



ISS9MP: ISSUES IN MORAL PHILOSOPHY

US CREDITS: 3

Many of our moral beliefs are acquired and held quite unthinkingly; they are products of our upbringing and socialization, rather than of our own reflection on the right and the good. But sometimes we are forced, by the circumstances that we face, to think critically about our moral beliefs, and to reflect on what we ought to believe: we might have to ask, for instance, whether it is really right to use animals for food; or whether our state was justified in embarking on a particular war (which raises the question of if, and if so how, war could ever be justified); or what kind of care we ought to take of the natural environment. Even if such questions are not forced upon us by circumstances, we should engage in some kind of critical reflection on our moral beliefs: if we are to be responsible and rational beings, we must think for ourselves about moral matters (as about other matters), rather than simply being led by conventional opinions or ruling orthodoxies.

In this module we will engage in critical, philosophical reflection on morality, by examining a number of difficult moral issues, including questions about abortion, our treatment of animals, environmental values, punishment and world hunger. This module will introduce you to some of the central issues in moral philosophy – both normative issues about how we should live, and more theoretical issues about right and wrong.

Field Trip/Highlights:

We will tour sites in Edinburgh pertinent to the Scottish Enlightenment period. Of particular interest is the Scottish philosopher David Hume, whose moral standpoint is one of those considered in this course.

2010 International Summer School

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