Philosophy 302: Ethical Theory

In this course we will read and evaluate (1) historically important ethical theories, (2) mid-twentieth century criticisms of those theories, and (3) contemporary approaches to ethical thinking. After a brief introduction to moral philosophy, we will examine two theories which dominated Western moral philosophy for at least two hundred years – Kantianism and Utilitarianism. We then consider several criticisms of these theories that developed in the mid to late twentieth century. We end by considering two or three new approaches to moral philosophy which attempt to take these criticisms into account.

We will meet in person Monday through Thursday from 11-11:50. Class will be held primarily in a lecture / large-group discussion format with regular small-group discussions. Assignments will include formulating questions and engaging in discussion with other students, short explanatory papers, and a series of essays.