

Syllabus
Seminar on Contemporary Metaethics

This seminar will focus on issues in contemporary metaethics, with a special emphasis on those surrounding moral realism. Inevitably, then, it will be taking up questions of the semantics, epistemology, and metaphysics of morals.

This course will meet on Mondays from 4:00-6:30. [NOTE: It will not meet on August 27 and it will meet earlier in the afternoon on October 8.]

The seminar will be structured around Derek Parfit's Appendix on Normativity, Naturalism and Non-Cognitivism at the end of his book manuscript Climbing the Mountain, Frank Jackson's From Metaphysics to Ethics and Russ Shafer-Landau's Moral Realism: a Defense, with a selection of recent papers interspersed. Much of Shafer-Landau's book provides useful background for the issues taken up by Parfit and Jackson. I recommend that you start reading it sooner rather than later, especially if you are not already familiar with metaethics, even though we won't be discussing it explicitly until the last third of the course. Both books are available on-line (Amazon.com, for instance, has both in stock) and they've been ordered at student stores as well (though they are not in yet).

Writing assignments: several *very* short (1-2 page) weekly papers due on Sundays; a seminar paper is due at the end of the semester

Tentative Schedule*

August 27:NO CLASS

September 3:.....LABOR DAY, NO CLASS

September 10:.....Parfit's *Metaethics Appendix, Part I*

September 17:.....Parfit's *Metaethics Appendix, Part II*

September 24:.....Ancillary Readings

* Extremely tentative. I expect we will find the Parfit reading tempting us in to some significant ancillary reading, ditto the Jackson, ditto the Shafer-Landau. In light of that I have for each of these three built in two sessions for ancillary readings to be determined as we go along. I am thinking and hoping we may get a chance to read some work in progress by John Broome and by Joseph Raz.

October 1:Ancillary Readings

October 8:Class starts and ends early, Jackson's From Metaphysics..., Chapter 4 & 5

October 15:Jackson's From Metaphysics..., Chapter 6

October 22:Ancillary Readings

October 29:Ancillary Readings

November 5:.....Shafer-Landau's Moral Realism, Parts I & II

November 12:.....Shafer-Landau's Moral Realism, Parts III & IV

November 19:.....Shafer-Landau's Moral Realism, Part V

November 26:.....Ancillary Readings

December 3:.....Ancillary Readings

December 10:.....(make-up class), All the benefits of hindsight...