**Syllabus**

Name of the course: **Ethics**

Lecturer: Ferenc Huoranszki

Number of credits and number of ECTS credits: 2; ECTS: 4

Semester: 2021, Winter, Wednesday 11:30-12:30 and 13:30-14:30.

Course level: mandatory for first year BA students on the PPE program

Pre-requisites: none

Teaching format: Lectures and seminars

Description: Ethics is the branch of philosophy which inquires how we should live. Most of the times when we act, we pursue some goals and follow certain rules or expectations. Ethics investigates which aims are worth pursuing and which norms ought to be observed when we decide how to act. According to an ancient tradition, the natural aim of human life is happiness. In the first part of the course we shall try to understand what happiness is and in which sense, if any, moral decisions should be guided by considerations about human happiness. In the second part, we shall discuss the problem of moral motives and their relation to self-interest and the interest of others. Another ancient idea is that the fundamental moral virtue is justice: giving everyone what is their due. In the last part of the course, we shall investigate the conflict between desert and rights as well as the problem of how to respond to injustice done by others.

Learning outcomes: Students attending this course are expected to familiarize themselves with the most important concepts and problems of normative ethics. Further, they are expected to learn how to reconstruct and analyze philosophical problems related to moral issues and how to assess the validity and strength of various arguments about them. During their studies, students must also acquire certain communication skills such as the ability to formulate arguments concisely and accessibly and to give short critical comments. Finally, they will learn how problems in ethics are connected to various other issues both in and outside philosophy.  

Topics (week by week):

1. **Introduction: history and overview of the problems** (lecture)
2. **Happiness and duty**
3. Happiness and goodness
4. Happiness and pleasure
5. Justice and utility
6. **Motives and reasons**
7. Egoism
8. Self-interest and moral principles
9. Hard choices
10. Partiality and impartiality
11. **Justice and responsibility**
12. Desert and punishment
13. Moral luck
14. Responsibility and blame
15. **Summary**

Weekly readings:

1. ---
2. Kant, I. *Groundwork for the Metaphysic of Morals*, translated and edited by J. Bennett, 2008, ‘Preface’ and ‘Chapter 1: Moving from common-sense knowledge to philosophical knowledge of morality’, 1-13.
3. Mill, J. S. *Utilitarianism*, ‘Chapter 2: What Utilitarianism Is’, 9-27; and ‘Chapter 4: Of what sort of Proof the Principle of Utility is Susceptible’, 35-41. Kitchener, Batoche Books, 2001.
4. Mill, J. S. *Utilitarianism*, ‘Chapter 5: On the Connection between Justice and Utility’, 41-61. Kitchener, Batoche Books, 2001.
5. Brandt, R. ‘Rationality, Egoism, and Morality’, *The Journal of Philosophy* 69 (1972): 681-697.
6. Parfit, D. ‘Prudence, Morality and the Prisoner’s Dilemma’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*. Vol.65, London, 1979.
7. Thomson, J.J. ‘Killing, letting die, and the trolley problem’, *The Monist* 59 (1976): 204-217.
8. Wolf, S. ‘Morality and Partiality’, *Philosophical Perspectives* 6 (1992): 243-259.
9. Burgh, R. W. ‘Do the Guilty Deserve Punishment?’, *The Journal of Philosophy* 79 (1982): 193-210.
10. Nagel, T. ‘Moral Luck’, in *Mortal Questions*, 24-38. Cambridge University Press, New York, 1979.
11. Watson, G. ‘Responsibility and the Limits of Evil: Variations on a Strawsonian Theme’, in *Agency and Answerability*, 219-259. Oxford University Press, New York, 2004.

Assignments: Class attendance is mandatory. Students are required to read carefully the texts assigned to each consecutive week. Study questions shall be raised during the introductory talk for each session. Possible answers to those questions and arguments supporting them shall be discussed during the seminar. The topics to be discussed are partitioned into three major groups. The discussion of the first and the second part will be followed by a brief (30-minute-long) in-class in-term examination where students must answer concisely 5 questions related to philosophical issues raised in the relevant texts and lectures. After the last week, there will be a longer (one hour long) in-class end-term examination. Students will receive 5 comprehensive questions, each related to different issues that we have discussed during the course. They must choose and answer two out of these five questions. The length of the answers is not predetermined, but ideally, it should be between 600 and 800 words for each chosen question.

Assessment: Students’ performance shall be evaluated on the grounds of their examination results. The first two examinations’ contribution to the final grade shall be 25-25 percent. The contribution of the last examination to the final grade shall be 50 percent. Excellent class participation can contribute up to plus one grade to the final grade (e.g. from B to B+ etc.).

Grading criteria: The purpose of the exams is to testify that students have familiarized themselves with the most important concepts and problems of philosophical ethics. At this early stage, no originality is required (though it is always appreciated). The main expectations for good performance in the exams are familiarity with the technical vocabulary, correct understanding of the issues under consideration and a sufficient level of argumentative rigor.