Office Hours: Thursdays after class 4:30 – 6pm in Collins. I may try to have some lunchtime appts as well. Some Wednesdays I will often be at RH for meetings. TF I will be at Lincoln Center.

Précis of the Seminar:
This course is a graduate-level introduction to the leading contemporary theories in normative ethics – utilitarianism, neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics, and Kantian deontological theories – including case studies that clarify their possible implications. We will also pay some attention to recent “meta-normative” theories about the basis of moral obligations. For example, some accounts ground ethical norms in the nature of personal agency (constitutivism), whereas some focus on social practices (contract and constructivist theories), or second-person relations. A central goal of the course is to give students a broad sense of the landscape of moral theory today and how the main normative positions connect with issues in related areas of ethics, such as value theory (realism, expressivism) and the relation between norms and motivation (internalism, externalism). But our focus will be on the shape and foundation of the different systems of moral norms, rather than on metaethical problems that lie in the background of these theories (such as the nature of our motives, or the kind of freedom necessary for responsibility). Thus the course provides a basis for further work in ethics. We will not focus in detail on the historical development of twentieth-century moral philosophy, which is the subject of a 6000-level course. Similarly, Natural Law ethics and topics in contemporary continental ethics (e.g. Levinas and Habermas) are foci of other graduate seminars.

This course does not assume much background other than a passing familiarity with the history of modern philosophy. We will briefly review the central tenets of Kant’s and Mill’s work as an introduction to our themes, and then concentrate on key primary readings in contemporary normative ethical theory, with the help of some secondary articles that help explain these works and place them in context. As a 5000-level seminar, this course is designed to serve students of widely varying levels of prior preparation. Students with less preparation need only concentrate on gaining a solid understanding of the different theoretical approaches, while students with more background will be able to take on more advanced questions in the final paper with my guidance.

The course has six main units:
1. An overview of contemporary normative ethics and related areas of moral philosophy, including questions about the meaning of “moral obligation.”
2. The problems of moral relativism and psychological egoism.
3. Utilitarianism and its problems
4. Deontological Ethics, including Neo-Kantian Constitutivism
5. Virtue Ethics and Character
6. Two Applications: criminal justice and euthanasia.
Texts:
All other courses readings on Eres and Blackboard.

Assignments:
12% Class participation: includes attendance and active listening, and being prepared and able to ask informed questions. I do not expect you to understand the readings before discussion.
20% 1 short essay in Feb. with a choice between particular questions on the readings.
20% 1 take-home test due in early April with multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions on the readings.
20% 1 oral report on a given reading for the day (with 3-page written summary and questions).
A few students may choose a second short paper topic instead of oral report if necessary.
28% 1 final paper (roughly 10-12 pages) on a topic of the student's choice, directly related to our readings but possibly bringing in other sources. (Depending on the student's level of preparation, this can be a critical review of two or more course readings, or an essay focusing on euthanasia or criminal justice or other applications).

Tentative Schedule

1/20: *Introduction: The Meaning of Moral Obligation*
1. Mark Timmons ch.1: the structure and function of moral theories.
2. Handouts on the different topics within philosophical ethics and related subjects.

1/27: *Normative Theory and the challenge of Relativism*
1. Robert Audi, *Moral Value and Human Diversity*, ch.1 on Major Ethical Views
2. Timmons ch.3: critiques of Moral Relativism

2/3: *Moral Egoism and Psychological Egoism*
1. Responses to Moral Relativism continued.
2. Joel Feinberg, "Psychological Egoism" (on eres)
4. Moral wrongness and individual/collective self-defeat (discussion)

2/10: *Utilitarianism*
2. Handout on forms of utilitarianism (test cases).
3. Singer-style direct utilitarian arguments for redistribution (handout).
4. Timmons chs.5-6 on utilitarianism.
5. Recommended (not required): Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" (eres).

2/17: *Critiques of utilitarianism*
1. Timmons ch.6 continued.
2. *First paper due*
2/24: **Deontological Theories (Kantian, Rossian) and the importance of individuals**
1. Robert Audi, *The Good and the Right*, ch.2 on Rossian Intuitionism (eres)
2. Distinctive features of deontological accounts of the Right as ‘prior’ to the Good (discussion)
3. Timmons ch.7 on Kant’s moral theory.
4. Historical background on Kant

3/3: **Applications: Criminal Justice -- Utilitarian and Deontological Approaches**

3/10: **Deontology and Social Contract theory**
1. Prisoner's Dilemma (again) and the idea of public goods (handout).
2. Hobbesian egoistic contract theory; Locke and implicit commitments to liberty (selections).
3. Enlightenment arguments against slavery and monarchy (handout).
5. Recommended: Kevin Davis, "Kant's Principle of Publicity in *Perpetual Peace*," also in the Kant-Congress volume [these two articles are adjacent in the volume, with Davis's first]

3/17: Spring break (enjoy!). Also St. Patrick’s Day (enjoy!).

3/24: **Neo-Kantian Constitutivism: the Moral Law as an Implicit Commitment of Agency**
1. Korsgaard's “The Authority of Reflection” in *The Sources of Normativity*, Lecture.3 (eres)
2. Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution*, ch.2 (eres)

3/31: **Applications: Euthanasia**
1. Natural Law Theories: Timmons ch.4
2. Appellate Court decision by Judge Noonan and Handouts (eres)
3. James Rachels, “Active and Passive Euthanasia” (eres)

4/7: **Neo-Aristotelian Virtue Ethics**
1. Timmons ch.9 on Virtue Ethics

4/14: **Virtue and Character**
1. MacIntyre continued.
3. Take-home test due.


4/28: **The Second Person Relation**

5/5: Overflow
1. Final Paper due