

# *Ethics And Values*

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## **Aims (as in submission to CCETSW)**

The academic teaching on ethics is intended to provide students with some of the intellectual and analytic skills required to examine the meaning and implications of the values of social work, and to assess ethical issues and dilemmas in practice.

The two lectures explore the nature of ethical argument, with special reference to social work. In particular: they consider whether various ethical narratives (such as rights talk, or diverse forms of consequentialism) are illuminating when applied to social work issues; they assess the extent to which many apparently 'moral' disagreements in reality rest on differing empirical claims; and, as a contrasting emphasis, they examine areas (such as resource allocation) which may present more centrally 'moral' issues for social work than the individualist topics conventionally addressed in the literature.

Each student attends three classes (the classes being small to enable discussion). Class topics may vary with student interest (with titles such as 'HIV/AIDS: some ethical problems' or 'The dilemmas of liberty'), but are designed to ensure that central practice issues (such as care/control dilemmas, issues of client consent and the use of authority, accountability, confidentiality, issues around discrimination) are discussed by all students. The pedagogic task is to ensure that each student acquires generic strategies for handling ethical problems, and that each student considers the specific issues listed; these ends can be attained through discussion of diverse class topics.

It should also be noted that, despite the provision of this identifiable teaching segment on 'ethics', we regard discussion of pertinent ethical issues as permeating the substantive social work and law teaching.

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## **Possible essay questions:**

Is social work intrinsically an ethical activity, or simply a technical one?

What do you take to be the central ethical problem(s) of social work?

Do you have to be a good person to be a good social worker?

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## Reading

Ethical issues permeate much social work discussion, so be alert to their representation and the assumptions made about them in the 'social work' texts that you encounter. The following annotated reading list of more explicitly 'ethical' writing is - obviously - not intended as a "read all" list; better assess a little carefully and analytically than skim much rapidly. This is not an area with an incontestable, empirically-grounded core which it behoves you to know; texts summarising philosophical positions characteristically misperceive the nature of the activity. So: choose some readings to relate to your interests, and **think** about them.

- Almond, B (ed.) (1990) *Aids: a moral issue : the ethical legal and social aspects* (Macmillan)
- Appelbaum, D. & Lawton, S. V. (1990) *Ethics and the professions* (Prentice Hall) "Stresses the importance of applying theoretical considerations to the concrete decision-making scenario" medical, criminal justice, not social work examples)
- Banks, S (1999) *Ethical issues in youth work* Routledge
- Brierly, P. (1982) *Risk and social work* (RKP) - on practice, but in an area where values and practice interconnect
- Clark, C. L. & Asquith S. (1985) *Social Work and Social Philosophy: a guide for practice* (RKP, PB) - does not quite live up to its title, but some reasonable discussion
- Dickenson, D. (1991) *Moral Luck in Medical Ethics and Practical Politics* (Avebury)
- Dingwall, R. (1986) 'The Jasmine Beckford Affair' *Modern Law Review* 49:489-506 - a useful analytic aid if you are interested in the Hollis and Howe debate around responsibility in child abuse cases
- Elster, J. (1983) *Sour Grapes* (CUP) - required reading for anyone interested in the morality and specification of personal preferences; impressive, and deployed, erudition.
- Fairbairn, G. & Fairbairn S. (1988) *Ethical issues in caring* (Avebury)
- Fairbairn, S. & Fairbairn G. eds (1989) *Psychology, Ethics and Change* (R&KP) "draws attention to ethical issues surrounding the use of psychological approaches in attempting to bring about change in human well-being"
- Feinberg, J. (1973) *Social Philosophy* (Prentice-Hall, Paperback) - a short tidy review of some central problems in thinking about social relations
- Frey, R. G. ed (1993) *Values Welfare and Morality*
- Gambrill. E. D. & Pruger, R. (eds) (1991) *Ethics and values: controversial issues in social work.* (Allyn and Bacon)
- Gauthier, D. (1986) *Morals by Agreement* (Clarendon Press, Oxford)
- Hardin, R. (1988) *Morality within the Limits of Reason* (University of Chicago Press) - an exemplar of one variety of contemporary moral philosophy (see also the Gauthier book above)
- Harris, N. (1987) 'Defensive social work' *British Journal of Social Work* 17:61-69 The practical consequences of one ethical position?
- Hay, D A (1989) *Economics Today: A Christian critique*
- Hill, M. and Laing, P. (1979) *Social Work and Money.* Allen and Unwin. - more practical detail on the interconnections between values and actions of workers
- Hollis, M. & Howe, D. (1987) 'Moral risks in social work' *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 4:123-133 - On responsibility in child-abuse cases; see also Dingwall, Howe, Lipsky, and Sheldon,

for the substantive context, and Nagel and Honore for related philosophical arguments:  
and Dickenson, and Macdonald, G.

- Honoré, A. (1988) 'Responsibility and Luck' *Law Quarterly Review* October 1988 pp530-553.
- Horne, M. (1987) *Values in Social Work* Wildwood House
- Howe, D. (1986) *Social Workers and their practice in Welfare Bureaucracies*
- Hudson, B. H. & Macdonald G. M. (1986) *Behavioural Social Work: an Introduction* (Macmillan, PB)  
- see Ch 1
- Hugman, R. (1991) *Power in caring professions* Macmillan
- Illingworth, P. (1990) *Aids and the good society: from philosophy to social policy* (Routledge)
- Jordan, B. (1990) *Social work in an unjust society* (Harvester Wheatsheaf)
- Judge, K., Smith, J, Taylor-Gooby P (1983) 'Public opinion and the privatisation of Welfare: some theoretical implications' *Journal of Social Policy* 12 :469-490 - on the underpinnings of public values.
- Judge, K. (ed) (1980) *Pricing the Social Services*, Macmillan - on resource allocation - see Chs 1,6,7
- Kane, K. A. and Kane R. L. 'Long-term care: a field in search of values' in Kane and Kane *Values and Long Term Care* (DC Heath) - another problem for consequentialism?
- Levy, C. S. (1976) *Social Work Ethics* (New York: Human Sciences Press)
- Lipsky, M. 1980 *Street-level Bureaucracy: dilemmas of the individual in public services* - on the sociology of "organisations"; here since, if true, it has implication for the perception of what it is that social work is about, and hence how it should be assessed.
- Lowenberg, F. and Dolgoff R (1982) *Ethical decisions for social work practice* (Itasca, Ill: F.E.Peacock)
- Macdonald, K.I. (1980) 'Time and information in political theory' in M.Freeman and D.Roberston eds. *The Frontiers of Political Theory* - more articulated defence of assumption underlying the lectures
- Macdonald, G. M. (1990) 'Allocating blame in social work' *British Journal of Social Work* December 1990
- Macdonald, G. M. & Macdonald K. I. (1994) 'Ethical issues in Social Work Research' in *Ethical Issues in Social Work* ed D. Smith & R Hugman, Routledge (copy of paper in Box in Library)
- Macdonald K. I. & Macdonald, G. M. (1999) 'Empowerment: a critical view' in W. Shera & L.M. Wells eds *Empowerment Practice in Social Work: Developing Richer Conceptual Foundations*, Canadian Scholar's Press, Toronto 1999. (copy of paper in Box in Library)
- McReadie, P. (1976) 'Rawlsian justice and the financing of the national health service' *Journal of Social Policy* 5:113-131
- Michelman, F. (1975) 'Constitutional welfare rights and a Theory of Justice' in N Daniels (ed) *Reading Rawls: critical studies of A Theory of Justice* (Blackwells, Paperback) - for those interested in rights
- Moore, S. T. (1987) 'The theory of Street-Level Bureaucracy: a positive critique' *Administration and Society* 19 74-94 - see Lipsky
- Nagel, T. (1979) 'Moral luck' pp24-38 in *Mortal Questions* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.  
A robust attempt to ascribe responsibility for fortuitous negative outcomes.
- Pearson, G. (1975) 'Making social workers' in R Bailey & M Brake (eds) *Radical Social Work* - an interesting, intelligent - and still without too many emulators - discussion of the connection between the values and actions of social workers.
- Philpot, T. ed. (1986) *Social Work: A Christian perspective* A collection of essays around "altruism".

- Pine, B. A. (1987) 'Strategies for more ethical decision making in child welfare practice' *Child Welfare* 66:315-326 - an attempt to cash "ethics" discussions into practical considerations for organisational action.
- Plant, R. & Pritchard C. (1991) *Life and death issues: ethical dilemmas in medicine and social work* (Macmillan)
- Reamer, F. G. (1982) *Ethical dilemmas in social service* (New York: Columbia University Press) - arguing against the view that "ethical dilemmas and dilemmas about techniques slide into one another"
- Rhodes, M. L. (1986) *Ethical Dilemmas in Social Work Practice* (RKP, PB) - reasonably intelligent detailed case studies, arguing against any simple template solutions
- Sheldon, B. (1987) 'The Psychology of Incompetence', in Drewry, G., Martin, B., and Sheldon, B. (eds.) *After Beckford*, London, Social Policy Institute.
- Singer, P. (1979) *Practical Ethics* (CUP Paperback) - stimulating and individual introduction
- Skyrms, B. (1990) *The dynamics of rational deliberation* (Harvard University Press)
- Smart, J. C. & Williams B. (1973) *Utilitarianism: for and against* (OUP) Intelligent debate over some of the issues in consequentialist ethics.
- Smith, J. W. (1991) *AIDS: Philosophy and beyond: philosophical dilemmas of a modern pandemic* (Avebury)
- Stewart, G. and Stewart, J (1986) *Boundary Changes: Social Work and Social Security*. Child Poverty Action Group and BASW. - more practical detail on the interconnections between values and actions of workers
- Timms, N. (1983) *Social work values: an enquiry* (RKP Paperback) - his negatives are more telling than his positives
- Walrond-Skinner, S. & Watson D eds (1989) *Ethical issues in Family Therapy* (R&KP) claims: "the contributors make explicit the assumptions which inform family therapy and link them to discussions of ethical issues"
- Watson, D. ed. (1985) *A Code of Ethics for Social Work: the second step* (RKP) - yet more about BASW code of Ethics - some interesting matter, spoilt by the starting referent.
- Williams, B. (1972) *Morality: an introduction to ethics* (CUP Paperback) - competent, clear, concise committed - possibly the best "introduction" which, at the same time, manages a substantive contribution
- Winclair, M. R. (1993) *Ethics and the Elderly*
- Yelaja, S (ed) (1982) *Ethical issues in social work* (Springfield Ill: Charles C Thomas)