

PHIL 132: ETHICAL THEORY

FALL 2020

W 3:00-5:45
Sweeny Hall 241
Prof. Brown

In this class we will raise classical questions in moral theory such as:

What is the foundation of morality? Should morality be based on religion or can it be secularly derived? If morality is indeed secularly derived, is it relative or universal?

What motivates people to action: reason, sentiments, one's character or moral emotions?

Why should one be moral, especially if doing the right thing is contrary to one's self-interest? Are we selfish by nature?

How do we determine what is right or wrong?

We will consider these questions through reading major ethical theories, such as virtue ethics, Kantianism, utilitarianism, contractarianism, meta-ethics, feminist ethics, Buddhist ethics, and a few seminal articles in applied ethics. We will be studying ethical theories in historical order while being mindful of the development of ideas through different periods of time and in different schools of thought.