

PHI 214

Moral Metaphysics

Spring 2019

Instructor Information

Instructor
Dr. Justin Morton

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Office Location & Hours
Social Sciences 2281
Time TBD

Course Description

My act was wrong because it caused you serious pain. What is meant by this “because”? In what sense does the moral depend on the non-moral? Does the moral always depend on the mental? If so, is morality not objective? What about the *principle* that if an act causes serious pain, then it’s wrong—what role, if any, does that principle play in the explanation of the fact that my act was wrong?

These are some of the central questions to a domain of metaethics we’ll call *moral metaphysics*. We’ll be discussing these issues and several others, framed by Mackie’s Argument from Queerness.

Evaluation

If you’re taking the course for credit, you’ll write 15 pages. You can choose to do this in one big chunk at the end of the quarter, or you can write papers in 5-page increments (10-page and 5 page papers, or 3 5-page papers) to be turned in whenever (but by the end of the quarter).

You’ll also write a weekly response, to be turned in by 11:59 Sunday night. This should be 1-1.5 pages (double-spaced), and should formulate an argument from one of that week’s readings in valid form, before going on to interact with it in some philosophically interesting way.

Finally, everyone enrolled will lead a session of the class of their choosing (once we finalize the reading list). Your job is NOT to summarize the reading or lecture, but rather to frame/start/guide discussion.

If you are merely auditing the course, I strongly encourage you to do all of these things, but you are only required to come to class having thoroughly read the week’s reading, ready to discuss it.

Papers | 80%
Responses | 10%
Leading discussion | 10%

Reading Schedule

1. The Argument from Queerness

4/1 J.L. Mackie, chapter 1 of *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*

2. Supervenience (1 weeks)

4/8 Tristram McPherson, “Ethical Non-Naturalism and the Metaphysics of Supervenience”
David Enoch, ch. 6 of *Taking Morality Seriously*

*Optional: Gideon Rosen, “What is Normative Necessity?”

3. Normative Dependence/Grounding (2 weeks)

4/15 Selim Berker, “The Explanatory Ambitions of Moral Principles”
Barry Maguire, “Grounding the Autonomy of Ethics”
4/22 David Enoch, “How Principles Ground”
Fogal and Risberg, “The Metaphysics of Moral Explanations”

*Optional: Gideon Rosen, “Metaphysical Relations in Metaethics”

4. Particularism (3 weeks)

4/29 Jonathan Dancy, from *Ethics Without Principles*
5/6 Dancy, continued
5/13 Dancy, continued
Selim Berker, “Particular Reasons”

5. Making Sense of Realism (2 weeks)

5/20 Gideon Rosen, “Objectivity and Modern Idealism: What is the Question?”
5/27 Connie Rosati, “Mind-Dependence and Moral Realism”
Billy Dunaway, “Realism and Objectivity”

6. Which Normative Properties are (Normatively) Fundamental? (1 week)

6/3 Chris Howard, “The Fundamentality of Fit”
Barry Maguire, “The Value-Based Theory of Reasons”