

PHIL 4352: PROBLEMS IN PHILOSOPHY: ETHICS: METAETHICS & PRACTICAL REASON
PHIL 5352: BASIC PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES: ETHICS: METAETHICS & PRACTICAL REASON

The University of Texas at El Paso

Semester: Fall 2016

Location: Hudspeth Hall, Rm. 114

Time: Mon. & Wed., 4:30-5:50 pm

INSTRUCTOR: DR. CAROLINE T. ARRUDA

Office Hours:

- Mondays & Wednesdays, 3:00-4:00 pm
- Other times by pre-arranged appointment

Office: Worrell Hall, Room 306

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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. (2nd edition)
2. Fisher, Andrew and Simon Kirchin, eds. *Arguing About Metaethics*. Routledge Press, 2006.
3. Readings and links to journal articles posted on Blackboard

LIBRARY RESOURCES:

1. Books on Reserve at the library:
 - a. Volumes 1-4,6-8 of *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, ed. Russ Shafer-Landau. Oxford University Press
 - b. *Metaethics: A Contemporary Introduction* by Mark van Roojen. Routledge Press, 2015.
 - c. *Constructivism in Practical Philosophy*, eds. J. Lenman & Y. Shemmer. Oxford University Press, 2012.
 - d. *Weighing Reasons*, eds. B. MacGuire & E. Lord. Oxford University Press, 2016.
 - e. *On What Matters*, Vols. 1&2 by Derek Parfit. Oxford University Press, 2011.
 - f. *Metaethics: The Critical Concepts*, Vols. 1-4, ed. Russ Shafer-Landau. Routledge: 2008.
2. Electronic Books via UTEP Library (links in Blackboard site):

- a. *Constructivism in Ethics*, ed. Carla Bagnoli. Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- b. Vol. 10, *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, ed. Russ Shafer-Landau. Oxford University Press, 2015.
- c. Selections from *International Encyclopedia of Ethics*, Vols. 1-9, ed. Hugh LaFollette, Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.

COURSE RESOURCES:

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
6. PhilPapers:
 - 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 (see Blackboard)**

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: 3% of semester grade
- In-class Presentation: 15% of semester grade
- Weekly Argument Summaries: 12% of the semester grade
 - You will write **twelve in total**
 - 1% each, for a total of 12% 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

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS & REQUIREMENTS
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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 **twelve** argument summaries over the course of the semester.
- Your argument summaries **MUST** cover the readings that are designated for argument summaries in the schedule on this syllabus (see below).
- 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

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)= Reading or link to article posted on Blackboard
(LR)= Library Reserve

***= must be the subject of weekly argument summary**

Week 1: INTRODUCTION

8/22: Introduction to the course

- Sign up for in-class presentations during class

8/24:

- “Introduction” (*ICM*)
- “Methodology in Metaethics” by Folke Tersman (BB)
- “Cognitivism” by Caj Strandberg (BB)
- “Non-Cognitivism” by Michael Ridge (BB)

Week 2: THE OPEN QUESTION ARGUMENT

8/29:

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

8/31:

- “The Naturalistic Fallacy” by W. Frankena (*AM*) *
- “Naturalistic Fallacy” by J. Suikkanen (BB)

Week 3: THE OPEN QUESTION ARGUMENT

9/05: University Holiday (No Classes)

9/07: No class due to Dr. Arruda being away at a conference; Make-Up Class on Dec. 2nd at our normal class time (location TBA)

Week 4: THE OPEN QUESTION ARGUMENT

9/12:

- “The Open Question as a Linguistic Test” by F. Snare (*AM*) *

9/14: Class canceled (Dr. Arruda away at conference)

Week 5: ERROR THEORY AND MORAL REALISM

9/19:

- “Mackie’s Error-Theory and the Argument from Queerness” (*ICM*)
- “The Argument from Relativity and Queerness” by J. Mackie (*AM*) *

9/21:

- “Moral Realism and the Sceptical Arguments...” by D. Brink (*AM*) *
- “On the Genuine Queerness of Moral Properties and Facts” by R. Garner (*AM*)

- **Topics for Essay #1 posted on Blackboard by 9:00 pm**

Week 6: EMOTIVISM AND PRESCRIPTIVISM (PRE-CURSOR TO EXPRESSIVISM AND QUASI-REALISM)

9/26:

- “Emotivism and the Rejection of Non-Naturalism” (*ICM*)
- “Critique of Ethics and Theology” by A.J. Ayer (BB) *

9/28:

- Selections from *The Language of Morals* by R.M. Hare (BB) *
- “Prescriptivism” by Daniel Boisvert (BB)

9/30: **Essay #1 Due by 9:00 pm via Blackboard**

Week 7: MORAL REALISM AFTER MOORE: NON-REDUCTIVE NATURALISM

10/03:

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

10/05:

- Continue discussion of Sturgeon
- “Moral Supervenience” by Johannes V. Schmitt (BB)

Week 8: MORAL REALISM AFTER MOORE: REDUCTIVE NATURALISM; ANALYTIC NATURALISM

10/10: Reductive Naturalism

- “Naturalism 2: Reductionism” (*ICM*)
- “Moral Realism” by P. Railton (*AM*) *

10/12: Analytic Naturalism

- “Critical Notice of Hurley” by F. Jackson (*AM*)
- “Moral Functionalism” by F. Jackson (BB)
- **Topics for Essay #2 posted on Blackboard by 9:00 pm**

Week 9: MORAL REALISM AFTER MOORE: MODERN NON-NATURALISM

10/17:

- “Contemporary Non-Naturalism” (*ICM*)
- “Values and Secondary Qualities” by J. McDowell (*AM*) *

10/19:

- “Pathetic Ethics” by David Sosa

10/21: **Essay #2 due at 9:00 pm via Blackboard**

Week 10: EXPRESSIVISM

10/24:

- “Blackburn’s Quasi-Realism” (*ICM*)
- “Realism and Variations” by S. Blackburn (*AM*) *

10/26:

- “Moral Feelings and Moral Concepts” by Allan Gibbard in *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, Vol. 1 (LR)

Week 11: EXPRESSIVISM

10/31:

- “Expressivism, Yes! Relativism, No!” by T. Horgan & M. Timmons in *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, Vol. 1 (LR)

11/2:

- “Mind-independence without the mystery: Why quasi-realists can't have it both ways” by S. Street *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, Vol. 6 (LR)
- **Topics for Term Paper Posted on Blackboard by 9:00 pm**

Week 12: THE FREGE-GEACH PROBLEM

11/7:

- “The Frege-Geach Problem” by S. Blackburn (*AM*) *
- “Frege-Geach Objection” by M. van Roojen (BB)

11/9:

- “Moral *Modus Ponens* and Moral Realism” by G.F. Schueler (*AM*)

Week 13: METAETHICAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

11/14:

- “Constructivism in Metaethics” by C. Bagnoli (BB)
- “Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory” by J. Rawls (LR—ask for my PHIL 4351/5351 Course Reserves)
- *Recommended*: “What is Constructivism in Ethics?” by S. Street

11/16:

- “Realism and Constructivism in Twentieth-Century Moral Philosophy” by C. Korsgaard (BB)

Week 14: METAETHICAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

11/21:

- “Metaethics and its Discontents: A Case Study of Korsgaard” by N. Hussain & N. Shah (BB)

11/23:

- “Is Constructivism an Alternative to Moral Realism?” by D. Copp (BB)

Week 15:

11/28:

- In class appointments to discuss outlines/drafts for term papers.
- It is mandatory to bring an outline or a draft of your paper to class. They will be

collected.

11/30: Catch-up day in case we are behind in the readings

12/2: Make-up class meeting; Topic and location TBA

Week 16: Final Exam Week

12/9: Term papers due via Blackboard at 9:00 pm