

Risky Ethics

Emma J. Curran

9-11am, Fridays, Ryle Room, Radcliffe Humanities Building

The outcomes of our actions are rarely certain; when we act, we might bring about any number of outcomes. For our ethical theories to be action-guiding, they must tell us what to do in the face of such uncertainty. This seminar will serve as an introduction to the ethics of risky decision-making. It will cover questions of how to interpret, conceptualise and distribute risk, and it will address a series of problems risk poses for ethical theories.

The reading list will be kept up-to-date on emmajcurran.co.uk/risky-ethics.

Week 1. *Ex Ante Pareto*

Core readings:

- Mahtani, Anna. (2017). The Ex Ante Pareto Principle, *Journal of Philosophy*, 11(6): 303-323
- Gustafsson, Johan E and Kacper Kowalczyk. (forthcoming). Ex Ante Pareto Principle and Opaque Identity, *Journal of Philosophy*, accessed: johangustafsson.net/papers/ex-ante-pareto-and-the-opaque-identity-puzzle.pdf

Additional readings:

- Mahtani, Anna. (2020). Frege's puzzle and the ex ante Pareto principle, *Philosophical Studies*, 178(6): 2077-2100

Week 2. *Egalitarianism*

Core readings:

- Fleurbaey, Marc and Alex Voorhoeve. (2013). "Decide As You Would With Full Information: An Argument Against Ex Ante Pareto" in Nir Eyal, Samia A. Hurst, Ole F. Norheim, Dan Wikler (eds.) *Inequalities in Health*, New York: Oxford University Press: ch.8
- Frick, Johann. (2013). "Uncertainty and Justifiability to Each Person: Response to Fleurbaey and Voorhoeve" in Nir Eyal, Samia A. Hurst, Ole F. Norheim, Dan Wikler (eds.) *Inequalities in Health*, New York: Oxford University Press: ch.9

Additional readings:

- Broome, John. (1991). Fairness, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 91(1): 87-102
- Wasserman, David. (1996). Let them Eat Chances, *Economics & Philosophy*, 12(1): 29-49
- Stefánsson, Orri H. (2023). In Defence of Pigou Dalton for Prospects, *Utilitas*, 35: 292-311

Week 3. Prioritarianism

Core readings:

- Otsuka, Mike and Alex Voorhoeve. (2009). Why It Matters That Some People Are Worse Off Than Others: An Argument Against the Priority View, *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 37(2): 171-199
- Buchak, Lara. (2017). Taking Risks Behind the Veil of Ignorance, *Ethics*, 127(3): 610-644
- Van Fossen, Stephanie. (2024). Can Relative Prioritarianism Accommodate the Shift?, *Ethics*, 134(4): 525-537

Additional readings:

- Buchak, Lara. (2013). *Risk and Rationality*, New York: Oxford University Press, chs. 1-3.
- Thoma, Johana. (2023). Taking Risk on Behalf of Another, *Philosophy Compass*, 18(3): 1-13

Week 4. Contractualism

Core readings:

- Frick, Johann. (2015). Contractualism and Social Risk, *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 43(3): 175-223
- Otsuka, Mike. (2015). “Risking Life and Limb: How to Discount Harms by Their Improbability” in I. Glenn Cohen, Norman Daniels, and Nir Eyal (eds.) *Statistical versus Identified Victims: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, New York: Oxford University Press: ch.5

Additional readings:

- Steuwer, Bastian. (2021). Contractualism, Complaints, and Risk, *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy*, 19(2): 111-147
- John, Stephen. (2014). Risk, Contractualism, and Rose’s “Prevention Paradox”, *Social Theory and Practice*, 40(1): 28-50
- Hare, Caspar. (2012). Obligations to Merely Statistical People, *Journal of Philosophy*, 109(5/6): 378-390

Week 5. Partial Aggregation

Core readings:

- Horton, Joe. (2020). Aggregation, Risk, and Reductio, *Ethics*, 130(4): 514-529
- Wu, Patrick. (2021). Aggregation and Reductio, *Ethics*, 132(2): 508-525

Additional readings:

- Lazar, Seth. (2018). Limited Aggregation and Risk, *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 46 (2):117-159
- Curran, Emma. (2023). “Aggregation and Risk” in *Doing Less Than Best*, thesis submitted to the University of Cambridge: 64-93, doi.org/10.17863/CAM.104249
- Horton, Joe. (2017). Aggregation, Complaints, and Risk, *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 45(1): 54-81

Week 6. Constraints

Core readings:

- Hare, Caspar. (2016). Should We Wish Well To All?, *Philosophical Review*, 125(4): 451-472
- Kowalczyk, Kacper. (2022). People in Suitcases, *Journal of Moral Philosophy*, 20(1-2): 3-30

Additional readings:

- Tenenbaum, Sergio. (2017). Action, Deontology, and Risk: Against the Multiplicative Model, *Ethics*, 127(3): 674-707
- Harris, John. (1975). The Survival Lottery, *Philosophy*, 50(191): 81-87

Week 7. Risk Offsetting

Core readings:

- Barry, Christian and Garrett Cullity. (2022). Offsetting and Risk Imposition, *Ethics*, 132(2): 352-381
- Berkey, Brian. (2024). When Is It Permissible to Impose and Offset Risks? A Response to Barry and Cullity, *Ethics*, 134(4): 512-524
- Byrne, Thomas. (2022). Increasing the Risk That Someone Will Die Without Increasing the Risk That You Will Kill Them, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 107: 395-412

Additional readings:

- Stefánsson, Orri H and Mac Willners. (2023). Why Offsetting is Not Like Shaking a Bag: a Reply to Barry and Cullity, *Ethics, Policy and Environment*, 26(1): 144-148
- John, Tyler M., Amanda Askeel, and Hayden Wilkinson. (forthcoming). The Moral Inefficacy of Carbon Offsetting, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, doi.org/10.1080/00048402.2024.2328639

Week 8. Risk as a Harm

Core readings:

- Rowe, Thomas. (2021). Can a risk of harm itself be a harm?, *Analysis*, 81(4), 694-701
- Stefánsson, Orri H. (2024). How a pure risk of harm can itself be a harm: a reply to Rowe, *Analysis*, 81(1): 112-116

Additional readings:

- Smith, Martin. (2024). Probability, Normalcy, and the Right Against Risk Imposition, *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy*, 27(3): 505-524
- Maheshwari, Kritika. (2021). On The Harm of Imposing Risk of Harm, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 26(4): 965-980