

## **PHIL 514: Ethical Theory**

T/TH, 8:30-9:45, Hamilton College 201

Spring 2014

Professor: Jennifer A. Frey

Office Hours: T/TH 1:30-2:30, or by appointment

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### **Course Description**

This is an introductory survey course in twentieth century and contemporary meta-ethics. Broadly construed, meta-ethics is the study of the metaphysical, epistemological, semantic, and psychological presuppositions and commitments of moral discourse and practice. The special focus of this course is how we might understand our shared *value* claims; in particular, we will explore the sources of the meaning of these claims, whether this meaning is subjective or objective, and how we ought to understand the role they play in human life. To these ends, we will explore how value is connected to facts about the natural world, how value claims are related to our concepts of practical reason, deliberation, choice, and intention, and how it appears under the special guise of a 'morality' system.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Upon successful completion of the course, the student will be able to

- Identify, reconstruct, and evaluate arguments in twentieth century analytic meta-ethics.
- Provide careful and considered written analysis and evaluation of these arguments.
- Engage easily in constructive philosophical dialogue with others concerning the main topics addressed in class.
- Successfully and confidently defend one's own philosophical perspective.

## **Course Requirements**

### *Undergraduate Requirements*

Class Participation: 10%

Essay #1: 20%

Essay #2: 20%

Midterm: 25%

Final: 25%

Each essay will be 5-6 pages in length (detailed assignments will be passed out when appropriate). The midterm and final will be a combination of short answer and short essay questions. The final is basically a second midterm and only covers material from the second half of the class. Class participation will be based on your contributions to our classroom discussions.

### *Graduate Requirements*

Essay #1: 30%

Presentation/Paper: 20%

Term Paper: 50%

In addition to the reading assignments, graduate students must write one short essay (6-8 pages in length and one term paper (15-20 pages in length), and complete one in class presentation. Come see me immediately to sign up for a presentation time.

## **Grading Rubric**

A = 100-90% = excellent, exceptional, exemplary work

B+ = 89-85% = very good, commendable, admirable

B = 84-80% = good, shows promise

C+ = 79-75% = adequate, acceptable, ok

C = 74-70% = passable, but weak

D+ = 69-65% = very poor, unsatisfactory

D = 64-60% = marginal, seriously flawed  
 Below D = 60% and below = failure

### Required Texts

Stephen Darwall, Allan Gibbard, and Peter Railton: *Moral Discourse and Practice* (Oxford University Press, 1997) ISBN: 0-19-509669-X

Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness*, (Oxford University Press, 2001) ISBN:

Christine M. Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution: Agency, Identity, and Integrity* (Oxford University Press, 2009) ISBN: 978-0-19-955279-5

Michael Smith, *The Moral Problem* (Blackwell, 1994) ISBN: 978-0-6311-9246-6

### Course Schedule

1/14	T	Introduction	NO READING
1/16	H	G.E. Moore	<i>Principia Ethica</i> , (MDP)
1/21	T	Charles Stevenson/A. J. Ayer	The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms (MDP) A Critique of Ethics (BB)
1/23	H	J. L. Mackie	<i>Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong</i> (MDP)
1/28	T	Alan Gibbard	Wise Choices, Apt Feelings (MDP)
1/30	H	Peter Railton	Moral Realism (MDP)
2/4	T	John McDowell	Values and Secondary Qualities, Projection and Truth in Ethics (MDP)
2/6	H	David Wiggins	Truth, Invention, and the Meaning of Life (BB), A Sensible Subjectivism? (MDP)
2/11	T	Thomas Nagel	<i>The Possibility of Altruism</i> (MDP)
2/13	H	Thomas Nagel	Ethics and Value (BB)
2/18	T	Peter Geach Philippa Foot	Good and Evil (BB) Goodness and Choice (BB)

2/20	H	John Rawls	Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory (MDP)
2/25	T	T. M. Scanlon	Contractualism and Utilitarianism (MDP)
2/27	H	Bernard Williams	Internal and External Reasons (MDP)
2/27	H	Phillipa Foot	Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives (MDP)
3/4	T	Michael Smith	<i>The Moral Problem</i> , chapters 1-2
3/6	H		IN CLASS MIDTERM Essay #1 Due (grad/undergrad), Friday 3/7
3/11	T	NO CLASS	SPRING BREAK
3/13	H	NO CLASS	SPRING BREAK
3/18	T	Michael Smith	<i>The Moral Problem</i> , chapters 3-4
3/20	H	Michael Smith	<i>The Moral Problem</i> , chapters 4-6
3/25	T	Christine M. Korsgaard	<i>Self-Constitution</i> , chapters 1-3
3/27	H	Christine M. Korsgaard	<i>Self-Constitution</i> , chapters 4-6
4/1	T	Christine M. Korsgaard	<i>Self-Constitution</i> , chapters 7-9
4/3	H	J. David Velleman	The Possibility of Practical Reason (BB) Acting (BB)
4/8	T	David Enoch	Agency, Schmagency: Why Normativity Won't Come From What Is Constitutive of Action (BB)
4/10	H	G.E.M. Anscombe	Modern Moral Philosophy (BB)
4/15	T	Bernard Williams	Morality, The Peculiar Institution (BB)

4/17	H	Philippa Foot	Virtues and Vices (BB) Essay #2 due, Friday 4/18 (undergrad only)
4/22	T	Philippa Foot	<i>Natural Goodness</i> , chapters 1-3
4/24	H	Philippa Foot	<i>Natural Goodness</i> , chapters 4-6
4/29	T		REVIEW/WRAP UP
5/1	H		IN CLASS FINAL EXAM Term Papers due (grad only)

## **Classroom Rules and Procedures**

### *Attendance Policy*

Although you are not graded for attendance, Students are obligated to attend class regularly. This class adopts the university-wide attendance policy, which is as follows: absence from more than 10% of the scheduled class sessions, whether excused or unexcused, is excessive and there will be a grade penalty for each further absence. Every absence over four will drop one's total grade in the course by half a letter grade (or five percentage points). For instance, a student with six absences can receive no better than a 90% in the class.

To record your attendance, you will need to sign your name on an attendance sheet that will be passed around during class. If the sheet does not make it to you, *it is your responsibility* to sign the sheet before you leave. If you forget to sign the sheet, you will be marked absent.

### *Classroom Environment*

The classroom should be a respectful and professional environment; you should strive to dress, speak, and behave professionally. Be attentive in class. Do no sleep, text, eat, read other course materials, pass notes, etc. Do not arrive to class late. This classroom is a technology free zone unless otherwise stated by the professor on specific occasions. **Laptop computers, tablets and smartphones are not permitted to be on and in use.** Failure to comply will result in expulsion from the classroom.

### *Academic Honesty*

Assignments and examination work are expected to be the sole effort of the student submitting the work. Students are expected to follow the University of South Carolina Honor Code ([www.housing.sc.edu/academicintegrity/honorcode.html](http://www.housing.sc.edu/academicintegrity/honorcode.html)) and should expect that every instance of a suspected violation will be reported. Students found responsible for violations of the Code will be subject to academic penalties under the Code in addition to whatever disciplinary sanctions are applied. Cheating on a test or copying someone else's work will result in an F for that assignment or exam, and possibly a grade of F in the course, and, in accordance with University policy, be referred to the University Committee for Academic Responsibility and may result in expulsion from the University.

### *Blackboard*

I will rely on Blackboard for assignments and grades, as well as to communicate with you outside of class. It is your responsibility to make sure that the email address you use and check is the email address used by Blackboard; if you are not receiving Blackboard communications from me it is your responsibility to notify both me immediately and to fix the problem immediately. I expect you all to be proficient in Blackboard, and if you are having problems with it, it is your sole responsibility to make sure that solutions are found. Instructions, tips, and support are available at [uts.sc.edu](http://uts.sc.edu) or [servicedesk@sc.edu](mailto:servicedesk@sc.edu)