Section A: Normative Ethics

1. Explain what utilitarianism is and whether Bernard Williams’s integrity-based objection to it is successful. In addition, critically discuss two of the ways in which utilitarians have responded to Williams’s objection.

2. For most utilitarians, the total amount of wellbeing (happiness, in Mill’s case) is the only factor that affects the goodness of an outcome. Critically discuss the objections that utilitarianism fails to take proper account of (a) the way in which wellbeing is distributed and (b) the culpability of agents.

3. Define hedonism. Then describe Robert Nozick’s ‘experience machine’ thought experiment and explain whether it amounts to or provides a successful objection to hedonism. Finally, identify two alternative theories of wellbeing and explain whether you think that either of these theories is superior to hedonism. Argue in support of your view.

4. In relation to deontology, explain, giving reasons in support of your view (a) whether – and if so, in what circumstances – the deontological constraint against doing harm may be overridden, and (b) whether moderate deontology collapses into consequentialism.
5. What is a harm? If an adult, X, inflicts severe physical pain on another adult, Y, without Y's consent, to prevent Y from slipping into an irreversible coma, and if X achieves his objective, has X harmed Y? From a deontological standpoint, has X either infringed or violated the deontological constraint against doing harm? Discuss critically.

Section B: Descartes

6. In the first Meditation Descartes sets out to reject his former beliefs. Explain why and how he does this, and what conclusions he comes to. Explain, as far as you can, whether you agree with Descartes' reasons, or his conclusions, and why you do so.

7. What is the philosophical significance of the claims “I exist” (or “I am”) and “I think” (or “I am thinking”) for Descartes? To answer this question you should explain their significance in the light of the first of Descartes' Meditations. You may also include an account of why Descartes thinks that his essence does not depend on any material body. Explain, as far as you can, whether you agree with Descartes' reasons, or his conclusions, and why you do so.

8. What is Descartes's view, in the second Meditation, about how we know that the wax is the same before and after its exposure to the heat of the fire? Why does he say that this knowledge does not depend on his senses? Do you find his arguments convincing? Give reasons for your answer.

9. In the third Meditation Descartes offers an argument for the existence of God. Explain how the argument is supposed to work. Explain, as far as you can, whether you agree with Descartes' reasons, or his conclusions, and why you do so.

10. In the fourth Meditation Descartes tries to explain how he could be made by a perfect God who would not deceive him, and yet also have false beliefs. Explain how his argument about truth and error is supposed to work, and how Descartes tries to make his own false beliefs his responsibility, rather than God's. Explain, as far as you can, whether you agree with Descartes' reasons, or his conclusions, and why you do so.

11. In the sixth Meditation Descartes defends a dualist conception of human nature. Explain the main features of his mind-body dualism, and say whether and why you do, or don't, think it is a reasonable position.