What does it mean to be ethical? Is being ethical in one’s interest in general, if not in every particular situation? Is ethics rooted in enduring properties of human nature? If so, what are these properties, and how are they manifested in the development of ethics over time? Is human nature separate from the nature of other things, or linked to it? Ought we to understand ethics as universal, or as it better understood in terms of different domains, such as politics, religion, and business, that have risen over time? Might there be a future stage of ethics that will be different from earlier stages, and if so, what might it be like?

I have recently published a book with Palgrave, *Why Business Ethics Matters: Answer from a New Game Theory Model*, that tackles these questions. The answers to the questions that I suggest in the book—e.g., that ethics can be understood in terms of solving social games, and that ethics is indeed generally in the interests of people, and other beings and entities, such as corporations—will be covered in the seminar. The seminar will also cover an alternative, “crooked timber” position that understands human nature as highly prone to selfishness, along with other flaws or sins, and understands ethics in our personal and work lives as a worthy, but often personally disadvantageous, struggle against the unfortunate components of our nature.

An aim of the book, and of the seminar as well, is to bridge the cultures of humanistic inquiry and scientific inquiry. A premise of the seminar is that to understand what we are as human beings, we need the insights of literature and other forms of art—but we equally need the insights of social psychology, game theory, and other forms of science. Accordingly, the seminar is an interdisciplinary one, with readings that will be drawn from both social scientific sources and from classical and contemporary sources in the humanities.

The seminar blends highly theoretical material in philosophy and science with highly practical material. The required writings will call on you both to reflect on the abstract, academic side and the personal, action-oriented side of ethics. After taking the seminar, you will know more than you did before about the history of inquiry into ethics, and about the differing answers that classical and contemporary philosophers, artists, and scientists have given to basic questions about ethics and its relation to our nature. You will also be equipped to relate that knowledge to your own life, and to your aspirations for the future.

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