PHIL743: ETHICS PROSEMINAR
New North 204; M 1-3:30 PM

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Course description

This course is a graduate-level introduction to ethical theory, focusing on issues in metaethics and moral psychology.

Course objectives

Through active participation in this seminar, you will

- get some grip on the importance of metaethical positions
- become acquainted with how we do ethics now
- get prepared to pass that damned comp

Course format

The format of the course is a fairly even mix of lecture and discussion.

Course requirements

Course requirements include three short papers, one longer paper, a final examination, and seminar participation.

The short papers. Each of the three short (1000-1250 words) papers should be a criticism of an argument offered in one of the readings for that week's seminar meeting. Each should be submitted by e-mail as a Word document or .pdf by 10 PM the evening before the seminar will meet to discuss that particular reading. Members of the seminar have complete freedom to decide which authors they wish to write their short papers on, subject to three provisos: at least one of the papers should be turned in no later than October 3; at least two of these papers must be turned in no later than November 21; and one can turn in only one paper per week.

Course requirements (continued)

These short papers have a threefold purpose. First, they serve to keep you thinking in a focused, critical way about the views we are discussing in class. Second, I will sometimes use these papers as material for critical discussion. (Because I need to read these papers before class, none of these papers will be accepted after the 10-PM-the-night-before deadline.) Third, one of these papers will serve as a springboard for the longer paper.

***Note*: These are to be short, but *not sloppy*. Write as if you will be offering these pieces to *Analysis*, or reading them at an APA meeting.**

The longer paper. The longer (3000-3500 words) paper should be an enlargement of one of the short papers turned in on November 21 or earlier. Apart from taking into account my critical remarks and whatever discussion of the argument occurred in class, the longer version should consider in greater detail the extent to which the criticism put forward can be answered by the view. This paper will be due **December 2.**

The final exam. There will be a final exam, which will also serve as the qualifying exam in ethics. It will be at the time scheduled by the registrar (**Thursday, December 15, at 12:30 PM**), unless there is unanimous, uncoerced (even by social sanctions) agreement to hold it earlier.

Seminar participation. Let's not turn this into some sort of philosophical Bataan Death March toward the qualifying exam. Ethics is fun, dammit. Let's keep it lively and interesting.

Texts
Michael Smith, *The Moral Problem*; Russ Shafer-Landau and Terence Cuneo, *Foundations of Ethics: An Anthology*; Foot, *Natural Goodness*; other papers available to copy or available electronically.

Consulting

I'm around on Monday a bit, but not much more than the listed office hours. Wednesdays I am much more free. I'm usually around all day Fridays. I'm around almost never on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

SCHEDULE

8/31 READING. Smith, *The Moral Problem*, ch 1.
TOPICS. The distinction between metaethics and normative ethics. Smith's 'Moral Problem' as a metaethical problem.

9/5 NO CLASS: LABOR DAY

9/12 READING. Moore, "The Subject-Matter of Ethics," in *FE*, pp. 465-473; Ayer, "Critique of Ethics and Theology," in *FE,* pp. 40-46; Blackburn, "Moral Realism" excerpt (reserve); Smith, *The Moral Problem*, ch. 2.
TOPICS. Can moral concepts be defined? Non-naturalistic and naturalistic definitions. The open question argument. Smith's diagnosis.

9/19 READING. Blackburn, "How to Be an Ethical Anti-Realist," in *FE*, pp. 47-57; Blackburn, "Attitudes and Contents," in *FE*, pp. 474-484; Schroeder, from *Noncognitivism in Ethics* (reserve)
TOPIC. Expressivism. The Frege-Geach Problem.

9/26 READING. Zangwill, "Externalist Moral Motivation," in *FE*, pp. 243-251; Foot, "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives," in *FE*, pp. 286-291; *The Moral Problem*, ch. 3.
TOPICS. Internalism and externalism. Varieties of internalist theses. Reasons and motivation.

10/3 READING. Hume, excerpt from *A Treatise of Human Nature* (reserve); Nagel, excerpt from *The Possibility of Altruism* (reserve); McDowell, "Are Moral Requirements Hypothetical Imperatives?" (reserve); *The Moral Problem*, Ch. 4.
TOPICS. The Humean theory of motivation. Does the Humean theory call into question the existence of categorical moral requirements? Alternatives to Humeanism.

10/10 NO CLASS: MIDSEMESTER HOLIDAY

10/17 READING. Mackie, "The Subjectivity of Values," in *FE*, pp. 13-22; Joyce, "The Myth of Morality," in *FE,* pp. 23-34.
TOPICS. Error theory.

10/24 NO CLASS: OUT OF TOWN

10/31 READING. Smith, *The Moral Problem*, chs. 5-6; Milo, "Contractarian Constructivism," in *FE*, pp. 120-131; Korsgaard, "The Authority of Reflection," in *FE*, pp. 93-106,
TOPICS. Constructivism.

11/7 READING. Railton, "Moral Realism," in *FE*, pp. 186-205; "Naturalism and Prescriptivity" (reserve)
TOPICS. Reductivist naturalism I.

11/14 READING. Hampton, "The Authority of Reason," in *FE*, pp. 206-209; Shafer-Landau, "Ethics as Philosophy: A Defense of Ethical Nonnaturalism," in *FE*, pp. 210-222; Shafer-Landau, "Moral Reasons," in *FE*, pp. 312-327.
TOPICS. Non-naturalist realism.

11/21 READING. Schroeder, "The Humean Theory of Reasons" and "Weighting for a Plausible Humean Theory" (both available at http://www-bcf.usc.edu/~maschroe/research/)
TOPICS. Reductivist naturalism II.

11/28 READING. Foot, *Natural Goodness*, chs. 1-5 (pp. 1-82)
TOPICS. Nonreductivist naturalism.

12/5 READING. Adams, *Finite and Infinite Goods*, chs. 1-2, 10-11 (pp. 13-82, 231-276) (reserve).
TOPICS. Supernaturalist realism.

Final class DATE/TOPICS/MENU TBA