

Moral responsibility

Advanced research seminar + essay writing class

LMU Munich, Department of Philosophy

Summer term 2015, Mondays 14-16 in M210, starting on Apr 20

Instructor: Dr Jan-Christoph Heilinger
Office hours: Tue 13-15 in M212

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Course description

Responsibility is a core concept in moral philosophy. When we act or fail to act in a morally significant way, a certain kind of moral *response* to our act or omission – such as e.g. praise or blame – seems often appropriate.

In this seminar we will enquire into the idea of moral responsibility, we will learn about the structure and conditions of moral responsibility, about its relation to other concepts such as duty and obligation, we will distinguish different sorts of moral responsibility (such as individual, collective and shared responsibility; as well as causal and remedial responsibility) and contrast moral responsibility with other forms of responsibility (such as legal or role responsibility).

During the course of the seminar, the theoretical considerations about the concept will be confronted with practical challenges such as the topical problem of individual moral responsibility for global warming and climate change.

We will be reading texts by Derek Parfit, H.L.A. Hart, Iris Young, Henry Shue, Shelley Kagan, Simon Caney, Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, and others.

Course requirements

Students may either write four short essays (ca. 2.200 words each) during the term or a “Hausarbeit” (ca. 7.500 words) during the term break. Students are expected to participate actively in class and to give a brief presentation of one of the readings.

Schedule

Apr 20 Introduction (Reading recommendation: Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, Entry on *Moral Responsibility*)

+ *The Concept of Responsibility* +

Apr 27 David Miller: *Two Concepts of Responsibility*

May 4 David Miller: *National Responsibility*

May 11 H.L.A. Hart: *Responsibility and Retribution*

May 18 Matthew Braham/Martin van Hees: *An Anatomy of Moral Responsibility*

May 25 – no class, Pentecost –

+ *Global Warming and Individual Moral Responsibility* +

Jun 1 James Dwyer: *On Flying to Ethics Conferences. Climate Change and Moral Responsiveness*

Jun 8 Walter Sinnott-Armstrong: *It's Not My Fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations*

Jun 15 Derek Parfit: *Five Mistakes in Moral Mathematics* (from *Reasons and Persons*)

Jun 22 Shelley Kagan: *Do I Make A Difference?*

Jun 29 Henry Shue: *Subsistence emissions and luxury emissions*

Jul 6 Simon Caney: *Cosmopolitan Justice, Responsibility, and Global Climate Change*

+ *Responsibility for Global Justice* +

Jul 13 Barry, Christian/Gerhard Øverland: *The Feasibility Alternatives Thesis: Kicking Away the Livelihoods of the Global Poor*, and: Iris M. Young: *Responsibility for Justice*

Bibliography

- Barry, C. and G. Overland (2012). "The Feasibility Alternatives Thesis: Kicking Away the Livelihoods of the Global Poor." Politics, Philosophy & Economics 11(1): 97–119.
- Braham, M. and M. van Hees (2012). "An Anatomy of Moral Responsibility." Mind 121: 601-634.
- Caney, S. (2005). "Cosmopolitan justice, responsibility and global climate change." Leiden Journal of International Law 18: 747–775.
- Dwyer, J. (2013). "On flying to ethics conferences: Climate change and moral responsiveness." International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics 6(1): 1-18.
- Hart, H. L. A. (2008). Punishment and Responsibility. Essays in the Philosophy of Law. New York, Oxford University Press.
- Kagan, S. (2011). "Do I make a difference." Philosophy and Public Affairs 39(2): 105–141.
- Miller, D. (2007). National Responsibility and Global Justice. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Parfit, D. (1984). Reasons and Persons. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Shue, H. (1993). "Subsistence Emissions and Luxury Emission." Law & Policy 15(1): 39–59.
- Sinnott-Armstrong, W. (2010). It's Not My Fault. Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations. Climate Ethics. Essential Readings. S. M. Gardiner, S. Caney, D. Jamieson and H. Shue. Oxford, Oxford University Press: 332–346.
- Young, I. M. (2011). Responsibility for Justice. Oxford/New York, Oxford University Press.

Assessment criteria for written assignments

Standardly, written assignments will be graded according to the following criteria.

1. Structure and organisation

Is the assignment well organised?

Does it have a clear introductory paragraph, thesis statement, and concluding paragraph?

Are there clear transitions between paragraphs and sections of the assignment?

2. Exposition and interpretation

Do you give a clear and charitable interpretation of the view(s) under consideration?

Do you make clear the underlying assumptions of the view(s) as well as their implications?

Do you support your interpretations with relevant citations from the text?

3. Argument and critical evaluation

Do you provide good arguments for the claims you make? Is it obvious what they are?

When critiquing a view, do you consider possible responses to that critique?

Do you show that you have thought independently about the problem in question?

4. Writing style

Is your prose style clear and easy to understand?

Are there any recurring grammatical or spelling errors?

Do you avoid awkward and confusing sentence structures?