

**PHIL 4352: PROBLEMS IN PHILOSOPHY: ETHICS: CONTEMPORARY METAETHICS**  
**PHIL 5352: BASIC PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES: ETHICS: CONTEMPORARY METAETHICS**

The University of Texas at El Paso

Semester: Fall 2014

Location: Quinn Hall, Rm. 103

Time: Wednesdays, 4:30-7:20 pm

**INSTRUCTOR: DR. CAROLINE T. ARRUDA**

Office Hours:

- Wednesdays, 1:00 pm-3:00 pm
- Other times by appointment

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**GENERAL COURSE DESCRIPTION:** Normative ethics, broadly conceived, seeks to determine how we ought act. In order to answer this concern, however, ethics must also seek to answer more foundational questions about the status of moral claims, the existence of moral facts, the nature of moral language, among others. This is the domain of metaethics. In this course we will focus on the classic and contemporary debate in metaethics about these and other issues.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:** The main objectives of this course are twofold: first, to develop your understanding of the various philosophical positions and questions in metaethics; second, to formulate your own, informed philosophical positions on the central questions in metaethics.

**REQUIRED TEXTS (AVAILABLE AT THE UNIVERSITY BOOKSTORE):**

1. Miller, Alexander. *An Introduction to Contemporary Metaethics*. Polity Press, 2013. (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)
2. Fisher, Andrew and Simon Kirchin, eds. *Arguing About Metaethics*. Routledge Press, 2006.

**COURSE RESOURCES:**

(THESE LINKS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE UNDER THE 'WEBLINKS' SECTION OF OUR BLACKBOARD SHELL)

1. Blackboard site for this course
2. The Writing Center
  - Located in Library 227
  - Visit their website at:  
<http://academics.utep.edu/Default.aspx?alias=academics.utep.edu/writingcenter>
3. Jim Pryor's "Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper":
  - <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>
4. Purdue University Library's Citation Guide:
  - <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>
5. UTEP's Instructional Support Services Module "How to Avoid Plagiarism":
  - [http://dmc.utep.edu/home/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=390:part-3-citations&catid=109:internet-research&Itemid=539](http://dmc.utep.edu/home/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=390:part-3-citations&catid=109:internet-research&Itemid=539)
6. PhilPapers:
  - [www.philpapers.org](http://www.philpapers.org)
  - An online philosophy database of professional philosophical research
  - Professionally authored bibliographies on specific debates within each sub-specialty in Philosophy. See bibliographies on Metaethics

7. List of texts on reserve at the UTEP library related to Metaethics

**MISCELLANEOUS NOTES:**

1. Any changes made to this syllabus will be announced in class.
2. If you contact me by email, I need *at least twenty-four hours* to respond.
3. If you want me to read a paper draft, I need *at least one week* to do so. Please plan ahead.

**GRADING:**

- Class Participation: 4% of semester grade
- In-class Presentation: 15% of semester grade
- Weekly Argument Summaries: 11% of the semester grade
  - You will write **nine in total** (excluding weeks where you write reaction papers and the week of your in class presentation)
  - 1% each, for a total of 11% of semester grade
  - Each summary graded on a Pass/Fail basis
- Two Short Papers: 15% each, for a total of 30% of semester grade
- Term Paper: 40% of semester grade

<b>COURSE ASSIGNMENTS &amp; REQUIREMENTS</b>
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**CLASS PARTICIPATION:**

Students are expected to complete the reading for each class meeting, and they must bring their books (or a photocopy of the reading assignment) to class. They will be called upon in class to answer questions about the reading and are expected to make thoughtful comments or to ask well-formulated questions. No question is too simple or naïve to ask! Students are expected to maintain a respectful demeanor in class, although they should feel free to criticize and to question one another as long as it is done in a respectful fashion

**IN-CLASS PRESENTATION:**

During the first week of classes, students will sign up for one reading assignment for their class presentations.

Requirements for undergraduates:

1. The presentation should be approximately **ten minutes long (and no longer)**.
2. The presenter should make clear the following aspects of the day's assigned reading:
  - a. The author's main claim(s).
  - b. The reasons that the author uses to support the claim.
  - c. How those reasons support (or fail to support) the claim(s) in question.
  - d. The relationship between the reading and other assigned readings for the class.
  - e. If relevant, possible issues with the structure, clarity and/or soundness of the argument.
  - f. Raise at least one objection or counterargument.
3. The presenter should be prepared to field questions from other class members.

4. Hand in a typed version of the presentation on the day of your class presentation.
5. Upload a copy of the presentation to Blackboard before you come to class.
6. Follow all requirements for written assignments for this course. See “General Requirements for Written Assignments” below.
7. **NO OUTSIDE SOURCES ALLOWED.**

Requirements for graduate students:

1. The presentation should be approximately **fifteen minutes** long (**and no longer**).
2. The presenter should make clear the following aspects of the day’s assigned reading:
  - a. The author’s main claim(s).
  - b. The reasons that the author uses to support the claim.
  - c. How those reasons support (or fail to support) the claim(s) in question.
  - d. The relationship between the reading and other assigned readings for the class.
  - e. Contextualize the argument in question by explaining its relevance for the debates under consideration in the course.
  - f. If relevant, discuss possible issues with the structure, clarity and/or soundness of the argument.
  - g. Raise at least two objections or counterarguments.
3. The presenter should be prepared to field questions from other class members.
4. Hand in a typed version of the presentation on the day of your class presentation.
5. Upload a copy of the presentation to Blackboard before you come to class.
6. Follow all requirements for written assignments for this course. See “General Requirements for Written Assignments” below.
7. **NO OUTSIDE SOURCES ALLOWED.**

### **WEEKLY ARGUMENT SUMMARIES:**

For both undergraduates and graduates:

- You will write **eleven** argument summaries over the course of the semester.
- You **WILL NOT** write argument summaries on the days that you write reaction papers or on the day of your in-class presentation.
- Your argument summaries **MUST** cover the readings that are designated for argument summaries in the schedule on this syllabus (see below). In most cases, this means that your argument summary for a given class meeting will cover **more than one** reading assignment. Your summaries should be divided accordingly.
- Argument summaries must:
  1. **Be approximately 350-450 words in length per article/reading assignment, but no less than 300 words.**
  2. Be divided or organized by article under discussion.
  3. Cover the designated assigned readings for that class meeting.
  4. Explain the basic thesis of the article, the claims used to support the

thesis and the ways in which these claims support the thesis.

5. Use clear, simple, non-technical language.
  6. Explain any complicated or technical aspects of the main argument.
  7. Define/explain technical terms in simple language.
  8. Summarize any other major arguments that the author discusses, such as refutations of competing views **WHERE SPACE PERMITS**.
  9. **NOT USE ANY OUTSIDE SOURCES.**
  10. NOT cover every detail of the article.
  11. NOT raise criticisms of the argument. Their function is to explain the argument.
  12. Be uploaded to Blackboard by class time on the day that the article(s) in question will be discussed.
- Argument summaries will be graded on a Pass/Fail basis. If you meet the requirements above, you pass. If you don't, you fail. For the purposes of calculating your semester grade, this means that you either receive 100% or 0% on the assignment.

### **TWO SHORT PAPERS:**

For undergraduates:

- You will write **two 1200 word papers on assigned topics**.
- **Please see the syllabus below for due dates.**
- You will upload it under the link on the Blackboard site.
- It is your job to ensure that you hand in two papers. I will not remind you to do so.
- **For directions for this assignment, please see Blackboard (“Directions for Undergraduate Students’ Reaction Papers”)**.
- Follow all general requirements for written assignments for this course. See “General Requirements for Written Assignments” below.

For graduate students:

- You will write **two 1500 word papers on assigned topics**.
- **Please see the syllabus below for due dates.**
- You will upload it under the link on the Blackboard site.
- It is your job to ensure that you hand in two papers. I will not remind you to do so.
- **For directions for this assignment, please see Blackboard (“Directions for Graduate Students’ Reaction Papers”)**.
- Follow all requirements for written assignments for this course. See “General Requirements for Written Assignments” below.

### **TERM PAPER:**

For undergraduates:

You will write a **2500-2700 word term paper** for this course. See the schedule below for due dates. This paper will require that you do the following (**but please see the more detailed assignment directions posted on Blackboard**):

- Develop a topic for which you must receive my approval (see schedule for deadline).

- **Read at least one *reputable***, academic sources on the topic (e.g., a recent journal article on the topic in an academic journal) and **include it in your paper**.
- Use the relevant assigned course readings in the paper.
- See the specific assignment directions under the ‘Assignments’ tab on Blackboard.

For graduate students:

You will write a **3000 word term paper** for this course. See the schedule below for due dates. Also see the section ‘General Requirements for Written Assignments’ on this syllabus.

This paper will require that you do the following (**but please see the more detailed assignment directions posted on Blackboard**):

- Develop a topic for which you must receive my approval (see schedule for deadline).
- **Read at least two *reputable***, academic sources on the topic (e.g., a recent journal article on the topic in an academic journal) and **include them in your paper**.
- Use the relevant assigned course readings in the paper.
- See the specific assignment directions under the ‘Assignments’ tab on Blackboard.

#### **DIRECTIONS FOR HANDING IN PAPERS AND RECEIVING GRADED PAPERS THROUGH BLACKBOARD:**

- You must hand in your papers under the ‘Assignments’ tab on the Blackboard site for this course. The due dates for each paper are listed on the schedule on this syllabus.
- I will upload graded essays under the ‘Assignment’ link for the assignment in question, and you will receive a message in Blackboard when it is returned.
- **You can view the comments and the grade by downloading the graded exam, opening it in Microsoft Word, and clicking on ‘View with Markup’.**

#### **GRADING SCALE:**

- A 90-100%
- B 80-89%
- C 70-79%
- D 60-69%
- F 59% and below

### **COURSE POLICIES**

#### **CLASS PROTOCOL AND CONDUCT:**

- Students are expected to arrive on time to class. **Any students arriving to class more than 10 minutes late or leaving more than 10 minutes early will be considered absent.**
- Students must turn off all cell phones, iPods, etc. during class. If your cell phone rings during class, you will be asked to leave.
- Students are expected to refrain from chatting with their neighbors during class. If you do so, you will be asked to leave.

#### LAPTOPS, RECORDING DEVICES AND CELL PHONES:

- Using laptops, your cell phone (including text messaging), audio or video recorders or other digital devices during class **is prohibited**.
- **Lectures cannot be recorded** (except in individual cases where I have granted permission).

#### MAKE-UP POLICY:

- Students will be allowed to make up missed work, including quizzes, ONLY in the case of documented family emergency or illness.

#### LATE ASSIGNMENTS:

- I will deduct one letter grade for each calendar day that an assignment is late.

#### EMAIL:

- All class email correspondences will be conducted exclusively through our UTEP email addresses.

#### BLACKBOARD:

- We will be using the Blackboard shell for our class throughout the semester.
- If you have not done so, you should learn how to use Blackboard.
- I will be using Blackboard to post course materials, including the syllabus, essay topics and your grades for your assignments.

#### ATTENDANCE POLICY:

- Attendance is mandatory.
- To account for emergencies, illness, among other possibilities, you are allowed **1 absence**.
- Any absence(s) after your allowed absence will result in the **deduction of one full letter grade from your semester grade**.
- If you miss **2 or more classes, you will fail this course**.

#### DISABILITIES:

- “UTEP seeks to provide reasonable accommodations for all qualified individuals with disabilities, including learning disabilities. This university will adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required affording equal educational opportunity. It is the student’s responsibility to register with Disabled Student Services Office in the East Union Bldg., Room 106 within the first two weeks of classes, and inform the faculty member to arrange for appropriate accommodations.”
- The Disabled Student Services Office can also be reached in the following ways:  
Web: <http://www.utep.edu/dsso>

Phone: (915) 747-5148 voice or TTY

Fax: (915) 747-8712

E-Mail: [dss@utep.edu](mailto:dss@utep.edu)

#### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

- **UTEP’s Policy:** “Scholastic dishonesty (which includes the attempt of any student to present the

work of another as his or her own, or any work which s(he) has not honestly performed, or attempting to pass any examination by improper means) is a serious offense and will subject the student to disciplinary action. The aiding and abetting of a student in any dishonesty is held to be an equally serious offense. All alleged acts of scholastic dishonesty should be reported to the Dean of Students for disposition. It is the Dean of Students' responsibility to investigate each allegation, dismiss the allegation, or proceed with disciplinary action in a manner which provides the accused student his or her rights of due process." See the Dean of Students office for further information at <http://www.utep.edu/dos/acadintg.htm>.

- **Students who violate the above policy will be reported to the appropriate academic office, will receive a zero or 'F' for the assignment in question and may receive a zero or 'F' for the semester.**

#### **GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:**

(IN ADDITION TO THE SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR EACH ASSIGNMENT)

- 1) Essays should be written using a formal tone, must be edited for spelling and grammatical errors, and should include a clear thesis statement that answers the assigned question.
- 2) Essays must make use of the relevant assigned course readings.
- 3) *Reputable, academic sources* that are not part of the assigned reading list may be used (or, where required, must be used).
- 4) **Some assignments for this course prohibit the use of outside sources. Please follow this requirement where applicable.**
- 5) Essays must have internal citations and include a formal bibliography. Both MLA and Chicago Style formatting are acceptable.
- 6) Essays must be double-spaced, have a 1-inch margin, and be written using a 12 point font. They should include page numbers in the bottom right-hand corner of the page.
- 7) Essays must include a word count underneath the author's name.
- 8) Essays (excluding the in-class presentation) will be handed in on the Blackboard site for this course.

#### **TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

Reading assignments are listed on the day for which they should be completed.

Key: (ICM)= *An Introduction to Contemporary Metaethics*  
(AM)= *Arguing About Metaethics*  
(BB)= Article posted on Blackboard  
\* = **must be the subject of weekly argument summary**

#### **WEEK ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE**

Aug. 27: Introduction to the course

- Sign up for in class presentations during class

#### **WEEK TWO:**

Sept. 3: **No Class due to conference (online replacement assignment)**

**WEEK THREE:**

Sept. 10: **No Class due to conference (replacement meeting to be scheduled)**

**WEEK FOUR: AN INTRODUCTION TO METAETHICS; THE OPEN QUESTION ARGUMENT**

Sept. 17:

- “Introduction” & “Moore’s Attack on Ethical Naturalism” (*ICM*)
- “The Open Question Argument” by G.E. Moore (*AM*) \*

**WEEK FIVE: THE OPEN QUESTION ARGUMENT**

Sept. 24:

- “The Naturalistic Fallacy” by W. Frankena (*AM*) \*
- “The Open Question as a Linguistic Test” by F. Snare (*AM*) \*

**WEEK SIX: ERROR THEORY AND MORAL REALISM**

Oct 1:

- “Mackie’s Error-Theory and the Argument from Queerness” (*ICM*)
  - “The Argument from Relativity and Queerness” by J. Mackie (*AM*) \*
- **Topics for Essay #1 posted on Blackboard by 9:00 pm**

**WEEK SEVEN: ERROR THEORY AND MORAL REALISM (CONTINUED)**

Oct. 8:

- “Moral Realism and the Sceptical Arguments...” by D. Brink (*AM*) \*
  - “On the Genuine Queerness of Moral Properties and Facts” by R. Garner (*AM*) \*
- **Oct. 12<sup>th</sup>: Essay #1 Due by 9:00 pm via Blackboard**

**WEEK EIGHT: EMOTIVISM AND PRESCRIPTIVISM**

Oct. 15:

- “Emotivism and the Rejection of Non-Naturalism” (*ICM*)
- “Critique of Ethics and Theology” by A.J. Ayer (BB) \*
- Selections from *The Language of Morals* by R.M. Hare (BB) \*

**WEEK NINE: MORAL REALISM AFTER MOORE: NATURALISM**

Oct. 22:

- “Naturalism 1: Cornell Realism” (*ICM*)
- “Moral Explanations” by N. Sturgeon (*AM*) \*

**WEEK TEN: MORAL REALISM AFTER MOORE: NATURALISM (CONTINUED)**

Oct. 29:

- “Naturalism 2: Reductionism” (*ICM*)
  - “Moral Realism” by P. Railton (*AM*) \*
- **Oct. 30<sup>th</sup>: Topics for Essay #2 posted on Blackboard by 9:00 pm**

**WEEK ELEVEN: MORAL REALISM AFTER MOORE: NATURALISM (CONTINUED)**

Nov 5:

- “Troubles for New Wave Moral Semantics” by T. Horgan & M. Timmons (*AM*) \*
- “Critical Notice of Hurley” by F. Jackson (*AM*) \*

#### **WEEK TWELVE: MORAL REALISM AFTER MOORE: MODERN NON-NATURALISM**

Nov. 12:

- “Contemporary Non-Naturalism” (*ICM*)
- “Values and Secondary Qualities” by J. McDowell (*AM*) \*
- **(In class) Sign up for mandatory appointments to discuss term papers**
- **Nov. 13<sup>th</sup>: Essay #2 due at 9:00 pm via Blackboard**
- **Nov. 13<sup>th</sup>: Topics for Term Paper Posted on Blackboard**

#### **WEEK THIRTEEN: EXPRESSIVISM**

Nov. 19:

- “Blackburn’s Quasi-Realism” (*ICM*)
- “Realism and Variations” by S. Blackburn (*AM*) \*
- **Mandatory appointments to discuss term papers throughout the week (please bring outline)**

#### **WEEK FOURTEEN: THE FREGE-GEACH PROBLEM**

Nov. 26:

- “The Frege-Geach Problem” by S. Blackburn (*AM*) \*
- “Moral *Modus Ponens* and Moral Realism” by G.F. Schueler (*AM*) \*

#### **WEEK FIFTEEN:**

Dec. 3:

- Catch up day

#### **WEEK SIXTEEN:**

Dec. 10: **Term Papers Due by 9 pm via Blackboard.**