Seminar in Ethics: Respect for Persons
Phil 848R; Spring 2009
Thursday 2:00-4:30; Skinner 1116

From a Kantian, nonconsequentialist perspective, this seminar will inquire into respect for persons as an ethical norm for actions. According to one approach, we respect persons in acting just in case we respect the value inherent in them. According to another approach, respecting persons is best understood not in terms of honoring the value in them, but rather in terms of abiding by more specific moral constraints in our treatment of them. In examining this second approach, we will focus on the constraint against treating others merely as means. The seminar will begin with some readings from Kant, but will concentrate mainly on the views of contemporary philosophers. In short, we will evaluate the plausibility of various Kantian principles of respect for persons. Investigations in applied ethics (e.g., regarding self-interested suicide and regarding how we ought to distribute scarce, life-saving resources) will inform these evaluations.

Course Requirements:

One in-class presentation, two presentation questions, one seminar paper, in addition to regular class participation.

In-class presentation of, or, preferably, based on, 3,000 word paper:
- 30% of course grade
  - Your presentation should stem from one or more of the readings for a particular session of the course.
  - The presentation needs to argue for a philosophical thesis. It cannot simply be a précis of our readings.
  - Please sign up for the date on which you wish to give a presentation.
  - You must get a copy of your paper to those responsible for posing questions and to the instructor by the Tuesday before the session at which you will present it.
  - I would strongly prefer if you did not simply read your paper, but instead talked it through (e.g., based on a handout).

In-class participation in discussion:
- 10% of course grade
  - You must pose a substantive question regarding two different student presentations during the semester.
  - Please sign up for the dates on which you wish to pose the questions.
  - Of course, your participation grade will not depend solely on the quality of these two questions.

Seminar paper: 20-30 pages
- Draft due May 15, 2009. (If you like, I’ll give you a grade on the draft and use it in your final grade calculation.)
- Revised paper (assuming you choose to do a revision) due by August 15, 2009.
- 60% of course grade.
- The topic is, of course, up to you, but it must be within the realm of our concerns in the course. The topic may be, but need not be, the same as that of your in-class presentation. It is strongly suggested that you discuss your paper topic with the instructor at some point during the semester.

**Readings:**

[All are available as PDFs on ELMS site for this course, https://elms.umd.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp]


Harris, John (1987) “QALYfying the Value of Life.” *Journal of Medical Ethics* 13, 117-123.


Kerstein, Samuel (2009b) “Death, Dignity, and Respect.” [manuscript].


Parfit, Derek (2008) *On What Matters* [manuscript].

Schaber, Peter (2009) “Using People Merely as a Means” [manuscript].


**Schedule:**

Note that readings might be added or subtracted in the course of the semester, depending on how the seminar develops. Changes will be indicated via email.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 29</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 5</td>
<td><em>Groundwork</em> on respect for persons</td>
<td>GMS 406-440, but focus on 427-440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hill (1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 12</td>
<td><em>Metaphysics of Morals</em> (Doctrine of Virtue) on respect for persons</td>
<td>MS 379-413 &amp; 417-474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 12</td>
<td>Aggregation</td>
<td>Taurek (1977), Kamm (2007a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 26</td>
<td>Respect for Persons and Resource Allocation</td>
<td>Harris (1987), Kerstein/Bognar (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2</td>
<td>Nonconsequentialism</td>
<td>Kamm (2007b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 16</td>
<td>Against Doctrine of Double Effect, On Intent</td>
<td>Scanlon (2008), chapters 1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 23</td>
<td>Means and Ends</td>
<td>Scanlon (2008), chapter 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 30</td>
<td>Possible Consent</td>
<td>Parfit (2008), chapter 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 7</td>
<td>Merely as a Means; Respect and Value</td>
<td>Parfit (2008), chapters 9-10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>