

PIU33021-202122 | MORAL PHILOSOPHY

Credits:	5 ECTS
Contact Hours:	22 Lectures
Pre-requisite:	N/A
Semester:	Michaelmas
Module Leader:	Dr Rachel Handley
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Module Outline

Moral Philosophy can be split into three broad camps; normative ethics, applied ethics, and metaethics. In this module we will look at all three.

In the first half of the module, before reading week, we will explore metaethics.

Some of the questions we will ask are as follows:

- What is the good?
- Is there such a thing as moral truth?
- Is all moral discourse erroneous?
- Can morality be objective?
- What is subjectivism?
- What is anti-realism?
- What is realism?

We will look at key thinkers such as A. J. Ayre, C. L. Stevenson, G. E. Moore, J. L. Mackie as well as the work of contemporary metaethicists. The first half of the module can be split into two parts: 1. The divide between metaethics and ethics (is there one, does it matter if there is a distinction, and so on). And 2. Anti-Realism vs Realism, the theories on each side of the realist divide, and the problems that come with those theories.

In the second half of the module, after reading week, we will look at key topics in applied ethics and normative theory. For some topics, like feminist ethics, and impartial ethics, we will explore the theories themselves. In other cases, like virtue theory, we will look at how it can be applied to animal ethics and to climate change ethics. An overarching theme of the second half of the module will be the tension between impartial and partial ethics. This tension, as we will see, pervades both normative and applied ethics.

Key Topics

- Feminist Ethics
- The Big Three: Virtue Ethics, Utilitarianism, Kantian Ethics
- Climate Change Ethics
- Animal Ethics
- Euthanasia
- Abortion

Learning Outcomes:

- For students to have a good understanding of the major metaethical theories, the key questions related to those theories, and the key problems.
- To be well versed in the different normative theories, both impartial and partial.
- To be able to apply the normative theories to key debates on abortion, euthanasia, climate change, and animal ethics.

Recommended Reading Lists

Metaethics

The Main Metaethical Debates

- David Copp, Introduction: Metaethics and Normative Ethics, from the Routledge Handbook of Ethical Theory, Section 2
- Mark Van Roojen, Moral Cognitivism vs Non-Cognitivism: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-cognitivism/>
- For further introductory resources please see the “Additional Key Resources” list at the end of this document.

Emotivism and Subjectivism

- Alexander Miller, Emotivism and the Verification Principle
- Alexander Miller, An Introduction To Contemporary Metaethics, Chapter 3 “Emotivism and the Rejection of Non-Naturalism”
- Neil Sinclair, Ethical Subjectivism and Expressivism (Cambridge Elements)
- J. Ayer, Language Truth and Logic
- L. Stevenson The Ethics of Language

Moral Realism & Naturalism

- Alex Miller, An Introduction to Contemporary Metaethics, Chapters 8 and 9
- Peter Railton, Moral Realism
- Richard Boyd, How To Be A Moral Realist
- David Brink, Externalist Moral Realism

G. E. Moore and Moral Non-Naturalism

- Alexander Miller, An Introduction to Contemporary Metaethics, Chapter 2
- G. E. Moore, Principia Ethica, Chapters 1 and 2.
- Stephen Darwall, How Should Ethics Relate to (the Rest of) Philosophy? Moore’s Legacy
- Russ Shafer-Landau, Ethical Non-Naturalism, from Ethical Realism: A Defence

Error Theory

- J. L. Mackie, Inventing Right and Wrong, Chapter 1.
- Alexander Miller, An Introduction to Contemporary Metaethics, Chapter 6.
- Jonas Olson, Moral Error Theory: History, Defence, Critique, Part 2 Chapters 5 & 6.
- Christopher Cowie, A New Argument for Moral Error Theory

Contemporary Non-Naturalism

- Alexander Miller, An Introduction to Contemporary Metaethics, Chapter 10
- David Enoch, Robust Metanormative Realism
- John McDowell, Projectivism and Truth in Ethics, from his 1998 collection of essays Mind, Value, and Reality.

Constructivism

- Sharon Street, What is Constructivism in Metaethics?
- James Lenman, Expressivism and Constructivism, from Constructivism in Practical Philosophy
- Michael Ridge, Kantian Constructivism: Something Old, Something New, from Constructivism in Practical Philosophy

Normative Ethics and Applied Ethics

Impartial vs Partial

Impartial Moral Thinking

- Norman Daniels, "Wide Reflective Equilibrium and Theory Acceptance in Ethics"
- Kai Nelson, Considered Judgements Again
- Utilitarianism, Mill

Partial Moral Thinking

- Susan Wolf, Morality and Partiality
- Cottingham, The Ethics of Self-Concern
- Charles Mills, Ideal Theory as Ideology

Feminist Ethics

- Nell Noddings, The Ethics of Caring
- Margaret Walker, Feminist Skepticism
- Carol Gilligan, In Another Voice
- Annette Baier, What Do Women Want In A Moral Theory?
- Raja Halwani, Care Ethics and Virtue Ethics
- Simone de Beauvoir, Ethics of Ambiguity

Climate Change

- Gardiner Ethics and Global Climate Change
- Peter Singer, Ethics and Climate Change
- Avram Hiller Climate Change and Individualism
- Mary Midgley, Individualism and the Concept of Gaia
- Gardiner, A Perfect Moral Storm: Climate Change, Intergenerational Ethics and the Problem of Moral Corruption
- Rosalind Hursthouse, "Environmental Virtue Ethics".

Animal Ethics

- Regan, The Moral Basis for Vegetarianism
- Peter Singer, Utilitarianism, Vegetarianism, and Animal Rights

- Rosalind Hursthouse, “Applying Virtue Ethics to the Treatment of Other Animals”.
- Jeff Jordan, Why Friends Shouldn't Let Friends Be Eaten: An Argument for Vegetarianism
- Andrew Tardiff, Simplifying the Case for Vegetarianism
- Cora Diamond, Eating Meat, Eating People

Abortion

- Suki Finn, Methodology for the metaphysics of pregnancy
- Fiona Woolard, Pregnancy, Applied Ethics, and Epistemically Transformative Experiences
- Judith Jarvis Thomson, A Defence of Abortion
- Phillipa Foot, The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect
- Fiona Woolard, Double Effect, Doing and Allowing, and The Relaxed Non-Consequentialist

Harm, Killing, and Letting Someone Die

- Fiona Woollard – SEP Entry on “Doing and Allowing Harm”
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/doing-allowing/>
- Judith Thomson “The Trolley Problem”
- Philippa Foot “Killing and Letting Die”
- James Rachels, “Active and Passive Euthanasia”
- Shelly Kagan “The Additive Fallacy”

Assessment

Essay

- 1 2500 word essay due at the end of the semester (date TBA).
- Any topic on the module can be chosen for the essay.
- Essay questions will be provided but students are encouraged to come up with their own question.

Exam

- Answer 1 question.