

PHIL 152-01
Recent Ethical Theory
California State University, Sacramento, (Fall 2020)
Tues/Thurs, 1:30-2:45 pm (online)

Subject to Change due to dynamic COVID-19 Situation

Instructor: Dr. Tristan J. Rogers, Lecturer, Department of Philosophy

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Recent ethical theory has been defined by the attempt to recover the possibility of moral knowledge from the skeptical claims of ethical subjectivism. As participants in this discussion, students of ethics have an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the foundations of ethics and their relevance for our lives and societies. But what are the foundations of ethics? Is ethics objective in the sense of not depending on social conventions and our feelings? Or is ethics just a way of expressing emotions of approval or disapproval of certain types of actions? These are what philosophers call “meta-ethical” questions. A second line of questioning investigates normative ethical theories, i.e. about what makes an action morally right. Is morality fundamentally about producing good consequences? To what extent does morality depend on natural facts? Can we construct morality as a mutually advantageous agreement among rational agents? Finally, is morality fundamentally about moral character rather than right action? In this course, we will discuss these questions, raised in the philosophical work of G.E. Moore, W.D. Ross, A.J. Ayer, Bernard Williams, Philippa Foot, John Rawls, and others. Students are encouraged to engage with the texts and develop their philosophical acumen in discussion with their peers.

Catalogue Description: “Major topics in ethical theory with attention to their contemporary formulation, including such topics as utilitarianism vs. right-based theories and the dispute over the objectivity of ethics.”

Required Texts:

All required readings will be provided in pdf format on the Canvas Course Site.

However, students who appreciate a physical book will find the majority of the readings in *Twentieth Century Ethical Theory*, eds. Cahn and Haber (out-of-print, but affordable used copies available online)

Learning Objectives: By the end of the course, the student should have the ability to

- ✓ Develop competence in philosophical language and literature on the history and transformations of ethical theories. *Practical Goals associated with this objective:*
 - Accurately describe and distinguish a variety of concepts, theories, and positions in the history of ethics;
 - Express one's own ethical judgments in a cogent and clear fashion;
 - Engage in respectful discussion of difficult and sometimes controversial ethical issues;
 - Analyse specific ethical arguments for consistency and credibility (including one's own).
- ✓ Develop written and oral communication skills as those are associated with argumentative writing and public speaking. *Practical Goals associated with this objective:*

- Write competently in concise, precise and well-developed logical style;
 - Express of a point of view through the formulation of a coherent and consistent argument;
 - Present an exposition of text in a coherent manner to an audience of peers.
- ✓ Meet the learning objectives associated with all General Education area C2 (Humanities) courses at CSUS:
- Demonstrate knowledge of the conventions and methods of the study of the humanities.
 - Investigate, describe, and analyze the roles and effects of human culture and understanding in the development of human societies.
 - Compare and analyze various conceptions of humankind.
 - Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the historical development of cultures and civilizations, including their animating ideas and values.

Format:

This is a hybrid synchronous/asynchronous course. The synchronous portion will consist of live discussion sessions on Zoom during the scheduled class time. The asynchronous portion will include short audio lectures (accompanied by notes) to assist you with the readings, and an online discussion forum to discuss and learn from each other.

Assessment:

5% - Discussion Posts

Students are expected to participate and engage in the class discussion forum at least 1-2 times/week

20% - Study Questions

I will collect written responses to Study Questions posted online for each assigned reading. Responses will be graded as Check (15)/Check-Plus (20)/Check-Minus (10), depending on thoroughness, accuracy, and relevance. Due at 1 pm, prior to the scheduled class discussion time.

50% - Philosophical Analysis Papers

There will be three short analysis papers (1000 words). The papers should follow the format detailed [here](#). We will discuss this further as the assignments approach. Due dates on the schedule below.

25% - Final Exam

There will be a written at-home final exam, due at the end of the exam period.

Grading Schema:

A = 93-100%, A- = 90-92%, B+ = 87-89%, B = 84-86%, B- = 80-83%, C+ = 77-79%, C = 74-76%, C- = 70-73%, D+ = 67-69%, D = 60-66 %, F = 0-59%

Late work policy: As a rule, work will not be accepted late except in cases of documented emergency or illness. You may make a written petition in advance if you feel an exception is warranted.

Course conduct: You are expected to be respectful toward your fellow students and myself, both in online discussions and virtual Zoom sessions. While per [university policy](#), access to video is not required of students for synchronous sessions, it is my expectation that you will be fully present and participate appropriately, either voluntarily or when called on.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a violation of University policy and seriously undermines your integrity as a student. Penalties may be severe. It is your responsibility to understand the University's plagiarism

policy. When in doubt, ask me. See <https://www.csus.edu/umannual/student/stu-0100.htm>

Reasonable Accommodation: Should any student need accommodation because of a disability, please let me know to discuss options (documentation to SSWD, Lassen Hall 1008, 916-278-6955).

Tech Requirements:

- ✓ Canvas: Most versions of Internet Explorer, Firefox, Chrome, and Safari, support the use of Canvas. To view specific Operating System and Browser compatibility with Canvas, please refer to: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10720>.
- ✓ Zoom: You can download Zoom and find more information about using Zoom here: <https://www.csus.edu/information-resources-technology/zoom/student-resources.html> .
- ✓ PowerPoint: If you do not have access to PowerPoint, you can download it for free here (scroll down to PowerPoint and click on “Access Online or Download from Office365”): <https://www.csus.edu/information-resources-technology/software-catalog/#business-productivity> .
- ✓ If you experience difficulties with your computer or connecting to the campus networks please contact the Information Resource Technology (IRT) Service Desk by e-mail: [servicedesk@csus.edu](mailto: servicedesk@csus.edu) or phone (916) 278-7337.
- ✓ For information about their complete services visit: <http://www.csus.edu/irt/ServiceDesk/>.

Tech Support: If you need technical assistance, including with devices or WiFi access, here are some helpful links for the Information Resources and Technology office:

- ✓ During the Covid-19 campus closure, laptops can be checked out for long-term, remote use, as specified here: <https://www.csus.edu/information-resources-technology/teaching-learning/laptop-checkout.html>.
- ✓ Other assistance, such as information on WiFi Access, can be found here: <https://www.csus.edu/information-resources-technology/remote-learning/>

Covid-19 Instructions and Support: In general, see the university’s website [COVID-19 Information and Resources at Sacramento State](#) , and if you are planning to come to campus, check the Sac State Mobile App for the latest COVID-19 protocols. If you are sick, stay home and do not attend class. Notify your instructor. If you are experiencing any COVID- like symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat, muscle aches, loss of smell or taste, nausea, diarrhea, or headache) or have had exposure to someone who has tested positive for COVID contact **Student Health & Counseling Services (SHCS) at 916-278-6461** to receive guidance and/or medical care. You are asked to report any possible COVID related illnesses/exposures to SHCS via this link [COVID-19 Illness/Exposure Report Form](#). Expect a call from SHCS within 24 hours.

Student Health & Counseling Services: Student Health and Counseling Services staff are available for virtual and in-person services. During this public health crisis and extended period of limited physical or social interaction, if you need counseling or other physical or mental health services, you should not hesitate to reach out to the Student Health and Counseling center. For helpful information and access to their services visit their website at: <https://www.csus.edu/student-life/health-counseling/>.

Basic Needs Support: If you are experiencing challenges with food, housing, financial or other unique circumstances that are impacting your education, help is just a phone call or email away! The CARES office provides case management support for any enrolled student. Email the CARES office at cares@csus.edu to speak with a case manager about the resources available to you. Check out the [CARES website](#).

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Dates	Topics	Readings/Assignments NB: due <i>before</i> class
Week One	Tues, Sept 1	Meet and Greet Introduction to the Course	James Rachels, "Moral Philosophy in the Twentieth Century" (optional)
	Thurs, Sept 3	Ethical Intuitionism	Moore, "The Subject-Matter of Ethics," Sections 1-7
PART ONE: Meta-Ethics – Intuitionism and Emotivism			
Week Two	Tues, Sept 8	Ethical Intuitionism	Moore, "The Subject-Matter of Ethics," Sections 8-15
	Thurs, Sept 10	Ethical Intuitionism	Russell, "The Meaning of Good and Bad"
Week Three	Tues, Sept 15	Ethical Intuitionism	Prichard, "Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?"
	Thurs, Sept 17	Ethical Intuitionism	Ross, "What Makes Right Acts Right?"
	Sun, Sept 20	First Analysis Paper Due	Submit via Canvas
Week Four	Tues, Sept 22	Positivism	Wittgenstein, "A Lecture on Ethics"
	Thurs, Sept 24	Positivism	Ayer, "A Critique of Ethics"
Week Five	Tues, Sept 29	Emotivism	Stevenson, "The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms"

	Thurs, Oct 1	Emotivism	Stevenson, "The Nature of Ethical Disagreement"
Week Six	Tues, Oct 6	Moral Disagreement	Mackie, "A Refutation of Morals"
	Thurs, Oct 8	Moral Disagreement	Ewing, "The Definition of Good"
Week Seven	Tues, Oct 13	Moral Reasoning	Hampshire, "Fallacies in Moral Philosophy"
	Thurs, Oct 15	Moral Reasoning	Blanshard, "The New Subjectivism in Ethics"
	Sun, Oct 18	Second Analysis Paper Due	Submit via Canvas
PART TWO: Normative Ethics – Utilitarianism and Contract Theory			
Week Eight	Tues, Oct 20	Utilitarianism	Smart, "Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism"
	Thurs, Oct 22	Utilitarianism	Brandt, "Some Merits of One Form of Utilitarianism"
Week Nine	Tues, Oct 27	Utilitarianism	Williams, "A Critique of Utilitarianism"
	Thurs, Oct 29	Utilitarianism	Rawls, "Two Concepts of Rules"

Week Ten	Tues, Nov 3	Contract Theory	Rawls, “Outline of a Decision Procedure for Ethics”
	Thurs, Nov 5	Contract Theory	Rawls, “Justice as Fairness”
Week Eleven	Tues, Nov 10	Contract Theory	Gauthier, “Why Contractarianism?”
	Thurs, Nov 12	Contract Theory	Scanlon, “Contractualism and Utilitarianism”
	Sun, Nov 15	Third Analysis Paper Due	Submit via Canvas
PART THREE: Normative Ethics – Naturalism and Virtue Theory			
Week Twelve	Tues, Nov 17	Naturalism	Anscombe, “Modern Moral Philosophy”
	Thurs, Nov 19	Naturalism	Foot, “Moral Beliefs”
Week Thirteen	Tues, Nov 24	Naturalism	Foot, “Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives”
	Thurs, Nov 26	Thanksgiving	NO CLASS
Week Fourteen	Tues, Dec 1	Virtue Theory	Foot, “Virtues and Vices”
	Thurs, Dec 3	Virtue Theory	MacIntyre, “The Nature of the Virtues”

Week Fifteen	Tues, Dec 8	Virtue Theory	Russell, "Virtue Ethics, Happiness, and the Good Life"
Week Sixteen	Thurs, Dec 10	Virtue Theory	Annas, "Virtue and Duty: Negotiating Between Different Ethical Traditions"
	Dec 14-18	Final Week	Exam Due Dec 18