

# Twentieth-Century Philosophers: David Wiggins

(PY5326)

Semester 2, 2017

Time: Tuesdays, 1-3

Location: Edgecliffe, Room 104

## INSTRUCTOR

Dr. Adam Etinson

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will introduce students to the moral philosophy of David Wiggins, principally through an encounter with his 2008 book, *Ethics: Twelve Lectures on the Philosophy of Morality*. We will be reading that book in its entirety, along with a few other papers by Wiggins, and various primary sources that form the subject of Wiggins' discussions in *Ethics* (including Plato, Aristotle, Hume, Kant, and Mill, among others). This will provide students with an intimate understanding of Wiggins' thought, as well as an opportunity to watch a twentieth-century philosopher in action, as it were – allowing them to compare Wiggins' interpretation of classic works in moral philosophy with their own. The instructor will make an effort to bring in guest philosophers to help us interpret both Wiggins and his primary sources throughout the course.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the module, students should have gained a good critical understanding of the core elements of Wiggins' moral philosophy. Students will be able to analyse and critically evaluate his arguments on a range of approaches in ethics, and will have gained exposure to various other classic authors and texts as well. To these ends, the requirements of the module are: Attendance at all classes; a careful reading of the assigned readings, allowing time to critically reflect on the arguments; preparation for both lectures and seminars; participation in seminar discussions; and completion of all formal assessment.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**Class Participation (Ungraded):** All students will be expected to come to class prepared with a discussion question about the assigned readings for the day. The question can be

critical (i.e., it may raise an objection against an assigned author), interpretive (i.e., it may raise an issue of interpretation in an assigned text), or thematic in nature (e.g., the question may interrogate a broad idea or theme that emerges from the readings). The purpose of this exercise is to allow students to play an active role in lectures, and also to generate engaged classroom discussion. As far as general participation goes, my advice is: don't be shy. If you have something on your mind, we are all interested in hearing it.

**Essay Plan (Ungraded):** Students will be required to submit a plan for their final essay by the **10<sup>th</sup> of April**, on MMS. The essay plan will outline, in less than 1000 words, the general topic and broad argumentative structure of their final essay. Students are encouraged to discuss their essay plans with the instructor both before and after submission of the plan itself.

**Final Essay (100% of final grade):** (Word Limit: 5000 words) As a final written assignment, students will be expected to write a *final paper* that explores a topic drawn from an assigned reading, or set thereof. Final essays are due to be submitted through MMS on **Monday, May 1<sup>st</sup>**. Clear requirements regarding expectations can be found on page 30 of the MLitt student handbook. As a very general rule, research papers will be assessed on the basis of (i) lucidity, (ii) effort, (iii) relevance to the chosen question, (iv) independence of thought, (v) argumentative charity; and (vi) comprehension of the relevant readings.

NOTE: Late submissions, as well as overly long essays, will be subject to severe penalties.

### COURSE MATERIALS

There are four required texts for the course. Please make sure these are purchased well before the start of term. For any other readings not contained in these texts, they will be uploaded onto MMS for digital download.

#### REQUIRED TEXTS:

- (1) David Wiggins, *Ethics: Twelve Lectures on the Philosophy of Morality* (London: Penguin Books, 2006).
- (2) David Hume, *Moral Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2006), ed. Geoff Sayre-McCord.
- (3) Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), Revised Edition, Eds. Mary Gregor & Jens Timmermann.
- (4) John Start Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001) Second Edition, ed. George Sher.

#### RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

- (A) David Wiggins, *Needs, Values, Truth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), Third Edition.
- (B) Plato, *Republic* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992), Second Edition, Trans. G.M.A. Grube, & C.D.C. Reeve.

# SYLLABUS

## WEEK

### 1 PLATO (Jan 24)

- (1) David Wiggins, "Preface" & "Overview" in *Ethics*, pp. vii-9.
- (2) David Wiggins, "Glaucou and Adiemantus' interrogation of Socrates" in *Ethics*, Ch. 1, pp. 9-30.
- (3) Plato, *Republic* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992), Second Edition, Books I-II, pp. 1-60.
- (4) Thucydides, "The Melian Dialogue" in *A History of the Peloponnesian War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921), Tr. Charles Forster Smith, Book V, Chs. 84-116, pp. 155-179. (Available on MMS).

#### Background Reading

- (a) G.M.A Grube "Introduction" in *Republic*, pp. viii-xix.
- (b) Eric Brown, "Plato's Ethics and Politics in *The Republic*" in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2009), Sections 1, 2, & 3. (Available online)

### 2 HUME I (JAN 31)

- (1) David Wiggins, "Hume's genealogy of morals" in *Ethics*, Ch. 2, pp. 30-66.
- (2) David Hume, *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* in *Moral Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2006), ed. Geoff Sayre-McCord [Hereafter: *HMP*], Sections I-V, & Appendixes I-II, pp. 185-232, 268-281.

#### Background Reading

- (a) Geoff Sayre-McCord, "Hume's Moral Philosophy: An Introduction" in *HMP*, pp. x-xxxiv.

### 3 HUME II (FEB 7)

- (1) David Wiggins, "Hume's theory extended" in *Ethics*, Ch. 3, pp. 66-83.
- (2) David Hume, *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* in *HMP*, Sections VI-IX, & Appendixes III-IV, & Dialogue, pp. 232-268, 281-311.
- (3) David Hume, *Treatise on Human Nature*, Book III, Part I, Part II (Sections I-II), , in *HMP*, pp. 67-99.

#### Background Reading

- (a) Rachel Cohon, "Hume's Moral Philosophy" in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2010). (Available Online)

### 4 KANT I (FEB 14)

- (1) David Wiggins, "From Hume to Kant" in *Ethics*, Ch. 4, pp. 83-120.

- (2) Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), Revised Edition, Eds. Mary Gregor & Jens Timmermann [Hereafter: *GMM*], Preface, and Sections I-II, pp. 3-56.

5      **KANT II**      (FEB 21)

- (1) David Wiggins, “the laws of morality as the laws of freedom and the laws of freedom as the laws of morality” in *Ethics*, Ch. 5, pp. 121-138.  
(2) Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), Revised Edition, Eds. Mary Gregor & Jens Timmerman, Section III, pp. 56-73.

Background Reading

- (a) Christine Korsgaard, “Introduction” in *GMM*, pp. ix-xxxvii.

6      **MILL**      (FEB 28)

- (1) David Wiggins, “Classical utilitarianism” in *Ethics*, Ch. 6, pp. 139-170.  
(2) John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001), Second Edition, pp. 1-65.

Recommended Reading

- (a) George Sher, “Editor’s Introduction” in *Utilitarianism*, pp. vii-xv.  
(b) Julia Driver, “The History of Utilitarianism” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2014), Sections 1 & 2. (Available Online)

7      **CONSEQUENTIALISM**      (MARCH 7)

- (1) David Wiggins, “A fresh argument for utilitarianism” & “The consequentialist argument” in *Ethics*, Chs. 7-8, pp. 170-229.  
(2) R.M. Hare, “A Philosophical Autobiography” in *Utilitas* (2002), Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 269-305. (Available on MMS)

Recommended Reading

- (a) Julia Driver, “The History of Utilitarianism” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2014), Sections 3 & 4. (Available Online)

8      **SOLIDARITY**      (MARCH 28)

- (1) David Wiggins, “A first-order ethic of solidarity and reciprocity” in *Ethics*, Ch. 9, pp. 229-269.  
(2) David Wiggins, “Solidarity and the Root of the Ethical” *The Lindley Lecture, University of Kansas* (March 2008), pp. 3-25. (Available on MMS)

- 9      **JUSTICE**      (APRIL 4)
- (1) David Wiggins, "Neo-Aristotelian reflections on justice" in *Ethics*, Ch. 10, pp. 269-317.
  - (2) Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), tr. Roger Crisp, Book V, pp. 81-103 (Available on MMS).
  - (3) Bertrand de Jouvenal, *Sovereignty: An Inquiry into the Political Good* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), Ch. 9 ("Justice"), pp. 139-167. (Available on MMS).
- 10     **METAETHICS I**      (APRIL 11)
- (1) David Wiggins, "Objectivity in ethics" in *Ethics*, Ch. 11, pp. 317-357.
  - (2) Michel de Montaigne, "On the Cannibals" in *Essays* (London: Penguin Books, 1958), Ch. 31, pp. 105-119. (Available on MMS)
- 11     **METAETHICS II**      (APRIL 18)
- (1) David Wiggins, "A Sensible Subjectivism?" in *Needs, Values, Truth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), Third Edition, pp. 185-215.
  - (2) David Wiggins, "Miscellanea Metaethica" & "Concluding Overview" in *Ethics*, pp. 357-385.