

Lingnan University
Department of Philosophy

Course Title	: Contemporary Metaethics
Course Code	: PHI4339M
Recommended Study Year	: 2-4 Years
No. of Credits/Term	: 3
Mode of Tuition	: Sectional
Class Contact Hours	: 3 hours/week
Category in Major Programme	: Programme Elective - Special Topics
Prerequisite(s)	: N/A
Co-requisite(s)	: N/A
Exclusion(s)	: N/A
Exemption Requirement(s)	: N/A

Brief Course Description

This course covers four branches of metaethics: moral semantics, moral metaphysics, moral epistemology, and moral psychology. The course focuses on major philosophical positions in contemporary metaethics, such as intuitionism, non-cognitivism, the error theory, naturalism, realism, and constructivism. It also emphasizes the close connections between metaethics and other subfields of philosophy like metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of science.

Aims

The course aims to enable students:

1. to be aware of the difference between metaethics and normative ethics
2. to acquire an understanding of the major philosophical positions in metaethics
3. to grasp the basic conceptual framework of analytic philosophy that is necessary for moral inquiries

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students are expected to

1. have an understanding of the distinctive features of the moral domain.
2. have general knowledge of the major philosophical schools in metaethics.
3. be aware of the philosophical presuppositions of metaethical theories.
4. grasp the connections between metaethics and other subfields of philosophy.

Indicative Content

1. Ethical intuitionism
2. Non-cognitivism
3. The error theory
4. Moral Relativism
5. The ideal observer theory
6. Kantian constructivism
7. Reductive ethical naturalism
8. Non-reductive ethical naturalism
9. Supernaturalism
10. Reason internalism vs. externalism
11. Motivational internalism vs. externalism
12. Miscellaneous

Teaching Method

Lectures, discussions, presentations and assignments

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

Students' progress towards the learning outcomes will be measured in terms of participation (LOs 1-4), presentation (LOs 1-3), essay (LOs 1-4) and examination (LOs 1-4).

Assessment

10% participation, 20% presentation, 30% paper, 40% final examination

Required Readings

Alexander Miller, *An Introduction to Contemporary Metaethics*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003

Russ Shafer-Landau and Terence Cuneo (eds.), *Foundations of Ethics*, Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.

Electronic Reserves.

Supplementary Readings

David Brink, *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

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

Stephen Darwall, *Philosophical Ethics*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1998.

James Dreier, *Contemporary Debates in Moral Theory*, Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.

Michael Smith, *The Moral Problem*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1995.

Important Notes

- (1) Students are expected to spend a total of 9 hours (i.e. 3 hours of class contact and 6 hours of personal study) per week to achieve the course learning outcomes.
- (2) Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is "the presentation of another person's work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarised ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student's own work". Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.
- (3) Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.
- (4) To enhance students' understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course "Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness" is available on <https://pla.ln.edu.hk/>