

Philosophy 429: ETHICAL ANALYSIS

Fall, 2008, TuTh 2:30–4, 513 Dennison.

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A current version of this syllabus will be kept posted at

<http://www-personal.umich.edu/~gibbard/Syllabus-Phil-429-08f.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 (ordered at Shaman Drum):

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 written pieces. Three short (five page) papers will be required (due dates Sept. 30, Oct. 28, and Dec. 4). There will be a mid-term exam (Oct. 14) and a final examination (Thursday, Dec. 18, 1:30–3:30 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. 2 (wk. 1):

- Introduction; no readings.

Thu. Sept. 4 (wk. 1):

- 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]

Tue. Sept. 19 (wk. 2):

- Frankena, “[The Naturalistic Fallacy](#)” (1939). *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 48, No. 192, Oct. 1939, pp. 464–477. [E]
- Nakhnikian, “On the Naturalistic Fallacy” (1963). [CT] in Hector-Neri Castaneda and George Nakhnikian, *Morality and the Language of Conduct* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press), 145–158.

Thu. Sept. 11:

- 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. 16 (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. 18:

- 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. 23 (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. Sept. 25:

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

Tue. Sept. 30 (wk. 5): First short paper due

Thu. Oct. 2:

- 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).

Tue. Oct. 7 (wk. 6):

- Hare, *The Language of Morals* (1952), 7.5 and 8 (pp. 121–36), 9.4 (pp. 148–9). [CT]
- Searle, “[Meaning and Speech Acts](#)” (1962). *Philosophical Review*, Vol. 71, No. 4, Oct., 1962, pp. 423–432. [E]

Justification, Dispositionalism, Naturalistic Moral Realism

Thu. Oct. 9:

- 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. 14 (wk. 7): MIDTERM EXAM

Thu. Oct. 16: No class; Weinberg Conference on Philosophy and Cognitive Science

Tue. Oct. 21 (wk. 7): FALL BREAK

Thu. Oct. 23 (wk. 8):

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

Tue. Oct. 28 (wk. 9):

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

Thu. Oct. 30: SECOND SHORT PAPER DUE

Internalism, Externalism, and Sensibility Theories

Tue. Nov. 4 (wk. 10):

- 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. 6: NO CLASS. (I’ll be at a conference.)

Tue. Nov. 11 (wk. 11):

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

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

Thu. Nov. 13:

- 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.

Tue. Nov. 18 (wk. 12):

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

Thu. Nov. 20:

- 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). [CT]. *Philosophical Studies* 83, 29–51.

- Horwich, “The Frege-Geach Point” (2005) [CT]. *Philosophical Issues* **15**, 78–93.

Tue. Nov. 25 (wk. 13):

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

Thu. Nov. 27: THANKSGIVING

Tue. Dec. 2 (wk. 14):

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

Thu. Dec. 4: THIRD SHORT PAPER DUE

Tue. Dec. 9 (wk. 15): Classes end

- Gibbard, “[Normative and Recognitional Concepts](#)” (2002). *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* **64**, 151–167.
- Railton, “Moral Factualism” (2005). J. Dreier (ed.), *Contemporary Debates in Moral Theory*. [CT]

Thursday Dec. 18, 1:30–3:30 p.m.: FINAL EXAMINATION, in classroom (513 Dennison).

Left over

- Sturgeon, “Moral Explanations” (1984). David Copp and David Zimmerman (eds.), *Morality, Reason and Truth* (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman & Allanheld), 49–78. [CT]
- Blackburn, “[Just Causes](#)” (1991). *Philosophical Studies* **61**, 3–17. Also in Blackburn, *Essays in Moral Realism* (1993), 198–209. [E]