



FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

PHIL 449 Lecture Section 01
Contemporary Meta-Ethics

Winter Term 2017
Course Outline

Lectures: MW 4:00 – 5.15 MS 217

Instructor: John A. Baker

Office: SS1222

Office Phone: 403-220-3167

Email: baker@ucalgary.ca -- when emailing please put "449" in the subject line

Office Hours: MW 3:00 – 3:45 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

We will examine in some detail the main meta-ethical questions that are currently being investigated in the professional literature. Such questions include questions (i) about rationality and the conditions under which a person has a reason to respond to situations in certain ways, (ii) about the differences between moral and non-moral reasons, (iii) about the nature of rights and duties (moral and non-moral) and about the conditions under which a person has a right or a duty (moral or no-moral) to respond to a situation in a certain way, (iii) about nature of intrinsic value, and (iv) about the nature of practical and moral reasoning.

Various cognitivist/moral-realist and non-cognitivist/anti-realist meta-ethical theories about how these questions are to be addressed will be discussed, including:

- moral realism in various guises, including natural law theory and some versions of evolutionary ethics, intuitionism, and divine voluntarism;
- anti-realism in various guises, including both expressivist/prescriptivist and rational constructivist versions;
- quasi-realist attempts to preserve at least the rhetoric of moral realism whilst taking seriously the problems moral realism faces;
- error theory both in the form argued for by John Mackie and in the form that some construals of evolutionary theory have been taken to imply.

Prerequisites:

Two previous courses in Philosophy, at least one of which must be a 300 or higher level course, and one of which must be 249 or 397; or consent of the Department.

Course Learning Outcomes

Students by the end of the course

- should be aware of what issues are currently viewed as being fundamental to the discipline *Metaethics* and should be able to state and critically engage with the arguments for and against the central theses of the metaethical theories listed above;
- should be familiar with, be able to use, and be aware of the limitations of the investigative tools currently being used in such meta-ethical inquiries, including the use of the resources of conceptual analysis, of rational choice theory, and of contemporary evolutionary ethical theory;

- should have developed and refined their ability (i) to formulate explicit and precise analyses of the reasoning in academic papers in the field, such analyses setting out the *direction* of the reasoning, the steps in the reasoning, and the unstated but critical background assumptions of the reasoning in such papers, (ii) clearly and concisely to frame and state arguments both for and against philosophical theses, and (iii) to gain the kinds of skills in analysis, argumentation, and research that would be of value in law, government and business policy development and implementation.

Required/Recommended Texts:

The UofC bookstore should have available copies of

Steven M. Cahn and Andrew T. Forcehimes, editors, *Foundations of Moral Philosophy – Readings in Metaethics*, Oxford University Press, 2017.

This is an excellent newly published collection of readings from the current literature.

The *Stanford Online Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [<https://plato.stanford.edu/>] is fast becoming a valuable, up-to-date resource for articles on the major theories to be discussed in the course. Articles worth consulting include:

- Geoff Sayre-McCord, 2012, “Metaethics”, at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/metaethics/>
- Stephen Finlay & Mark Schroeder, 2012, “Reasons for Action: Internal vs. External”, at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/reasons-internal-external/>
- Connie Rosati, 2006, “Moral Motivation”, at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-motivation/>
- William Fitzpatrick, 2014, “Morality and Evolutionary Biology”, at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/morality-biology/>
- Mark van Roojen, 2013, “Moral Cognitivism vs Non-Cognitivism”, at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-cognitivism/>
- Richard Joyce, “Moral Anti-realism”, at <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-anti-realism/>
- Carla Bagnoli, 2011, “Constructivism in Metaethics”, *Stanford University Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/constructivism-metaethics/>

Assignments, due dates, and grading

Assignments:

1. Weekly reading assignments will be set. 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 anyone who misses a class to find out what readings have been set.
2. Two brief “analysis-and-critique” assignments. The format for analysis-and-critique assignments and what they involve will be posted on D2L at the beginning of term and explained in class. Samples of ‘analyses-and-critiques’ will also be posted on D2L and discussed in class.
3. One short essay (about 1000 words maximum, excluding footnotes and bibliography). Details will be posted in D2L.
4. A term paper (about 1700 words maximum, excluding footnotes and bibliography). Details will be posted in D2L.
5. There will be no registrar-scheduled final examination.
6. Assignments are to be uploaded as MS-Word or rtf files (**not as pdf files**) to this course’s digital dropbox in D2L

Due-dates:

Analysis-and-critique 1: Due 4pm, January 27th.

Essay 1: Due, 4pm, February 10th.

Analysis-and-critique 2: Due 4pm, March 3.

Essay 2: Due 4pm, March 17th.

Term paper: Due 9am, Saturday, April 15th.

Grading

1. The first analysis-and-critique will be worth 10% of the final grade, the second will be worth 20%.
2. The first essay will be worth 15% and the second worth 20% of the final grade.
3. The term paper will be worth 35%.

4. (a) If an assignment is submitted after the stated deadline, then it will receive at most a B and then only if submitted by 9am of the day after the due day: it will receive at most a C if submitted by 9am of the day after that, and so on; (b) if the first analysis-and-critique assignment is not submitted by 3:00pm on January 30th, then it will not be accepted and a grade of F will automatically be given for that assignment; (c) if the second analysis-and-critique assignment is not submitted by 3:00pm on March 6th, then it will not be accepted and a grade of F will automatically be given for that assignment.
 5. Later virtue will be allowed to redeem earlier sin.
 6. Percentages will be computed using the numbers set by the University as equivalent to the letter grades.
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IMPORTANT DEPARTMENTAL, FACULTY AND UNIVERSITY INFORMATION

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

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services. SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For more information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>. Students who require accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their instructor. The full policy on student accommodations is available at http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf

D2L Help

Desire2Learn is UCalgary's online learning management system. Important information and communications about this course may be posted on D2L. Go to <http://www.ucalgary.ca/it/services/d2l> for help.

General Academic Concerns and Program Planning

Have a question but not sure where to start? The Arts Students Centre is your information resource for everything in the Faculty of Arts. Drop in at SS102, call 403-220-3580, or email ascarts@ucalgary.ca. Advisors in the ASC can also provide assistance and advice in planning your program through to graduation. Visit the Faculty of Arts website at <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> 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 Undergraduate Advisors. Jeremy Fantl (jfantl@ucalgary.ca), Reid Buchanan (buchanan@ucalgary.ca), Megan Delehanty (mdelehan@ucalgary.ca).

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 Department Manager, Merlette Schnell (schnell@ucalgary.ca). Include the specific course information and your UCID number in your request.

Writing

This course will include written assignments. Faculty policy directs that all written assignments (including, although to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization. Research papers must be properly documented. Students are also encouraged to use Writing Support Services and other Student Success Centre Services, located on the 3rd floor of the Taylor Family Digital Library. Writing Support Services assist with a variety of assignments, from essays to lab reports. Students can book 30-minute one-on-one appointments online, sign up for 15-minute drop-in appointments, and register for a variety of writing workshops. For more information on this and other Student Success Centre services, please visit www.ucalgary.ca/ssc.

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 or teaching assistant.

Internet and Electronic Communication Devices

The instructor reserves the right to establish course policies regarding the use of devices such as laptops, tablets, and smartbooks. If allowed, these devices must be used exclusively for instructional purposes and must not cause disruption to the instructor or to fellow students. Cell phones and paging devices should be set to silent mode during lectures. Audio or video recording of lectures is not permitted without the written permission of the instructor. Students violating this policy are subject to discipline under the University of Calgary's Non-Academic Misconduct policy

Emergency Evacuation:

In case of an emergency evacuation during class, students must gather at the designated assembly point nearest to the classroom. The list of assembly points is found at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints> . Please check this website and note the nearest assembly point for this course.

Other Helpful Contacts

- Safewalk and Campus Security: 403-220-5333.
- Faculty of Arts Student Representatives: 403-220-6552, arts1@su.ucalgary.ca , arts2@su.ucalgary.ca, arts3@su.ucalgary.ca, arts4@su.ucalgary.ca .
- Student Ombudsman: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>