

PHIL232: ETHICAL THEORY (UPDATED 2/10/16)
MAG104, MW 9:30-10:45 AM

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Course description

This course is an advanced undergraduate course in philosophical ethics. The first half of the course will be devoted to metaethics, which is concerned with providing an adequate account of the character of moral concepts, properties, and judgments. The second half of the course will be devoted to normative ethics, which is concerned with providing a formulation and defense of informative criteria for the exemplification of moral properties (e.g. for an action's being morally right, or an outcome's being morally good, or a character trait's being a moral virtue).

Course objectives

Through active participation in this seminar, you will

- Get some grip on the importance of metaethical positions
- Understand the deep differences between rival normative views
- Become acquainted with how we do ethics now

Course format

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

Course requirements and grading

Students will be graded on two criteria: the quality of their course paper(s) and the quality of their seminar presentation / participation.

Course requirements and grading (continued)

Course papers

Students will write two papers, the first 2500-3000 words, the second 3000-4000 words. The first paper is due March 4; the second paper is due May 7. With my permission, you can substitute one long paper (5500-7500 words) for the two shorter papers; the long paper will come due when the second paper would be due. You must get permission for the longer paper by February 26, so that if permission is denied, you still have time to get the first paper written.

Presentation

Each student will present a draft of his or her second (or long) paper in class and comment on another student's final paper draft. The draft will be circulated by e-mail at least 48 hours in advance of the presentation.

Participation

Prepared and active attendance is mandatory. (Preparation includes doing the reading carefully and thoughtfully and coming to class with preliminary thoughts on it.) It will be a small class, and there will be plenty of opportunity for close argument. On the other hand, inadequate preparation or lack of attendance will make the experience excruciating. Students are *always* required to be present for class, and this requirement will be backed up with sanctions for unexcused absences for the classes in which presentations are taking place.

The final grade

The first paper counts for 40%, the second 50%, and presentation / participation for 10%.

Consulting

I'm around on Mondays, Wednesdays, and usually Fridays. I'm almost never around on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I also check e-mail frequently.

SCHEDULE (UPDATED 2/10/16)

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Topic</i> | <i>Reading</i> |
|-------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1/13 | The moral problem | Smith, ch. 1 |
| 1/20 | Moorean non-naturalism | S-L, #7 |
| 1/25 | SNOW DAY | |
| 1/27 | Emotivism | S-L, #2 |
| 2/1 | Analysis of moral concepts | Smith, ch. 2 |
| 2/3 | Internalism and externalism | S-L, #16, #17 |
| 2/8 | Qualified internalism | Smith, ch. 3 |
| 2/10 | Humean theory of motivation | S-L, #1 |
| 2/17 | Defending the Humean theory | Smith, ch. 4 |
| 2/22 | Error theory | S-L, #3, #4, #5 |
| 2/24 | Against error theory | Smith, chs. 5-6 |
| 2/29 | Egoism and morality | S-L, #19, #20, #21 |
| 3/2 | Consequentialism | S-L, #48, #49, #50, #53 |
| 3/14 | Consequentialism (cont'd) | Continued |
| 3/16 | Deontology | S-L, #55, #56, #57 |
| 3/21 | Deontology (cont'd) | Continued |
| 3/23 | Contractualism | S-L, #64, #65 |
| 3/30 | Contractualism (cont'd) | Continued |
| 4/4 | Virtue ethics | S-L, #66, #67, #68, #70, #71 |
| 4/6 | Virtue ethics (cont'd) | Continued |
| 4/11 | Theological voluntarism | S-L, #23, #24, #25, #27, #28 |
| 4/13 | Theological voluntarism (cont'd) | Continued |
| 4/18 | Wrapping up loose ends | None |
| 4/20 | Presentations | Each other's work |
| 4/25 | Presentations | Each other's work |
| 4/27 | Presentations | Each other's work |
| 5/2 | Presentations | Each other's work |

Smith = Michael Smith, *The Moral Problem* (Blackwell)

S-L = Russ Shafer-Landau, *Ethical Theory: An Anthology, SECOND EDITION* (Wiley-Blackwell) — the *second* edition is a must