

PY3702: Value and Normativity

Lectures: Mondays 11–1, in the Arts Lecture Theatre.

Tutorials: Mondays 3–4 and 4–5, Wednesdays 10–11, Fridays 10–11 and 12–1, beginning in Week 2. Sign up for a tutorial through MMS.

Course coordinator: Justin Snedegar, js280@st-andrews.ac.uk

Office hours: Mondays, 2–3pm, and by appointment in Edgecliffe B18

Course teacher: Dan Cavedon-Taylor, dct2@st-andrews.ac.uk

Description

This module will deal with a range of core debates in recent philosophy concerning the nature of normativity and value. They will be approached through study of contemporary work in metaethics. Various positions on the nature and status of moral properties and, in particular, moral language, will be introduced and evaluated. We will also discuss the nature of moral reasons and their relationship to practical rationality.

Intended Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module students will have gained some basic knowledge of contemporary metaethics, including the landscape of views and the arguments and methods used to support them. The students' own philosophical skills should be sharpened, as well. This module should prepare students for further study, especially in moral philosophy, but also in “core” areas of philosophy including metaphysics, epistemology, and the philosophy of language.

To meet these outcomes, students should attend all lectures and tutorials. Students should also do the readings before the relevant lectures and tutorials, and come to both—especially tutorials—prepared to discuss the material.

Required Texts

- *Foundations of Ethics*, eds. Russ Shafer-Landau and Terence Cuneo
- *Noncognitivism in Ethics*, by Mark Schroeder

Assessment

50% continuous assessment and 50% exam:

- *Continuous Assessment:* One 3,500 word essay, answering one of the following questions:
 - What, if anything, can be learned from the Open Question Argument?
 - Do Mackie's arguments from queerness and relativity defeat non-naturalism?
 - Is noncognitivism defeated by the Frege-Geach problem?

This essay is due on Monday, 14 April, 2014 (after week 9). Submit via MMS by 23:59.

For full details of marking criteria for essays, see the [Philosophy Handbook for Undergraduates](#)

- *Exam*: One 3 hour exam

Tentative Schedule

The following schedule of readings is subject to change. Most readings are from *Foundations of Ethics*. The readings by Schroeder are from *Noncognitivism in Ethics*. Some readings are provided separately. The titles of some of these readings below link through to them. If you are not on a university network, you may need to login via Shibboleth. You will be able to select the University of St Andrews, and then login using your university username and password. If you have trouble accessing something, please don't hesitate to email me. The readings with no links, and that are not in either of the course texts, will be provided via MMS. These are primarily chapters from other books that must be scanned.

Week 1: Introduction and Moore

- Moore, 'The subject matter of ethics'
- McPherson, '[Open question argument](#)' (provided)
- Darwall, et al. '[Toward fin de siècle ethics](#)' (provided)

Week 2: Error Theory and Fictionalism

- Mackie, 'The subjectivity of values'
- Nolan, et al., '[Moral fictionalism versus the rest](#)' (provided)
- Joyce, 'The myth of morality'

Week 3: Naturalist Moral Realism

- Railton, 'Moral realism'
- Boyd, 'How to be a moral realist'

Week 4: Contemporary Non-Naturalism

- Shafer-Landau, 'Ethics as philosophy'
- Hampton, 'The authority of reason'
- Enoch, '[An outline of an argument for robust metanormative realism](#)' (provided)

Week 5: Constructivism

- Korsgaard, 'The authority of reflection'
- Harman, 'Moral relativism defended'
- Milo, 'Contractarian constructivism'

Week 6: Early Noncognitivism

- Ayer, 'Critique of ethics and theology'
- Schroeder, Chapter 2
- Hare, Ch. 1, *The Language of Morals* (provided)

Week 7: The Frege-Geach Problem

- Schroeder, Chs. 3–4
- Stevenson, ‘[The emotive meaning of ethical terms](#)’ (provided)
- Hare, Ch. 2, *The Language of Morals* (provided)

Week 8: Expressivism

- Schroeder, Chs. 6–7
- Blackburn, *Spreading the Word* Ch. 6 (provided)
- Gibbard, *Thinking How to Live*, Chs. 3–4 (provided)

Week 9: Moral reasons

- Foot, ‘Morality as a system of hypothetical imperatives’
- Williams, ‘Internal and external reasons’
- Korsgaard, ‘Skepticism about practical reason’

Week 10: Moral reasons

- Parfit, ‘[Reasons and motivation](#)’ (provided)
- Shafter-Landau, ‘Moral reasons’
- Finlay, ‘[The reasons that matter](#)’ (provided)

Week 11: Review and catch-up

Supplementary and Background Reading

The following books are not required reading, but would make good supplementary and background reading.

- *Moral Discourse and Practice*, eds. Darwall, Gibbard, and Railton
 - A nice anthology; overlaps somewhat with *Foundations of Ethics*
- *Moral Realism: A Defence*, Russ Shafer-Landau
- *Taking Morality Seriously*, David Enoch
 - Contemporary defenses of non-naturalist moral realism
- *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*, Allan Gibbard
- *Being For: Evaluating the Semantic Program of Expressivism*, Mark Schroeder
 - Contemporary discussions of expressivism
- *The Sources of Normativity*, Christine Korsgaard
 - Defense of a Kantian constructivist position
- *The Moral Problem*, Michael Smith
- *On What Matters*, Derek Parfit
- *The Domain of Reasons*, John Skorupski
 - Overarching, systematic works in contemporary metaethics