**PHIL 727: Ethics 2**

**Course Handout – Semester One 2019**

**Course Description:**

A prominent topic in recent moral theory is what present people owe to future people – those who will (or might) exist in the future. Debate centres on a set of theoretical puzzles posed in Part Four of Derek Parfit’s *Reasons and Persons.* Can you wrong someone if your actions are also responsible for their existence? What is the ideal population size? Can we imagine a contract with distant future people? How should we balance the interests of present and future people? Does it matter whether there are any future people at all? What moral weight should we attach to risks of imminent human extinction?

**Preliminary Reading:**

The best introduction to the issues and methods covered in the course is to look at Parfit's Reasons and Persons, Part Four, which is available as an e-book through the University of Auckland library. (It is also available in hardback, paperback, and kindle editions.)

**Readings.**

Most readings are available electronically through the University of Auckland library. If you have any difficulty accessing the material, please contact the lecturer.

A bibliography of works by Parfit, with electronic links to many items, can be found online at: <http://www.stafforini.com/blog/derek-parfit-a-bibliography/>

**General Information.**

Lecture Times: Thursday 9am – 11am.

Lecturer and Course Coordinator: Professor Tim Mulgan

Office hours: Tuesday 3pm – 5pm.

Office Location: Room 409, Arts 1, Level 4.

Email: [t.mulgan@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:t.mulgan@auckland.ac.nz)

Assessment: TWO Essays, maximum of 3,000 words each. (This includes all text, footnotes, headings, and bibliography.) There is no final examination.

If you are unable to meet the essay deadlines, please apply to the course coordinator for an extension. Essays submitted after the deadline without an extension will incur penalties as follows. If your essay is up to one week late, it will lose 5%. If your essay is between one and two weeks late, it will lose 10%. Essays submitted more than two weeks late without an extension will not be marked.

The first essay is due on Friday 3rd May 2019 at midnight.

The second essay is due on Friday 14th June 2019 at midnight.

Essays should be submitted electronically via Canvas.

**Essay Topics:** The course is divided into FOUR parts. You must choose topics from TWO different parts (i.e., you cannot write both essays on the same part of the course).

**Part One: Answer ONE of the following questions:**

1. What is the best solution to Parfit’s Non-Identity Problem?
2. Can we benefit or harm in creating?
3. Critically evaluate Kumar’s contractualist solution to Parfit’s Non-Identity Problem.
4. Does Roberts provide a convincing account of Can’t Expect Better non-identity problems?

**Part Two: Answer ONE of the following questions:**

1. What is the best response to Parfit’s Repugnant Conclusion?
2. What is the best solution to Parfit’s Mere Addition Paradox?
3. Critically evaluate Temkin’s claim that spatial distribution and temporal distribution are morally different.

**Part Three: Answer ONE of the following questions:**

1. What is the best account of the procreative asymmetry?
2. Critically evaluate Weinberg’s contractualist response to the procreative asymmetry.
3. Critically evaluate Chappell’s consequentialist response to the procreative asymmetry.

**Part Four: Answer ONE of the following questions:**

1. Would human extinction be a bad thing? If so, why?
2. Critically evaluate Scheffler’s account of the importance of future generations.
3. Does utilitarianism collapse into incoherence in the face of the distant future?

**Lecture Topics and Essential Readings**:

**Part One: Parfit’s Non-Identity Problem [Weeks One to Four].**

* **Week ONE [7th March 2019]: Introducing the Non-Identity Problem:** Parfit, D., 1984, *Reasons and Persons*, Oxford University Press, chapter 16: The Non-identity Problem. [e-book available through UoA library]
* **Week TWO [14th March 2019]: Is it Possible to Harm Future People?** Harman, E., 2009, ‘Harming as Causing Harm’, in Roberts, M., and Wasserman, D. (eds.), *Harming Future Persons: ethics, genetics and the nonidentity problem*, Springer, chapter 7, pp. 137-154. [e-book available through UoA library]
* **Week THREE [21st March 2019]: Contractualist Solutions to the Non-Identity Problem:** Kumar, R., 2009, ‘Wronging future people: a contractualist proposal’, in Gosseries, A., and Meyer, L., (eds.) *Intergenerational Justice*, chapter 9, pp. 251-272. [e-book available through UoA library]
* **Week FOUR [28th March 2019]: Three Kinds of Non-Identity Problem:** Roberts, M. A., 2007, ‘The Non-Identity Fallacy: Harm, Probability and Another Look at Parfit's Depletion Example’, *Utilitas* 19, 267-311. [Full text available through UoA library]

**Part Two: Parfit’s Repugnant Conclusion.**

* **Week FIVE [4th April 2019]: Introducing the Repugnant Conclusion:** Parfit, D., 1984, *Reasons and Persons*, chapter 17: The Repugnant Conclusion. [e-book available through UoA library]
* **Week SIX [11th April 2019]: Parfit’s Mere Addition Paradox:** Parfit, D., 1984, *Reasons and Persons*, chapter 19: The Mere Addition Paradox. [e-book available through UoA library]
* **Week SEVEN [2nd May 2019]: Does it Matter How Long Humanity Lasts?** Temkin, L. S., 2015, ‘Rationality with respect to people, places, and times’, *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 45, 576-608. [Full text available through UoA library]

**Part Three: Procreative Asymmetries.**

* **Week EIGHT [9th May 2019]:** **Introducing the Procreative Asymmetry:** Roberts, M. A., 2011, ‘The Asymmetry: A Solution’, *Theoria* 77, 333-367. [Full text available through UoA library]
* **Week NINE [16th May 2019]:** **Consequentialist Solutions to the Procreative Asymmetry:** Chappell, R., 2017, ‘Rethinking the Asymmetry’, *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 47, 167-177. [Full text available through UoA library]
* **Week TEN [23rd May 2019]:** **Contractualist Solutions to the Procreative Asymmetry:** Weinberg, R., 2015, *The Risk of a Lifetime: How, When, and Why Procreation May Be Permissible*, Oxford University Press, Chapter 5, ‘The Principles of Procreative Permissibility’, pp. 153-199. [e-book available through UoA library]

**Part Four: Human Extinction.**

* **Week ELEVEN [30th May 2019]: Do Present People Need Future People?** Scheffler, S., 2018, *Why Worry about Future Generations?* Oxford University Press, Chapter 1: ‘Temporal Parochialism and Its Discontents’, pp. 1-39. [e-book available through UoA library]
* **Week TWELVE [6th June 2019]: How Should Utilitarians Think About Human Extinction?** Beckstead, N., 2013, *On the overwhelming importance of shaping the far future*, Rutgers PhD thesis, introduction. Available on his website: <http://www.nickbeckstead.com/research>

**Recommended Reading on the Non-Identity Problem.**

* Boonin, D., 2014, *The Non-Identity Problem and the Ethics of Future People*, Oxford University Press.
* Dasgupta, S., 2018, ‘Essentialism and the Nonidentity Problem’, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 96, 540-570.
* Kavka, G., 1982, ‘The Paradox of Future Individuals’, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 11, 93-112.
* Parfit, D., 1986, ‘Overpopulation and the Quality of Life’, in P. Singer, ed., *Applied Ethics*, Oxford University Press, 145-164.
* Parfit, D., 2017, ‘Future People, the Non-Identity Problem, and Person-Affecting Principles’, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 45, 118-157.
* Roberts, M., ‘The Nonidentity Problem’, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.
* Weinberg, R., 2008, ‘Identifying and Dissolving the Non-Identity Problem, *Philosophical Studies* 137, 3-18.
* Woollard, F., 2012, ‘Have we solved the non-identity problem?’, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 15, 677-690.

**Recommended Reading on Harming and Benefitting.**

* Hanser, M., 1990, ‘Harming Future People’, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 19, 47-70.
* Harman, E., 2004, ‘Can we harm and benefit in creating?’, *Philosophical Perspectives* 18, 89-113.
* Holtug, N., 2010, *Persons, Interests, and Justice*, Oxford University Press.
* Parfit, D., 1984, *Reasons and Persons*, Oxford University Press, Appendix G: Whether causing someone to exist can benefit this person.
* Shiffrin, S. V., 1999, ‘Wrongful life, procreative responsibility, and the significance of harm’, *Legal Theory* 5, 117-148.

**Recommended Reading on Roberts on Non-Identity.**

* Greene, M., 2016, ‘Roberts on Depletion: How much better can we do for future people?’, *Utilitas* 28, 108-118.
* Roberts, M. A., *Modal Ethics*, 2017, draft manuscript. Available on her website: <https://robertsm.pages.tcnj.edu/>
* Roberts, M., 2002, ‘A new way of doing the best we can: Person-based Consequentialism and the Equality Problem’, *Ethics* 112, 315-350.
* Roberts, M. A., 2003, ‘Can It Ever Be Better Never to Have Existed at All? Person-Based Consequentialism and a New Repugnant Conclusion’, [*Journal of Applied Philosophy*](javascript:__doLinkPostBack('','ss%7E%7EJN%20%22Journal%20of%20Applied%20Philosophy%22%7C%7Csl%7E%7Erl','');) 20, 159-185.

**Recommended Reading on Kumar’s Scanlonian Contractualism.**

* Ashford, E., and Mulgan, T., ‘Contractualism’, *Stanford Encylopedia of Philosophy.*
* Kumar, R., 2000, ‘Defending the moral moderate: Contractualism and Commonsense’, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 28, 275-309.
* Kumar, R., 2003, ‘Who can be wronged?’, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 31, 99-118.
* Parfit, D., 2011, *On What Matters*, Oxford University Press, volume 2, Chapter 22, pp. 213-243.
* Scanlon, T. M., 2011, ‘How I am Not a Kantian’, in Parfit, D., *On What Matters*, Oxford University Press, volume 2, pp. 116-139 [especially 127-139].
* Scanlon, T. M., 1998, *What We Owe to Each Other*, Harvard University Press, especially Chapter 5, pp. 189–247.

**Recommended Reading on the Repugnant Conclusion.**

* Arrhenius, G., 2016, ‘Population Ethics and Different-Number-Based Imprecision’, *Theoria* 82, 166-181.
* Arrhenius, G., Ryberg, J., and Tännsjö, T., ‘The Repugnant Conclusion’, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.
* Chang, R., 2016, ‘Parity, Imprecise Comparability, and the Repugnant Conclusion’, *Theoria* 82, 182-214.
* Greaves, H., 2017, ‘Population Axiology’, *Philosophy Compass* 12, online early.
* Mulgan, T., 2006, *Future People*, Oxford University Press, chapter three.
* Parfit, D., 2016, ‘Can we avoid the repugnant conclusion?’ *Theoria* 82, 110-127.
* Ryberg, J., and Tannsjo, T., 2004, (eds.), *The Repugnant Conclusion. Essays on Population Ethics*, Kluwer Academic Publishers.
* Tannsjo, T., 2002, ‘Why We Ought to Accept the Repugnant Conclusion’, *Utilitas*, 14, 339-359.

**Recommended Reading on the Mere Addition Paradox.**

* Arrhenius, G., 2000, ‘An Impossibility Theorem for Welfarist Axiologies’, *Economics and Philosophy* 16, 247-266.
* Mulgan, T., 2000, ‘Dissolving the Mere Addition Paradox’, *American Philosophical Quarterly* 37, 359-372.
* Parfit, D., 1986, ‘Overpopulation and the Quality of Life’, in P. Singer (ed.), *Applied Ethics*, Oxford University Press, 145-164.
* Qizilbash, M., 2007, ‘The Mere Addition Paradox, Parity and Vagueness’, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 75, 129-151.
* Temkin, L., 1987, ‘Intransitivity and the Mere Addition Paradox’, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 16, 138-187.

**Recommended Reading on Temkin’s Temporal View.**

* Temkin, L., 2012, *Rethinking the Good: Moral Ideals and the Nature of Practical Reasoning*, Oxford University Press.

**Recommended Reading on the Procreative Asymmetry.**

* Benatar, D., 2006, *Better Never to Have Been*, Oxford University Press.
* Bradley, B., 2013, ‘Asymmetries in Benefiting, Harming and Creating’, *Journal of Ethics* 17, 37-49.
* Frick, J., 2014, *Making People Happy, Not Making Happy People*, Harvard Doctoral Dissertation. Available online. Chapter 1, ‘Conditional Reasons and the Procreation Asymmetry’
* Gardner, M., 2016, ‘Beneficence and procreation’, *Philosophical Studies* 173, 321-336.
* Holtug, N., 2001, ‘On the value of coming into existence’, *Journal of Ethics* 5, 361-384.
* Holtug, N., 2010, *Persons, Interests, and Justice*, Oxford University Press.
* McMahan, J., 2013, ‘Causing People to Exist and Saving People’s Lives’, *Journal of Ethics* 17, 5-35.
* Roberts, M. A., 2011, ‘An Asymmetry in the Ethics of Procreation’, *Philosophy Compass* 6, 765-776.
* Roberts, M. A., *Modal Ethics*, 2017, draft manuscript. Available on her website: <https://robertsm.pages.tcnj.edu/>
* Rulli, T., 2016, ‘The Ethics of Procreation and Adoption’, *Philosophy Compass* 11, 305-315.

**Recommended Reading on Weinberg’s Contractualist Procreative Justice.**

* Roberts, M. A., 2017, ‘Review of R. Weinberg *The Risk of a Lifetime*’, *Ethics* January 2017, 512-517
* Weinberg, R., 2002, ‘Procreative Justice: A Contractualist Account’, *Public Affairs Quarterly* 16, 405-425.
* Weinberg, R., 2015, *The Risk of a Lifetime: How, When, and Why Procreation May Be Permissible*, Oxford University Press. Also worth reading: Introduction; Chapter 3, ‘Is Procreation (Almost) Always Right?’; Chapter 4, ‘Is Procreation (Almost) Always Wrong?’.

**Recommended Reading on Chappell and Consequentialism.**

* Holland, A., 2016, ‘The case against the case for procreative beneficence’, *Bioethics* 30, 490-499.
* Mulgan, T., 2017, ‘How should utilitarians think about the future?’, *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 47, 290-312.

**Recommended Reading on Extinction and Existential Risks.**

* Bostrom, N., 2013, ‘Existential Risk Prevention as a Global Priority’, *Global Policy* 4, 15-31.
* Frick, J., 2017, ‘On the survival of humanity’, *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 47, 344-367.
* Parfit, D., 2011, *On What Matters*, Oxford University Press, volume two, part six, chapter thirty-six, pp. 607-620.
* Parfit, D., 1984, *Reasons and Persons*, Oxford University Press, Concluding Chapter.

**Recommended Reading on Scheffler on Future Generations.**

* Johansson, J., 2015, ‘The Importance of a Good Ending: Some Reflections on Samuel Scheffler’s *Death and the Afterlife*’, *Journal of Ethics* 19, 185-195.
* Luper, S., 2017, ‘Review of Sheffler *Death and the Afterlife*’, *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 14, 113-115.
* Scheffler, S., 2013, *Death and the Afterlife*, Oxford University Press. (Includes commentaries from Susan Wolf, Harry Frankfurt, Seana Shiffrin, and Niko Kolodny)
* Scheffler, S., 2018, *Why Worry about Future Generations?* Oxford University Press.
* Srinivasan, A., 2014, ‘After the Meteor strike: Review of Sheffler *Death and the Afterlife*’, *London Review of Books*, 25 September 2014.
* Stroud, S., 2015, ‘Review of Sheffler *Death and the Afterlife*’, *Ethics* January 2015, 605-610.
* Trisel, B. A., 2004, ‘Human extinction and the value of our efforts’, *The Philosophical Forum* 35, 371-391.

**Recommended Reading on Consequentialism and Extinction.**

* Kaczmarek, P., 2017, ‘How much is rule-consequentialism really willing to give up to save the future of humanity?’, *Utilitas* 29, 239-249.
* Mulgan, T., 2018, ‘What is really wrong with human extinction?’, paper delivered to International Society for Utilitarian Studies, July 2018.
* Vallentyne, P., and Kagan, S., 1997, ‘Infinite Value and Finitely Additive Value Theory’, *Journal of Philosophy* 94, 5-26.