

Philosophy 429: ETHICAL ANALYSIS

Fall, 2009, TuTh 2:30–4, 2271 Angell Hall.

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A current version of this syllabus will be kept posted at

<http://www-personal.umich.edu/~gibbard/Syllabus09f-Phil-429.pdf>

This will be a course in contemporary metaethics. Metaethics is concerned with what ethical claims mean, and with the kinds of reasoning or evidence that justify ethical claims. The course will take up the ethical intuitionism of Moore and Ross, the emotivism of Ayer and Stevenson, Hare's universal prescriptivism, and recent proposals such as Rawls' theory of reflective equilibrium, Brandt's linguistic reform, new versions of "moral realism", moral "expressivism" with "quasi-realism". Students should already have some background in moral philosophy in the twentieth century "analytic" tradition, preferably Philosophy 361 or the equivalent.

Book to buy:

Stephen Darwall, Allan Gibbard, and Peter Railton, eds. *Moral Discourse and Practice: Some Philosophical Approaches* (Oxford University Press, 1997). Many readings will be from this collection, which I'll label **DGR**.

Other readings will be in CTOOLS (marked [CT]) or otherwise obtainable electronically (marked [E]), often through links in the on-line copy of the syllabus.

Classes will consist both of lecture and of discussion, along with other oral activities and brief writings. Three short (5 page) papers will be required (due dates Oct. 6, Nov. 17, and Dec. 8). There will be a mid-term exam (Oct. 27) and a final examination (Wed. Dec. 17, 4–6 p.m.).

[A few things should go without saying, but with apologies for what I hope must be an insult to your intelligence, I spell them out: (1) **The work must be your own, and academic dishonesty would result in failing the course.** (2) **All requirements of the course must be met if you are to receive a passing grade for the course.** (3) **Regular attendance of class sessions is required.** Also, please make sure that you will be able to be at the final exam.]

Syllabus (subject to revision)***Intuitionism, the “Naturalistic Fallacy”*****Tue. Sept. 8 (wk. 1):**

- Introduction; no readings.

Thu. Sept. 10 (wk. 1): NO CLASS (I’m at a conference)**Tue. Sept. 15 (wk. 2):**

- G.E. Moore, from *Principia Ethica* (1903), DGR 2, 51–63.
- Henry Sidgwick, [The Methods of Ethics](#) (1874, 7th ed. 1901), Bk. I, Ch. 3, sec. 3 (pp. 31–35). [E]
- Frankena, “[The Naturalistic Fallacy](#)” (1939). *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 48, No. 192, Oct. 1939, pp. 464–477. [E]
- Nakhnikian, “On the Naturalistic Fallacy” (1963). In Hector-Neri Castaneda and George Nakhnikian, *Morality and the Language of Conduct* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press), 145–158. [CT]

Thu. Sept. 17:

- Prichard, “[Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?](#)” (1912). *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 21, No. 81, pp. 21–37. [E]
- Ross, *The Right and the Good* (1930), Ch. 1 (pp. 1–15). [CT]

Justification, Dispositionalism**Tue. Sept. 22 (wk. 3):**

- Ewing, “[A Suggested Non-Naturalistic Definition of Good](#)” (1939). *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 48, No. 189, Jan. 1939, pp. 1–22. [E]
- Brandt, “[Moral Valuation](#)” (1946). *Ethics*, Vol. 56, No. 2, Jan. 1946, 106–121. [E]

Thu. Sept. 24:

- Firth, “[Ethical Absolutism and the Ideal Observer](#)” (1952). *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 12, No. 3, Mar., 1952, pp. 317–345. [E]
- Brandt, *Ethical Theory*, Ch. 10 (pp. 241–69). [CT]

Emotivism, Prescriptivism**Tue. Sept. 29 (wk. 4):**

- Ogden and Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923), pp. 123–126 of 5th edition (1938). [CT]
- Barnes, W. H. F., “[A Suggestion about Value](#)” (1934). *Analysis* 1:3 (March), pp. 45–46 [E]
- Ayer, A. J., *Language, Truth, and Logic* (1936), pp. 102–114. [CT]

Thu. Oct 1:

- Stevenson, “The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms” (1937), DGR 4.

Tue. Oct. 6 (wk. 5): FIRST SHORT PAPER DUE**Thu. Oct. 8:**

- Hare, *Moral Thinking* (1981), 1.6 (pp. 20–24), 3.4–3.9 (pp. 52–64), 5.3–5.4 (pp. 94–99), 6.1–6.2 (pp. 107–111), 10.7–10.8 (pp. 182–7). [CT]

***Tue. Oct. 13 (wk. 6):**

- Hare, *The Language of Morals* (1952), 7.5 and 8 (pp. 121–36), 9.4 (pp. 148–9). [CT]
- Geach, Peter (1965). “[Assertion](#)”. *Philosophical Review* 74, 449–465. (See especially 463–465.) [E]

Justification, Dispositionalism, Naturalistic Moral Realism**Thu. Oct. 15:**

- Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (1971), sec. 9 (pp. 46–53). [CT]
- Brandt, *A Theory of the Good and the Right* (1979), pp. 10–16, 110–115, 126–129, 163–176, 193–195. [CT]

Tue. Oct. 20 (wk. 7): NO CLASS (Fall Break)*Thu. Oct. 22:**

- Railton, “Moral Realism” (1986), DGR 8.
- Boyd, “How to be a Moral Realist” (1988), DGR 7.

Fri. Oct. 23: Extra sessions (in regular classroom)

- Undergraduates only: 10–11 a.m.
- Graduates: 11–12 a.m.

***Tue. Oct. 27 (wk. 8): MIDTERM EXAM**

Thu. Oct. 29:

- Mackie, from *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (1977), DGR 6.
- Harman, from *The Nature of Morality* (1977), DGR 5.

Internalism, Externalism, and Sensibility Theories

***Tue. Nov. 3 (wk. 9):**

- Darwall, “Reasons, Motives, and the Demands of Morality” (1996), DGR 17.
- Foot, “Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives” (1972), DGR 18.
- Williams, “Internal and External Reasons” (1981), DGR 21.

Thu. Nov. 5:

- McDowell, “Values and Secondary Qualities” (1985), DGR 11.
- McDowell, “Projection and Truth in Ethics” (1987), DGR 12.
- Wiggins, “A Sensible Subjectivism” (1987), DGR 13.

Tue. Nov. 10 (wk. 10):

- Blackburn, “How to be an Ethical Anti-Realist” (1988), DGR 9.
- Rosen (1998). [Critical Study, “Blackburn’s Essays in Quasi-Realism”](#). *Nous* 32:3, 386–405. [E]

Thu. Nov. 12: NO CLASS. (I’ll be at a conference.)

Tue. Nov. 17 (wk. 11): SECOND SHORT PAPER DUE

Thu. Nov. 19:

- Gibbard, from *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings* (1990), DGR 10.

Fri. Nov. 20: Extra sessions (in regular classroom)

- Undergraduates only: 10–11 a.m.
- Graduates: 11–12 a.m.

Tue. Nov. 24 (wk. 12):

- Horwich, “[Gibbard’s Theory of Norms](#)” (1993), in *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 22, No. 1, Winter, 1993, pp. 67–78. [E]

- Dreier, “[Expressivist Embeddings and Minimalist Truth](#)” (1996). *Philosophical Studies* **83**, 29–51. [CT]
- Horwich, “The Frege-Geach Point” (2005). *Philosophical Issues* **15**, 78–93. [CT]

Thu. Nov. 26: THANKSGIVING

Expressivism (again), Non-naturalism (again) or Quietism

Tue. Dec. 1 (wk. 13):

- Dworkin, “[Objectivity and Truth: You’d Better Believe It](#)” (1996), pp. 87–139. *Philosophy and Public Affairs* **25**, issue 2. [E]

Thu. Dec. 3:

- Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other* (1998), 17–77. [CT]

Fri. Dec. 4: Extra sessions (in regular classroom)

- Undergraduates only: 10–11 a.m.
- Graduates: 11–12 a.m.

Tue. Dec. 8 (wk. 14): THIRD SHORT PAPER DUE

Thu. Dec. 10: Last class

- Street, Sharon (2008). “Constructivism about Reasons”. Russ Shafer-Landau, ed., *Oxford Studies in Metaethics* **3** (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 207–245. [CT]

FINAL EXAMINATION, Wednesday, December 16, 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm in classroom