

**Moral Subjects and Moral Conditions**  
PHIL 457W/486G/ 605Q  
Spring 2007

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**Texts:**

Books are listed in the order in which we will use them. All books are available at the bookstore and are on (traditional) reserves at the library. After each book listed, I have noted how much of the book has been assigned; this is intended to help you decide which books to buy and which to access on reserves. Selections from books cannot be put on electronic reserves if one is using more than one chapter from a book; thus there was only one case in which I could put a chapter on electronic reserves for this course (as indicated below); the book in which this chapter appears is also on traditional reserves. If you do not buy a book, please print/photocopy the relevant pages so that you can have the reading with you in class.

- John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Harvard University Press, 2001). ISBN#: 0-674-00511-2. [Total of 46 pages assigned].
- Peggy DesAutels and Margaret Urban Walker, eds, *Moral Psychology* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2004). ISBN#: 0-7425-3480-4. [Total of 30 pages assigned].
- Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge University Press, 1996): ISBN#: 0-521-55960-X. [Most of the book assigned].
- Margaret Urban Walker, *Moral Contexts* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2003). ISBN#: 0-7425-1379-3. [Most of the book assigned].
- Michele Moody-Adams, *Fieldwork in Familiar Places: Morality, Culture, and Philosophy*. (Harvard University Press, 1997). ISBN#: 0-674-00794-8. [Total of 88 pages assigned].
- Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Harvard University Press, Reissue edition 1993). ISBN#: 0674445449. [Most of the book assigned].
- Eva Feder Kittay, *Love's Labor: Essays on Women, Equality, and Dependency* (Routledge, 1999). ISBN#: 0-415-90413-7. [Total of 74 pages assigned].
- Tony Morrison, *Beloved*. (Vintage: Reprint Edition 2004). ISBN#: 1400033411. [Whole book assigned].
- Paula Moya and Michael Hames-García, eds, *Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism* (University of California Press, 2000). ISBN#: 0-520-22349-7. [Total of 37 pages assigned; the one chapter that we will read from this book is on electronic reserves].
- Simon Wiesenthal, *The Sunflower* (Schocken; revised and expanded edition, 1998). ISBN#: 0805210601. [Total of 93 pages assigned].
- Claudia Card, *The Atrocity Paradigm: A Theory of Evil* (Oxford University Press, 2002). ISBN#: 0195181263. [Total of 44 pages assigned].

**Course Description:**

Ethical theorists must offer accounts of the subjects (i.e. the people) about whom they are theorizing, as well as of the background conditions for their theory. Many ethical theories are not explicit about whom they assume the moral subject to be, and about what the background conditions may be. We will be looking at what happens when an ethical theory fails to make these assumptions explicit, and we will ask questions such as: What qualities should the moral subjects be assumed to have? What sort of background conditions should be assumed? Should the ethical theorist stipulate some idealized qualities for the moral subjects and background conditions? Or must ethical theory draw on descriptive accounts of actual people and actual life conditions? We will examine a variety of possible moral subjects and moral conditions (idealized and non-idealized, given through stipulation or

through descriptive accounts taken from narrative or from empirical work). We will evaluate and (re)construct ethical theories in light of our reflections about the moral subjects and moral conditions.

### **Course Requirements and Grading for Undergraduates:**

**Class preparation and participation:** You are expected to prepare for, attend and participate thoughtfully in ALL seminar meetings. Please avoid scheduling travel, medical appointments, etc., to conflict with class time. Two or more missed classes without documentation of a medical excuse or other emergency will result automatically in failure of the course. Repeated lateness or early leaving will add up to an absence. No laptops or other electronic distractions in class please.

**Short written assignments:** There are eleven class meetings with assigned readings; please choose any nine out of these eleven for which you will prepare a 250-300 word piece of writing. This piece of writing should consist of one paragraph in which you demonstrate your understanding of the reading by concisely articulating its key points (without quoting any passages), and one paragraph in which you present an original response to the reading. Credit is given only for written assignments that are completed on time and that are within the specified word limits; please send an electronic copy as an attachment (Microsoft Word format only please) via email *before class and* have a hard copy with you in class to refer to during discussion. Short written assignments will receive a  $\sqrt{+}$ ,  $\sqrt{}$ , or  $\sqrt{-}$ .

**Seminar paper:** A 3,000 word seminar paper is due on the first day of exams. The paper will be developed in stages, with a 1,000 word draft due April 10<sup>th</sup> (to be worked with in a writing workshop), and a 2,000 word draft due May 1<sup>st</sup> (to be presented in small groups in class). A full letter grade will be deducted from the final paper grade for each day that any of the drafts are late.

#### **Grading:**

25% class participation.

25% short written assignments.

50% seminar paper.

**Plagiarism:** Don't plagiarize.

### **Course Requirements and Grading for Graduate Students:**

Graduate student grades are based primarily on the seminar paper; however, unsatisfactory work on the short written assignments or an unsatisfactory level of class participation can reduce the final grade.

The written work assigned to graduate students is aimed at helping graduate students write work suitable for conference presentations and/or for eventual publication.

**Short written assignments:** There are eleven class meetings with assigned readings; please choose any seven out of these eleven for which you will prepare a piece of writing. For the first three that you choose to write on, follow the same instructions as the undergraduates, namely turn in a 250-300 word piece of writing that consists of one paragraph in which you demonstrate your understanding of the reading by concisely articulating its key points (without quoting any passages), and one paragraph in which you present an original response to the reading. For the next four written assignments, please prepare a 250-300 word paper *abstract*. An abstract is a short piece of writing in which you concisely describe a longer paper that you have written or propose to write. Many conference call-for-papers request an abstract. Imagine that you are writing an abstract to submit to a conference, and that your abstract describes a paper that you are proposing to write for this conference. The abstract should be related to the week's assigned reading; however, the paper that the abstract proposes should draw on other material as well.

Please send an electronic copy of each written assignment as an attachment (Microsoft Word format only please) via email *before class and* have a hard copy with you in class to refer to during discussion.

**Class presentation / discussion:** Each graduate student will have one one-hour opportunity during the semester to present an original interpretation of the reading and to lead a class discussion. The presentation itself should be between 15-20 minutes, and the rest of the hour taken up with discussion.

**Seminar paper:** You may write one of the papers that you proposed in an abstract, or you may devise a new topic. Please follow the same writing schedule as the undergraduates for the preliminary drafts of this paper; a 1,000 word draft is due April 10<sup>th</sup> (to be worked with in a writing workshop), and a 2,000 word draft is due May 1<sup>st</sup> (to be presented in small groups in class). For the final paper, please write two versions: a 6,000-8,000 word version aimed at publication, and a shortened 3,000 word version intended for conference presentation (i.e. with a 20-minute reading time). Write the longer version first, and then cut it down to the appropriate length for the conference version. I am asking you to do this because I find it is the most typical pattern of writing for professional philosophers who are engaged in presenting their work and publishing. Please turn in the long version by the first day of exams, and the short version by the last day of exams.

## **SCHEDULE:**

Tues., January 23  
Introductions

### **Part I: The idealized moral subject & moral conditions**

Tues., January 30

John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, all of Part I (§1-§11) and §23-§25 from Part III. 46 pages.

Charles Mills, “‘Ideal Theory’ as Ideology” in DesAutels and Walker, eds., *Moral Psychology*. 18 pages.

### **Part II: The universalized moral subject & moral conditions**

Tues., February 6

Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity*, prologue and lectures 1-3 (130 pages).

Tues., February 13

Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity*, lecture 4 (35 pages).

Margaret Urban Walker, “Ineluctable Feelings and Moral Recognition,” chapter 10 of *Moral Contexts*. 23 pages.

### **Part III: Contextualizing ethics**

Tues., February 20

Margaret Urban Walker, “Introduction: The Place of Moral Thinking”; “Seeing Power in Morality: A Proposal for Feminist Naturalism in Ethics”; “Naturalizing, Normativity, and Using What ‘We’ Know in Ethics”; and “Human Conditions”: all in *Moral Contexts*. 54 pages.

Tues., February 27

Michele Moody-Adams, *Fieldwork in Familiar Places*, chapters 1 & 4. 88 pages.

### **Part IV: Drawing on empirical studies of moral subjects and moral conditions**

Tues., March 6

Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, Introduction and chapters 1-3. 105 pages.

Tues., March 13

Eva Feder Kittay, *Love’s Labor*, Introduction and chapters 1 & 2. 74 pages.

Tues., March 20

Peggy DesAutels, “Moral Mindfulness” in DesAutels and Walker, eds., *Moral Psychology*. 12 pages.

[Start reading *Beloved*]

**Part V: Drawing on narrative portrayals of moral subjects and moral conditions**

Tues., March 27

Toni Morrison, *Beloved*. 275 pages.

RECESS (PASSOVER, EASTER)

Tues., April 10

1,000 word paper draft due; writing workshop.

Tues., April 17

Satya Mohanty, “The Epistemic Status of Cultural Identity: On *Beloved* and the Postcolonial Condition” in Moya and Hames-García, eds., *Reclaiming Identity*. 37 pages.

Tues., April 24

Simon Wiesenthal, *The Sunflower*, Book I. 93 pages.

Claudia Card, “The Moral Power of Victims” and “The Moral Burdens and Obligations of Perpetrators,” chapters 8 & 9 of *The Atrocity Paradigm*. 44 pages.

Tues., May 1

2,000 word paper draft due; student presentations.

Tues., May 8

Student presentations.