

CONTEMPORARY METAETHICS

PHIL XXX-XX · Semester Year · Meeting Time · Meeting Place

Instructor: Joe Ulatowski
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Office Hours: MWF or TR
Web page: http://; WebCT; Blackboard

Required Course Packet, available in the university's/college's bookstore.

Text:

Horgan, Terry and Mark Timmons eds. (2006). *Metaethics after Moore*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. ISBN 0199269912

Moore, G.E. (1993/1903). *Principia Ethica*. Revised edition. Edited by Thomas Baldwin. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0521448484

Course

Description:

The aim of this course is to provide a cumulative overview of the main arguments in the study of metaethics. Whereas normative ethics is that branch of philosophy concerned with first-order moral questions about what constitutes good and bad action, metaethics is the study of the second-order non-moral metaphysical and epistemological questions. Metaethicists use G.E. Moore's *Principia Ethica* as the pivotal text in discussions of metaethical problems. We will begin with a careful reading of Moore's texts. Then, we will explore responses to his work. In tandem, we will read recent discussions of metaethics. No knowledge of philosophy is presupposed for this course, though the student might find it helpful to have a general understanding of normative ethics.

Requirements:

Actually doing philosophy involves class discussion, in which students dialogue back and forth with the instructor and with each other. This class will be a seminar style course that places a premium on class discussion. Since this is the case, attendance is vital for success in the course.

Presentation. The student will complete a one-page summary of a reading designated by the instructor. The student should outline at least one argument in the reading and demonstrate that s/he has a command of the argument. If too confused by the argument, then summarize what you think the main argument of the reading is and present a few questions or criticisms of the main argument.

Examinations. There will be one take home mid-term examination, and one in-class final examination. The final exam will be comprehensive. The instructor also reserves the right to give an unannounced quiz at any time, though this is uncommon.

Final Paper. The student will be expected to complete one 10-12 page paper on a topic of the student's choice. More information, i.e., suggested topics, will be distributed sometime toward the middle of the semester. The student must submit a brief prospectus of the paper by DUE DATE, a bibliography by DUE DATE, and a detailed outline by DUE DATE.

Failure to complete any of these requirements will severely effect the your grade.

Policies:

Cheating. Cheating on any course requirement shall not be tolerated. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, copying from one's own clandestine notes, from someone else's paper, or quoting or paraphrasing an author without crediting the source (plagiarism). If the student is caught cheating, then s/he will receive a 0 on the work and will be subject to disciplinary action.

Students with Disabilities Act. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, cognitive, systemic, learning, and psychiatric impairments. Please contact the instructor at the beginning of the course to discuss any such accommodations that you may require for this course. For more information, the student should contact the Center for Disability Services.

Notice. The student is advised. All material contained herein, including course design, content, lectures, correspondence, Internet content, and written material, is the intellectual property of the instructor. In addition, the instructor reserves the right to change, revise, or alter any portion of this syllabus at any time, at his sole discretion, for any reason, without further notification to the student. This syllabus is in accordance with the [university of college handbook].

Grading:

There are no averages in this class, so put your calculators away. Grades will be determined according to a linear point scale. The more points you accumulate the higher your grade. In-class participation is worth a total of 100 points, each presentation is worth 50 points (100 total points available), each one-page summary of the major argument in an assigned paper is worth 25 points (250 total points available), and the final paper is worth a total of 200 points. The total number of points available equals 650.

The grading scale is as follows: 585 for an A-, 520 for a B-, 455 for a C-, 390 for a D-. Anyone who fails to earn 390 points fails the class.

**Course
Schedule &
Assignments:**

The table below outlines the approximate dates on which each topic will be discussed. Some topics will require additional time, particularly more discussion time, so this is not a schedule set in stone. This fact emphasizes the importance of attending class regularly as well as the importance of participating in class discussion.

| Title of Lecture & Readings for the Week | Week of: |
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| Moore's <i>Principia</i>. <i>Principia Ethica</i> , pp. vii-x, 1-21, 96-105, 142-148. | Week 1 |
| Carry-over from Week 1. Introduction and Stephen Darwall, "How Should Ethics Relate to (the Rest of) Philosophy?" HT, pp. 1-37 | Week 2 |
| Carry-over from Week 1. James Dreier, "Was Moore a Moorean?" HT, pp. 192-207 | Week 3 |
| Ayer's Response to Moore's <i>Principia</i>. A.J. Ayer, excerpts from <i>Language, Truth, and Logic</i> , pp. 102-114. | Week 4 |
| Bah, ethics! Charles Stevenson, "The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms," and Bernard Williams's "Morality and the Emotions." | Week 5 |
| Carry-over from Weeks 4 & 5. Connie Rosati, "Personal Good" HT, pp. 107-131 | Week 6 |
| Queerness and Subjectivity. J.L. Mackie, excerpts from <i>Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong</i> , pp. 15-49. | Week 7 |
| What has the doctor prescribed? R.M. Hare, excerpts from <i>The Language of Morals</i> and Geach's "Assertion." | Week 8 |
| Carry-over from Week 8. Judith Jarvis Thomson, "The Legacy of <i>Principia</i> " HT, pp. 233-254 | Week 9 |
| Sensible Subjectivism? David Wiggins "A Sensible Subjectivism?" and Plato's <i>Euthyphro</i> | Week 10 |
| Another stab at subjectivism. Colin McGinn, excerpts from <i>The Subjective View</i> , pp. 145-155. | Week 11 |
| Secondary Qualities. John McDowell, "Values and Secondary Qualities" | Week 12 |
| Carry-over from Weeks 10-12. Terry Horgan and Mark Timmons, "Cognitive Expressivism" HT, pp. 255-298; Stephen Barker, "Truth and the Expressing in Expressivism" HT, pp. 299-317 | Week 13 |
| Implications of Metaethics on Practical Reasoning. G.E.M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy;" Martha Nussbaum, "The Stoics on the Extirpation of the Passions" | Week 14 |

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| Metaethics, Kantian ethics, and practical reasoning. Christine Korsgaard, "Personal Identity and the Unity of Agency: A Kantian Response to Parfit" | Week 15 |
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