



UNIVERSITY OF  
CALGARY

FACULTY OF ARTS  
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

**PHILOSOPHY 449 Lec 1**  
**“Contemporary Metaethics”**  
**Fall Term 2014**  
*Course Outline*

**Lectures: Monday and Wednesday, 3.00-4.15, SS 541**

**Instructor:** John A. Baker  
**Office:** SS1222  
**Phone:** 403-220-3167  
**Email:** [baker@ucalgary.ca](mailto:baker@ucalgary.ca) -- when emailing please put “449” in the subject line  
**Office Hours:** Monday and Wednesday, 2.00-2.45 and after class

Outside those times, for a variety of reasons, it is not a good idea just to "drop in", hoping to catch me in the office: it is much better to phone or email me for an appointment. I am happy to make such appointments, so do not hesitate to make them.

***Course Description***

Questions about whether moral values, rights and duties exist objectively (i.e., independently of people’s beliefs *about* them and attitudes *to* them) and about how (if at all) we can reason validly and soundly about them are inextricably linked. The course begins by examining several famous arguments for saying that theories about values, rights and duties which say that at least some of them *do* exist objectively *cannot* be right: in this connection we will examine in detail several variants of Hume’s Guillotine, of Moore’s Open Question Argument, and of Hume’s Influence Argument (nowadays often referred to Mackie’s Queerness Argument). We will then turn to questions (a) about what should be said about the existence-status of values, rights and duties and (b) about how, if at all, we can reason validly and soundly about them if as many claim they cannot be treated as existing objectively in the above sense. In connection with *this* question we will examine some so-called “expressivist” and some so-called “quasi-realist” theories. A more detailed description of what will be covered in the course will be posted on D2L.

***Required Texts***

The basic structuring of the examination of the issues in the course will be provided by selections from my *Lectures in Metaethics*. As we go along, these selections will be posted on D2L and, in lots of time before the class, I will post an ‘announcement’ in D2L telling you what to read for that class (I also send an email giving the substance of the ‘announcement’).

The other readings for the course will consist of journal articles available on-line through the University Library or book chapters also available online. Instructions on how to access these will be posted on D2L.

Note that often in class we will be engaged in careful, line by line, examination of arguments found in the readings. I will post on-line (in D2L) an announcement about which article/chapters we will be discussing in class. Please bring to class copies of the article/chapter to be discussed – feel in class to use an electronic copy on your laptop or pad if you wish: otherwise bring a hard copy.

***Assignments and due dates***

**Assignments:**

1. ***Weekly reading assignments*** will be set. Except in the weeks when essays are actually due to be submitted (see 3 below), I will on the average set the equivalent of about two articles/chapters per week. ***Sometimes I will simply assume that an article or chapter has been read*** and the class will proceed on that assumption. It is the duty of any students who miss classes to find out what readings

have been set. As I said above, students should ensure that they bring to class copies of the article/chapter to be discussed.

2. Students will be asked to prepare four brief *analyses-and-critiques*. What an "analysis-and-critique" involves will be posted on D2L at the beginning of term and explained in class. Samples of 'analyses-and-critiques' will be posted on D2L and discussed in class.
3. *One shortish* (about 1200 words) *essay* and *one longer* (about 1500 words) *essay* will be set. The essay topics and readings for the essays will significantly overlap with, or be identical to, the readings mentioned in 1 and 2. Details of topics and readings will be announced in class and posted on D2L.
4. There will be an *in-class* test. This test will address the materials covered up to the time of the test. Details about the test will be posted on D2L.
5. There will be a two hour Registrar-scheduled examination. Details about the test will be posted on D2L.

#### **Due-dates:**

**NB: All assignments are to be submitted electronically as MS Word files.**

**Analysis-and-critique 1:** Details will be posted on D2L early on Monday, September 8<sup>th</sup>. The completed assignment will be due on Friday, September 19<sup>th</sup>, at 9am.

**Analysis-and-critique 2:** Details will be posted on D2L early on Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> September. The completed assignment will be due on Friday, 3<sup>rd</sup> October, at 9am.

**Essay 1:** The question for the first essay will be posted on D2L early on Monday, 29<sup>th</sup> September. The completed essay will be due on Friday, October 17<sup>th</sup>, at 9am.

**In-class test:** Information about the test (including a list of questions from which the questions that appear on the test will be drawn) will be posted on D2L early on Monday, September 15<sup>th</sup>. The test will take place on Wednesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> October.

**Analysis-and-critique 3:** Details will be posted on D2L early on Monday, October 27<sup>th</sup>. The completed assignment will be due on Friday, November 7<sup>th</sup>, at 9am.

**Analysis-and-critique 4:** Details will be posted on D2L early on Wednesday, November 5<sup>th</sup>. The completed assignment will be due on Friday, November 21<sup>st</sup>, at 9am.

**Essay 2:** The question for the second essay will be posted on D2L early on Monday, November 17<sup>th</sup>. The completed essay will be due on Saturday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, at 9am.

#### **Grading**

1. *Ceteris paribus*, the first analysis-and-critique will be worth 5% of the final grade and each of the second, third and fourth analyses-and-critiques will be worth 10%.
2. *Ceteris paribus*, the first essay will be worth 10% of the final grade and the second worth 20%.
3. *Ceteris paribus* the in-class test will be worth 10% of the final grade.
4. *Ceteris paribus* the registrar scheduled final examination will be worth 25% of the final grade.
5. Except in very exceptional circumstances, and at the discretion of the instructor, a passing grade in the course will be received only if (a) each of the four analyses, each of the two short essays, and the final examination are submitted *and* (b) the final examination receives a passing grade.
6. Later virtue will be allowed to redeem earlier sin.
7. Fairness to those who submit their assignments on time demands that lateness in submission of assignments be penalized. Accordingly, assignments handed in after the stated deadline will receive at most B if submitted by 3.00 pm of the day after the due day and C if submitted by 3.00 pm of the day after that, and so on, unless, of course, some sort of university recognized ground for delay — e.g. some sort of evidence of illness — is submitted.

**NOTE: If a student fails to submit her or his analysis of an article before I hand out my analysis of that article, then clearly the requirement set out in point 5(a) above can only reasonably be satisfied in relation to analyses if the student submits an analysis of some different article from that originally assigned. If this situation arises then the student will need to approach me for a replacement assignment. Note that point 7 will still apply.**

### **Academic Honesty**

Cheating or plagiarism on any assignment or examination is regarded as an extremely serious academic offence, the penalty for which may be an F on the assignment, an F in the course, academic probation, or requirement to withdraw from the University. See the relevant sections on 'Academic Misconduct' in the current University Calendar. Intellectual honesty requires that your work include adequate referencing to sources. Plagiarism occurs when you do not acknowledge or correctly reference your sources. If you have questions about correct referencing, consult your instructor.

### **Academic Accommodation**

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodation. If you are a student with a permanent disability or temporary impairment who may require academic accommodation, you must first register with the Student Accessibility Resource Office located in MacEwan Student Centre 452; phone 403-220-8237; email [access@ucalgary.ca](mailto:access@ucalgary.ca). Students who have not registered with the Student Accessibility Office are not eligible for academic accommodation. You are also required to discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of this course. Go to <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/> for further information.

### **D2L Help**

Desire2Learn is the University of Calgary's learning management system which has now replaced BlackBoard. Go to <http://www.elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/> for help in using Desire2Learn.

### **Student Advising and Information Resources**

- General Academic Concerns and Program Planning– Have a question but not sure where to start? The Faculty of Arts' Program Information Centre (PIC) is your information resource for everything in Arts. Drop in at SS110, call 403-220-3580, or email [artsads@ucalgary.ca](mailto:artsads@ucalgary.ca). Advisors in the PIC Office can also provide assistance and advice in planning your program through to graduation. You can visit the Faculty of Arts website at <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undersgraduate> for detailed information on common academic concerns.
- **Advice on Philosophy Courses** - You may find answers to your more specific questions about a philosophy degree on the Department of Philosophy's website <http://phil.ucalgary.ca> or contact one of Philosophy's current Undergraduate Advisors (see below)
- **Registration Overload/Prereq Waivers** – If you are seeking to register in a Philosophy course that is full or to get permission to waive the prereqs for a course, email the instructor of the course.

### **Protection of Privacy**

The University of Calgary is under the jurisdiction of the provincial Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act. The Department of Philosophy ensures the student's right to privacy by requiring all graded assignments be returned to the student directly from the instructor.

### **Student Ombudsperson and Students' Union Representatives**

The Student Ombuds Office provides independent, impartial, and confidential support for students who require assistance or advice in addressing issues and concerns related to their academic careers. For more information, see [www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds](http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds). For the Students' Union Faculty of Arts rep: [arts1@ucalgary.ca](mailto:arts1@ucalgary.ca).

### **Safewalk**

Call 403-220-5333 (24/7/365) for a Safewalk volunteer to accompany you safely to your destination on campus including parking lots, housing, and the LRT station or use a Campus Help Phone.

#### **PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT**

The Department of Philosophy is located on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor of the Social Sciences Building and on the web at [www.phil.ucalgary.ca](http://www.phil.ucalgary.ca)

#### **PHILOSOPHY UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM ADVISORS FOR FALL 2014:**

Chris Framarin (Undergrad Director) [chris.framarin@ucalgary.ca](mailto:chris.framarin@ucalgary.ca)

Reid Buchanan [buchanar@ucalgary.ca](mailto:buchanar@ucalgary.ca)

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For assistance with registration issues in Philosophy courses, contact Merlette Schnell ([schnell@ucalgary.ca](mailto:schnell@ucalgary.ca))