

**ADVANCED INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS:
CONTEMPORARY METAETHICS**

G83.1004-001

Spring 2003

Fridays from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Silver Center 503

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Office hours: Wednesdays from 4-5 p.m. and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar (which counts as a background course) will provide a high-level introduction to and survey of contemporary metaethics. The goal will be to supply you with a broad map of the overall field, and then to begin filling in selected regions of that map, with an emphasis on the positions of ethical naturalism, Blackburn's and Gibbard's noncognitivism, sensibility theories, and constructivism.

TEXTS

Darwall, Stephen, Allan Gibbard, and Peter Railton, eds. *Moral Discourse and Practice*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Gibbard, Allan. *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Korsgaard, Christine M. *The Sources of Normativity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Copies of all three books are available at the NYU Main Bookstore. Additional readings for the course will be made available in a folder in the Department copy room.

REQUIREMENTS

Students taking the course for credit have the option of writing either two ten-page papers or one twenty-page paper. If you choose to write two ten-page papers, then the first is due on Friday, March 14th, and the second is due on Friday, May 9th. If you choose to write one twenty-page paper, then a proposal and tentative outline is due on Friday, April 11th, and the paper itself is due on Friday, May 9th. From time to time I may also ask people to give short presentations.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

Week 1: Introduction

Friday, January 24th

- No reading

Week 2: Background to the current debate

Friday, January 31st

- Stephen Darwall, Allan Gibbard, and Peter Railton, "Toward *Fin de siècle* Ethics: Some Trends" (in *MDP*)
- G. E. Moore, selection from *Principia Ethica* (in *MDP*)
- Charles Stevenson, "The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms" (in *MDP*)

Week 3: Problems

Friday, February 7th

- Gilbert Harman, "Ethics and Observation" (in *MDP*)

- J. L. Mackie, selection from *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (in *MDP*)
- Nicholas Sturgeon, “Moral Explanations” (photocopy)

Weeks 4-5: Ethical naturalism

Friday, February 14th

- Re-read pp. 26-28 of “Toward *Fin de siècle* Ethics” (in *MDP*)
- Nicholas Sturgeon, “Moral Explanations” (photocopy), continued
- Richard Boyd, “How To Be a Moral Realist” (in *MDP*)

Friday, February 21st

- Re-read pp. 28-30 of “Toward *Fin de siècle* Ethics” (in *MDP*)
- Peter Railton, “Moral Realism” (in *MDP*)
- Peter Railton, “Naturalism and Prescriptivity” (photocopy)

Weeks 6-9: Blackburn’s and Gibbard’s Noncognitivism

Friday, February 28th

- Re-read pp. 15-19 of “Toward *Fin de siècle* Ethics” (in *MDP*)
- Simon Blackburn, Chapters 5 and 6 of *Spreading the Word* (photocopy)
- Simon Blackburn, “How To Be an Ethical Antirealist” (in *MDP*)

Friday, March 7th

- Allan Gibbard, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*, Parts I and II

Friday, March 14th

- Allan Gibbard, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*, Part III

Friday, March 21st

- SPRING BREAK

Friday, March 28th

- Allan Gibbard, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*, Part IV

Weeks 10-11: Sensibility Theories

Friday, April 4th

- Re-read pp. 19-24 of “Toward *Fin de siècle* Ethics” (in *MDP*)
- John McDowell, “Values and Secondary Qualities” (in *MDP*)
- John McDowell, “Projection and Truth in Ethics” (in *MDP*)

Friday, April 11th

- Same readings as last time, continued
- David Wiggins, “A Sensible Subjectivism?” (in *MDP*)

Weeks 12-14: Constructivism

Friday, April 18th

- Re-read pp. 12-15 of “Toward *Fin de siècle* Ethics” (in *MDP*)
- John Rawls, “Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory” (in *MDP*)
- Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity*, Lectures 1 and 2

Friday, April 25th

- Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity*, Lecture 3

Friday, May 2nd

- Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity*, Lecture 4