Philosophy 429: ETHICAL ANALYSIS

Winter, 2013. MW 4–5:30 p.m., Angell Hall 2071. (Syllabus revised Feb. 4, 2013)

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Office hours Tue. 3–5 p.m., or stop by or make an appointment.
A current version of this syllabus will be kept posted at

http://www-personal.umich.edu/~gibbard/Syllabus2013w-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:


Optionally: R.M. Hare, Moral Thinking: Its levels, method, and point (ISBN-13: 978-0198246602). This is a good book to own, and substantial parts of it will be assigned.

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 Feb. 11, March 18, and Apr. 15). There will be a mid-term exam (Feb. 25) and a final examination (Thurs. May 2, alas at 8–10 a.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"

Wed. Jan. 9 (wk. 0):

- Introduction; no readings.


- 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]

Wed. Jan. 16:

- Ross, *The Right and the Good* (1930), Ch. 1 (pp. 1–15). [CT]

Justification, Dispositionalism

Wed. Jan. 23 (wk. 2):


Mon. Jan. 28 (wk. 3):

- Brandt, *Ethical Theory*, Ch. 10 (pp. 241–69). [CT]
Emotivism, Prescriptivism

Wed. Jan. 30:

Mon. Feb. 4 (wk. 4):

Wed. Jan. 30:
- Hare, *Moral Thinking* (1981), 1.6 (pp. 20–24), 3.4–3.9 (pp. 52–64).

Mon. Feb. 11 (wk. 5): First short paper due

*Wed. Feb. 13:
- Hare, *Moral Thinking*, 5.3–5.4 (pp. 94–99), 6.1–6.2 (pp. 107–111), 10.7–10.8 (pp. 182–7). [CT]

Justification, Dispositionalism, Naturalistic Moral Realism

Mon. Feb. 18 (wk. 6):
- Hare, *The Language of Morals* (1952), 7.5 and 8 (pp. 121–36), 9.4 (pp. 148–9). [CT]

*Wed. Feb. 20:

Mon. Feb. 25 (wk. 7): Midterm Exam

Wed. Feb. 27:
BREAK. week of March 4–8

.Mon. Mar. 11 (wk. 8):
- Harman, from The Nature of Morality (1977), DGR 5.

**Internalism, Externalism, and Sensibility Theories**

Wed. Mar. 13:
- Foot, “Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives” (1972), DGR 18

.Mon. Mar. 18 (wk. 9): 2nd paper due

.Wed. Mar. 20:

**Expressivism (again), Non-naturalism (again,) Constructivism, Quietism**

.Mon. Mar. 25 (wk. 10):

.Wed. Mar. 27:
- Gibbard, from Wise Choices, Apt Feelings (1990), DGR 10.

Mon. Apr. 1(wk. 11):
Wed. Apr. 3:


Mon. Apr. 8(wk. 12):

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

Wed. Apr. 10:


Mon. Apr. 15(wk. 13): Last paper due

Wed. Apr. 17:


Mon. Apr. 22(wk. 14): LAST CLASS