best case in terms of their system. Votes are tallied and the top two vote getting teams move on to the championship. Repeat with case 2.

Of the two winners, the one that received the most votes in its rounds selects the ethical system it wants to argue from in the championship. The only constraint is that it cannot be the same system it argued from in the first round. Next the other winner selects. In the case of a tie, a round of rock, paper, scissors will decide first pick. Next the second place teams select a system. Give them five minutes to select a different spokesperson and build their cases. Present and vote as before. Team receiving the most votes wins, but is still expected to act in a fashion Aristotle would deem virtuous.

**Case1**

Families in your area want to open a special school in your neighborhood. It would give the local kids, including your children, a much better education than anywhere else in the school district. But it is so expensive that only one such school could be open and it would take resources from other schools, causing their educations to be less effective than they otherwise would be. Do you join in the movement to bring that school to your neighborhood?

**Case 2**

It is the 1990s and steroids in baseball have not been officially banned. You see those on your own team taking them. You know that your competitors are taking them. You know that if you do not take them you are at a competitive disadvantage which could cost you your job, the job you love and have been working incredibly hard every day of the last fifteen years to attain, the job that lets you feed your family and provide for your children’s college education. All you’ve ever done is play baseball and if you lose your position, you’d have to take a minimum wage job which wouldn’t allow them the money they need for college. You also know that it will have long-term negative health effects and that it violates the sense of fair play. Do you take the steroids?

**Championship case**

Philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre describes a case in which a student came to him during World War II after the Nazis had overrun France. His family was a mother, father, an older brother, and him. The father became a Nazi collaborator and was thrown out of the family. The older brother joined the resistance fighting against the Nazis for the liberation of France and was killed in the fighting. He is the only person his aging mother has in the world. She lives for him. If he left, she would die, allow herself to waste away, alone and broken-hearted. But he burns to avenge his brother’s death and wants to oppose the evil of Nazism. At the same time, if he joined the resistance, he would have to travel out of the country for training and be brought back in. He might not even make it there or back to make any difference at all. Should he act to make a huge difference in the life of one person he loves, or act to try to make what would at most be a small difference for the millions of people who live in the country he loves?

**Ethics Days 12-14 Ethics Skits**

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| **Content:**  1. Application of ethical theories | **Method:**  1. Group presentations and system identification |

***Instructor’s Instructions:*** This will be a set of skits in which in which groups will present different viewpoints moral issue from each of our ethical systems and the rest of the class will have to identify them and then discuss which is the most convincing in the context.

***Goals and Key Concepts:***

1. Students will hone their ability to think within the framework presented by all of the ethical systems studied.
2. Students will work on critical thinking skills, abilities to analyze ethical situations, and express complex ideas clearly and convincingly.

Divide the class into groups that have at least five members. Randomly assign groups to topics. Give them at least 30 minutes to write and practice skits based on their ethical situation. Each group must have one character present a case from each of the ethical systems. Have each group present. After each presentation, have those watching try to identify which character was utilizing which system. Once all of the systems have been correctly identified, ask the class if any of the cases could have been made more strongly with that system. Once the strongest case from each system has been presented, ask the class which one seems the best argument in the context.

**Case 1 The Trial of Robin Hood**

Robin Hood is being tried in a court of morality for theft. Friar Tuck, Robin Hood’s friend and a member of the clergy, and one of the poor villagers who received the money and was thereby able to pay his high taxes to the evil and greedy Prince John and thereby remain out of jail testify on his behalf. The sheriff of Nottingham and one of the wealthy people he robbed testify against him.

**Case 2 Thanksgiving Dinner with John Brown’s Family**

John Brown hatched an idea that he thought might end slavery. He and his sons would raid the armory at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, riding off with a large amount of military hardware. They would ride south until they reached the first plantation they could find. They would arm the slaves and help them over throw their masters. They would then take those slaves with them to the next plantation, arm those slaves, and so on and so on until their ever increasing army of liberated slaves freed all of the other slaves. It is Thanksgiving and the whole Brown family is together. John tells them of his plan. One son is all for it. His wife is against it. His mother-in-law likes it. His father-in-law hates it.

**Case 3 What Would You Do? Ask Thing One and Thing Two**

At the end of *The Cat in the Hat*, a brother and sister, whose house was just destroyed and then miraculously put back together by the Cat in the Hat, watch as their mother walks in and asks them what they did and if they had any fun? All of the activities in the house clearly violated the rules the mother have set. But they did not participate in them willingly. If they told her what happened and she believed them, she would be horrified and most likely not believe that they took no part in the festivities. But, given that the house is back to normal, she would most likely not believe them and thereby think they are lying to her, something she greatly frowns upon, something that would get them into deep trouble. The mother asks them and then steps into the next room before receiving an answer giving the brother, the sister, the Cat in the Hat, Thing One, and Thing Two to debate what they should tell her.

**Case 4 Survivor Gone Wrong**

It is the nineteenth season of *Survivor*, this time it’s *Survivor: Antarctica*. In a tragic turn of events, the director and entire film crew have fallen to their deaths down a crevasse leaving no one alive but the contestants with no way of contacting the outside world. It is getting dark and cold. There are five of them and only one parka which is owned by one of the contestants, a normal guy from Chicago. It cannot be shared and only the person wearing the parka will survive. One of the other contestants is an Olympic biathlete, but is single with no family. Another is a mother of three young children. A third is a research scientist who is working on curing cancer. A fourth is the Pope. Who gets the jacket?

**Case 5 Crime, Yes, but Punishment?**

Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov is poor and starving. His best friend is Marmeladov, a drunk who wasted all of his own family’s money. Alyona Ivanovna is a loan shark and pawn broker who takes advantage of the poor for her own enrichment. She is nasty, heartless, and causes immense suffering among those who are already suffering. Rashkolnikov’s sister is about to get married to someone she does not like, much less love, but is wealthy and would support the family. She and their mother are coming to town with the fiancé. Rashkolnikov realizes that if he kills Ivanova and takes her money, that he could support the family without his sister having to marry and would rid the community of a horrible person who only harms the community. They are all in his apartment when he tells them of his plan.

**Ethics Day 15 Ethics Review**

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| **Content:**  1. Review of Module | **Method:**  1. Discussion |

***Instructor’s Instructions:*** Having gone through a lot of argumentation, theory, and application for three weeks, this is a chance to review and synthesize the material.

**1. Impediments to Ethical Theory**

Ethical questions are sometimes very difficult. To be able to think clearly, rigorously, and rationally can only make our decisions better. But there are two extremes that would keep us from approaching these questions in a way that critically evaluates competing reasons for acting.

One extreme contends that there are no reasons for our moral beliefs. Ethical subjectivism contends that determinations of right and wrong are akin to choosing our favorite flavor of ice cream. It is a mere preference. We each have our own morality and no one can influence anyone else’s.

Ask the students to explain the problems with ethical subjectivism. How does subjectivism differ from ethical egoism? How does ethical egoism differ from psychological egoism?

Related to ethical subjectivism is cultural relativism according to which moral right and wrong are simply a matter of societal approval or disapproval. Each culture has its own morality which need not bear any resemblance at all to that of any other culture.

Ask the students to explain the problems with cultural relativism.

The other extreme contends that there are no competing moral views, that there is a single absolute answer to all problems which derives from the will of God or the gods. Divine Command Theory contends that there are no reasons why something is moral acceptable or not beyond the desire of the Divine.

Ask the students to explain the problems with Divine Command Theory.

**2. Ethical Deliberation**

The terms “right’ and “wrong” are too broad, so we distinguish between the classes of morally necessary, morally permissible, and morally impermissible actions. Ask students to explain what these terms mean.

An ethical system is a definition of basic moral vocabulary, it is designed to allow us to afford a moral status to each action. There are different ethical systems which stress different parts of the ethical situation: (1) who did it?, (2) what was done?, (3) what happened as a result of doing it?, (4) to whom was it done?, and (5) how did it affect the agent's relationships with other people? Ask students to name the system that corresponds to each of these elements.

Virtue ethics focuses upon the effects of the action upon the character of the agent. Ask students what a virtue is, how we determine whether something is a virtue, and how a virtue ethicist determines whether an act is morally permissible, morally necessary, or morally impermissible.

Deontology is ethics based on duty. Ask students what a duty is and how Kant used the Categorical Imperative to derive them. How does a deontologist determine whether an act is morally permissible, morally necessary, or morally impermissible?

Utilitarianism is a form of consequentialism? Ask them for a different consequentialist view (ethical egoism). What is utility? What is hedonism? What is the principle of utility? How does a utilitarian determine whether an act is morally permissible, morally necessary, or morally impermissible?

Rights-based ethics uses a social contract to distribute rights to members of a community which then define the moral boundaries. Ask students what is a right? What is a social contract? What is it for a right to be inalienable? What is it for a right to be inalienable? What rights are alienable and inalienable? How can you acquire a right? How can you give one up? How does a rights-based ethicist determine whether an act is morally permissible, morally necessary, or morally impermissible?

Care ethics bases moral notions on the existence of special sorts of human relationships. These relationships come with special moral obligations. Ask students to explain the difference between care-based relationships and contract-based relationships. How does a care ethicist determine whether an act is morally permissible, morally necessary, or morally impermissible?