

**MORAVIAN COLLEGE**  
**COURSE SYLLABUS**  
Spring 2014

**PHI 355 Meta-Ethics**

Instructor: Dr. Bernie Cantens

TR 10:20–11:30 AM

Classroom: Comenius Hall 201

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Web Page: <http://berniephilosophy.com/>

Office: Comenius Hall 107

Office Hours: TR 8:30-10:00

**All assignments and papers should be sent to berniecantens@markupsync.com**

**Required Text:**

*Metaethics: An Introduction*, Andrew Fisher, Acumen Publishing, 2011.

*Foundations of Ethics: An Anthology*, edited by Russ Shafer-Landau and Terence Cuneo, Blackwell Publishing, 2007.

**Course Catalogue Description:**

A study of the fundamental concepts of morality from metaphysical, epistemological, semantic, and psychological perspectives.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

- To explain the nature of metaethics and how it differs from normative and applied ethics.
- To write explicitly, clearly, and succinctly about the ontological views (error theory, emotivism, constructivism, sensibility theories and realism) concerning morality.
- To write explicitly, clearly, and succinctly about some of the most prominent issues in contemporary metaethics, such as moral disagreements, moral knowledge, and the relationship between the moral and nonmoral.
- To develop skills of analyzing and evaluating arguments for and against different views in the study of metaethics.
- To critically analyze and write about prominent primary texts in the field of metaethics.
- To exercise scholarly creativity, fairness and tolerance toward different conflicting views.

**Grading:**

Exam 1: 25%

Exam 2: 25%

Term Paper: 25%

Assignments: 15%

Class Presentation: 10%.

**Extra Credit**

Students can earn 3 extra points by attending 3 Philosophy Club meetings or other Philosophy department related events.

## **Course Requirements:**

### **(1) Exams (50% of the final grade)**

There will be two exams throughout the semester. Each exam is worth 20% of the final grade. The exam will be composed of essays and short answers. It is within the instructor's purview to apply qualitative judgment in determining grades for an assignment or for the course.

Exam 1: February 13, 2014

Exam 2: May 2, 2014 (8:30AM)

### **(2) Paper (25% of the final grade)**

Students will complete one philosophical writing assignment on a topic *directly* related to this course and assigned readings. The writing assignment is a *top-down, thesis-governed paper* approximately 5-7 pages long, double-spaced and 12-Times New Roman font. A thesis-governed paper is a more formal academic style paper – “the prototypical structure of academic prose. Such writing begins with the presentation of a problem to be addressed; near the end of the introduction, after the writer has presented the problem, the writer states his or her thesis, often accompanied by a purpose statement or a blueprint statement that gives the reader an overview of the whole essay. The body of the paper then supports the thesis with appropriate arguments and evidence” (John C. Bean, *Engaging Ideas*, 87). The students will be graded according to four criteria: (1) whether the introduction has a clear and explicit thesis and organized developing statements; (2) whether the paper is well organized and demonstrates a logical flow of ideas (in accordance with the introduction); (3) whether there are well constructed and developed arguments and/or critical explanations of philosophical problems and solutions; and (4) whether the writing skills, such as word use, sentence structure, grammar, and punctuation are correct.

The Writing Center is located in a building that is not accessible to persons with mobility impairments. If you need the services of the Writing Center, please call 610-861-1392.

### **(3) 4 Required Assignment Due Dates 15%**

January 30, 2014

February 6, 2014

March 20, 2014

April 3, 2014

April 24, 2014

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### **(4) Presentations (10% of the final grade)**

Each student will be responsible for delivering a lecture presentation on one of the selected reading during the second half of the semester

**Lecture Attendance:**

It is not possible to perform well in the course without attending lectures regularly. It is highly unlikely that you will learn this material adequately by borrowing a friend’s lecture notes. Missed classes without a good excuse will cost you 2% of your final grade.

**Important Note:** Please turn off your cell phones before walking into class! If you are having an emergency that requires you to have your cell phone on, please tell me at the beginning of class. No text messaging is allowed during the class, and the use of computers should be strictly confined to the things directly related to the class.

**Academic Dishonesty Policy**

See Student Handbook pp. 32 – 38.

**Student Behavior:**

See Student Handbook pp. 38 – 40.

**Students Disability Policy**

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Elaine Mara, assistant director of learning services for academic and disability support at 1307 Main Street, or by calling 610-861-1510. Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center”

**PROGRAM AND READING ASSIGNMENTS**

<b>WEEK</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>READINGS &amp; ASSIGNMENTS</b>
<b>WEEK 1</b>		
January 14	Introduction	<i>Introduction</i> 1-10 <i>Foundations</i> 1-5
January 16	Introduction	<i>Introduction</i> 1-10 <i>Foundations</i> 1-5
<b>WEEK 2</b>		
January 21	The Open Question Argument	<i>Introduction</i> 11-24
January 23	The Open Question Argument	<i>Foundations</i> , Moore, 465-73
<b>WEEK 3</b>		
January 28	Emotivism	<i>Introduction</i> 25-38

January 30	Emotivism	<i>Foundations</i> , Ayer, 40-6 <b>Assignment 1</b>
<b>WEEK 4</b>		
Feb 4	Error Theory	<i>Introduction</i> 39-53
Feb 6	Error Theory	<i>Foundations</i> , Mackie, 13-23 <b>Assignment 2</b>
<b>WEEK 5</b>		
Feb11	Review	
Feb13	<b>EXAM 1</b>	
<b>WEEK 6</b>		
Feb 17	Moral Realism and Naturalism	<i>Introduction</i> , 55-71
Feb 20	Moral Realism and Naturalism	<i>Foundations</i> , Railton, 186-205
<b>WEEK 7</b>		
Feb 25	Moral Realism and Naturalism	<i>Foundations</i> , Railton, 186-205
Feb 27	<b>No Class</b>	
<b>WEEK 8</b>		
March 4	Spring Recess	
March 6	Spring Recess	
<b>WEEK 9</b>		
<b>Student Presentations</b>		
March 11	Quasi Realism	<i>Introduction</i> , 91-109.

March 13	Quasi Realism	<i>Foundations</i> , Blackburn, 433-48
<b>WEEK 10</b>		
March 18	Quasi Realism	<i>Foundations</i> , Jackson, 449-54
March 20	Moral Relativism	<i>Introduction</i> , 91-109. <b>Assignment 3</b>
<b>WEEK 11</b>		
March 25	Moral Relativism	<i>Foundations</i> , Harman, 84-92
March 27	Moral Psychology	<i>Introduction</i> , 127-140
<b>WEEK 12</b>		
April 1	Moral Psychology	<i>Foundations</i> , Williams 292-8
April 3	Moral Psychology	<i>Foundations</i> , Smith, 223-42 <b>Assignment 4</b>
<b>WEEK 13</b>		
April 8	Moral Epistemology	<i>Introduction</i> , 141-56
April 10	Moral Epistemology	<i>Foundations</i> , Audi, 402-19 <b>Paper Due</b>
<b>WEEK 14</b>		
April 15	Moral Epistemology	<i>Foundations</i> , Little, 420-432
April 17	<b>No Class</b>	

<b>WEEK 15</b>		
April 22	Review	
April 24	Review	<b>Assignment 5</b>
Friday, May 2, 8:30AM	<b>Exam</b>	