

Philosophy 275z Practical Reason
Spring 2007

Instructors:

Chris Korsgaard
205 Emerson Hall
617-495-3916
Christine_Korsgaard@Harvard.edu
Office Hours: Thursdays 2:00-4:00

Course Assistant:

Kritika Yegnashankaran
yegnash@fas.harvard.edu

Melissa Barry
212 Emerson Hall
Melissa.J.Barry@williams.edu

Description:

A study of some important recent work on the theory of practical reason by David Velleman, John Broome, Michael Smith, Jay Wallace, and Joseph Raz, all of whom will visit the seminar.

Course Admissions Policies:

Participation in this course is by permission of the instructors. The course is not open to undergraduates, either as enrolled students or auditors. Permission to enroll will be extended to philosophy graduate students; in other cases our decision will depend on the size of the course and the student's background in philosophy. Graduate students who wish to audit the course must commit to attending regularly, participating in discussions, and asking questions of the visitors.

Readings from:

- David Velleman, Introduction to the new edition of *Practical Reflection*, Center for the Study of Language and Information: 2007.
- David Velleman, *The Possibility of Practical Reason*, Oxford, 2000.
- David Velleman, *How We Get Along*. The Shearman Lectures, 2007.
- Jay Wallace, *Normativity and the Will*. Oxford, 2006.
- Jay Wallace, "Resentment, Deliberation, and the Scope of Morality." (ms.)
- Michael Smith, "In Defence of *The Moral Problem*: A Reply to Brink, Copp and Sayre-McCord" in *Ethics*, Symposium on Michael Smith's *The Moral Problem*, 108, 1997, pp.84-119.
- Michael Smith, "Metaethics" in *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Philosophy*, edited by Frank Jackson and Michael Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) pp.3-30.
- John Broome, *Reasoning*: a new manuscript.
- Joseph Raz, "The Myth of Instrumental Rationality" and "Instrumental Rationality: A Reprise" both in *The Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* Volume 1, No. 1 April 2005.

Joseph Raz, new manuscript material on "Reasons and Rationality."

Christine M. Korsgaard, "The Normativity of Instrumental Reason" in Cullity and Gaut, *Ethics and Practical Reason*. Oxford, 1997.

Christine M. Korsgaard, "The Myth of Egoism." The Lindley Lecture 1999. Department of Philosophy, The University of Kansas, 2000.

Christine M. Korsgaard, "Acting for a Reason." Forthcoming in *Studies in Practical Reason*, edited by V. Bradley Lewis, the Catholic University Press and in Korsgaard, *The Constitution of Agency: Essays on Practical Reason and Moral Psychology*; Also appearing in the *Danish Yearbook of Philosophy*, Volume 40 (2005), 11-36. Edited by Finn Colin. Museum Tusulanum Press, 2005.

We have not ordered the books at the bookstore. Readings will be posted on or available through the course website and on reserve in Robbins Library. If you are auditing the course and wish to access the readings through the web site, you must supply us with your Harvard e-mail address or ID so that we can add you to the class list. If you are auditing and are not a Harvard student, you can get an "XID" for this purpose. Please contact Kritika Yegnashankaran to be added to the class list.

Written Assignments:

i) *Questions for the speakers*. All students, both auditors and enrolled students, are required to post questions for the speakers to the "Questions for Visiting Speakers" section of the course website, no later than 9:00 p.m. on the Wednesday before the speaker's visit. (Please note this is earlier than the time set for questions last term.)

ii) *Weekly 2-3 page papers*. Every enrolled student is required to hand in 2-3 double-spaced pages of writing (*absolutely no more*) each week. These short papers will be due by 5:00 each Wednesday, and must deal with the readings for the forthcoming Friday. You should hand turn them in by sending them to both me and Melissa as e-mail attachments; please be sure that your name is on both the paper itself and on the file. Apart from that requirement, the topic is entirely up to you: you may summarize the material, give a reading of a difficult passage, criticize one of the arguments, or defend the author against a possible criticism - anything as long as it concerns the reading for the week in question. These papers will not be graded, but you must turn all of them in order to pass the course.

iii) *Seminar Paper*. A seminar paper of 15-20 pages is due on Friday, May 18, by 5:00 p.m.

Students seeking an extension on any of the papers should ask the instructors before the date on which the paper is due.

Schedule

February 2: Introductory Meeting

Please read:

Korsgaard, "The Normativity of Instrumental Reason"

Korsgaard, "The Myth of Egoism"

Korsgaard, "Acting for a Reason"

in preparation for the seminar generally.

February 9: David Velleman

Introduction to the new edition of *Practical Reflection*

"The Story of Rational Action" (Chapter 7 in *The Possibility of Practical Reason*)

Also Recommended: "Deciding How to Decide" (Chapter 10 in *The Possibility of Practical Reason*)

For Further Reading:

"The Centered Self" (Chapter 11 in *Self to Self*, Cambridge, 2006)

"How to Share an Intention" (Chapter 9 in *The Possibility of Practical Reason*)

February 16: David Velleman Visit

How We Get Along

February 23: Jay Wallace

"Normativity, Commitment, and Instrumental Reason," Chapter 5 in *Normativity and the Will*

"Addiction as a Defect of the Will," Chapter 8 in *Normativity and the Will*

March 2: Jay Wallace Visit

New manuscript material: "Resentment, Deliberation, and the Scope of Morality"

March 9: Michael Smith

"In Defence of The Moral Problem: A Reply to Brink, Copp and Sayre-McCord"

"Metaethics"

March 16: Michael Smith Visit

The same continued

March 23: John Broome

Selections from his new manuscript *Reasoning*:

"Reasons"

"Rationality and Normativity"

March 30: Spring Recess

April 6: No Meeting

April 13: John Broome Visit

Selections from his new manuscript *Reasoning*:

“Responding to Reasons”

(Please note: there is a chapter with this title in the long manuscript “Reasoning.” That is an older version of the chapter. We will be receiving a newer version before Broome’s visit.)

Also Recommended:

Section 2.4, which I have put in a separate file called “Intro to Requirements” on the web site.

The first few pages of the chapter on “Theoretical Reasons,” which I have put on a separate file with the name on the web site.

“Requirements of Rationality”

For those interested in technical matters only: “Requirements”

Those two chapters are also posted separately on the web site.

April 20: Joseph Raz

“The Myth of Instrumental Rationality”

“Instrumental Rationality: A Reprise”

Note: the second of those papers is a response to commentary by John Broome, Jay Wallace, Mark Schroder and David Sobel. We have put those commentaries up on the web.

“Explaining Normativity: Reason and the Will” Chapter 5 of *Engaging Reason*

April 27: Joseph Raz Visit

From his new manuscript “Reasons and Rationality,” the third section, on “Reason and Reasons,” pp. 49-85.

May 4: Final Meeting

Final Paper due Friday May 18