

# PHL C06: The Good

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Lectures: Tuesdays, 6:00–9:00 pm  
AA 204

## Description

According to one taxonomy, ethical theories are made up of two parts: the good, which tells us which intrinsic factors exist; and the right, which tells us what to do with those intrinsic factors. An ethical theory requires both in order to be complete. This course will look at contemporary arguments for and against various accounts of the good. Although we will occasionally discuss how these arguments affect historical theories, we will be primarily concerned with contemporary ethics. The goods we will consider are well-being, equality, desert (getting what we deserve), fairness, knowledge, achievement, and autonomy.

## Grading

The first paper must be no longer than 1,500 words. The second paper must be no longer than 3,000 words. Please use standard formatting: 1 inch (2.54 cm) margins with 12-point, Times New Roman (or another suitable serif) font. Late papers will be penalized one letter point per day (e.g., a paper submitted one day late will go from a B to a B–). You may write your first paper on anything we have covered by that point in the course. For your second paper, you may write on any topic we have covered in the course, so long as you didn't write your first paper on the same topic. I will post sample essay topics, but you are encouraged to write on whatever you find most interesting. Papers will be submitted on Blackboard, and must be prepared for blind grading, which means that you must not include your name in the file name or the file itself.

The final exam will consist of short-answer questions. Participation means *participating*. Attending class is a necessary condition for getting a good participation grade, but it

isn't sufficient. You must also have done the readings and contribute to the class discussion.

Paper 1 (Due June 14th)	20%
Paper 2 (Due July 22nd)	40%
Final Exam	30%
Participation	10%

## Academic Conduct

Plagiarism is a serious academic offence which many students commit unintentionally. It is your responsibility to know what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it. In particular, for this course, you are required to give a citation whenever you discuss someone else's work. This is true regardless of whether you directly quote the author or, alternatively, summarize the author's ideas in your own words. This course, and philosophy in general, has no agreed-upon style guide. You can use whichever method you prefer, so long as I can find the relevant passage. Most importantly, *you must provide page numbers*. Here are two examples:

**Direct quotation:** In the introduction of *Reasons and Persons*, Derek Parfit says "Like my cat, I often simply do what I want to do" (p. ix).

**Summarization:** In the introduction of *Reasons and Persons*, Derek Parfit describes how he often behaves like his cat by acting in whatever way he wants to (p. ix).

If you are unsure how to properly cite something, consult one of the following sources: [The Writing Centre website](#); the Writing Centre itself; or me, the instructor. For more information on academic integrity, please consult the [university's webpage](#).

## Contacting the Instructor

I will do my best to respond to emails within 24 hours. If you email me, please include the course code in the subject or body of the message. If you are unable to attend my office hour (right before class) we can arrange a time to talk via Skype, Google Hangouts, or some other medium.

## Reading Schedule

There is no assigned textbook or reading pack for this course. All of the readings are either available for free online or will be made available on Blackboard.

### **May 3: Introduction**

- G.E. Moore, “The Conception of Intrinsic Value.”
- W.D. Ross, “What Things Are Good?” from *The Right and the Good*.

### **May 10: Hedonism**

- Derek Parfit, *Reasons & Persons*, Appendix I.
- Fred Feldman, excerpt from *Pleasure and the Good Life*.
- Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, pp. 43–44.

### **May 17: The Desire Theory**

- Chris Heathwood, “Faring Well and Getting What You Want,” in *The Ethical Life*.

### **May 24: Perfectionism**

- John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, Chapters 3–4.
- Thomas Hurka, *Perfectionism*, Chapter 2.

### **May 31: Equality**

- Thomas Nagel, “Equality,” in *Mortal Questions*.
- Larry Temkin, “Inequality,” *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 15 (1986): 99–121.

### **June 7: Equality**

- Derek Parfit, “Equality or Priority?”
- Kurt Vonnegut, “Harrison Bergeron”

### **June 14: Reading Week! No Lecture, But Your First Paper is Due**

### **June 21: Desert**

- James Rachels, “Punishment and Desert,” in *Ethics in Practice*, Hugh LaFollette (ed.).

### **June 28: Desert, A Second Helping**

- Shelly Kagan, “Equality or Desert?” in *What Do We Deserve?*, Louis Pojman & Owen McLeod (eds.).
- Louis Pojman, “Does Equality Trump Desert?” in *What Do We Deserve?*, Louis Pojman & Owen McLeod (eds.).

### **July 5: Autonomy**

- John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapter 3.
- Thomas Hill, “The Importance of Autonomy,” in *Autonomy and Self Respect*.

### **July 12: Autonomy**

- Stephen Darwall, “The Value of Autonomy and Autonomy of the Will,” *Ethics* 116 (January 2006): 263–284.

### **July 19: Knowledge & Achievement (Final Paper Due July 22nd)**

- Gwen Bradford, *Achievement*, Chapter 4.
- Jonathan Kvanvig, *The Value of Knowledge and the Pursuit of Understanding*, pp. 143–156.

### **July 26: Fairness**