



Metaethics | PIU33112

Year	Junior Sophister
ECTS Credits	10
Contact Hours	22 lectures; 4 tutorials
Pre-requisite	None
Semester	2
Module Leader & Lecturer	Dr. Michael Markunas
Contact Email	[tcd e-mail pending]

Module Outline:

Metaethics is the study of the nature of ethical facts and properties, as well as our knowledge, thought and talk about them. One can usefully think of as concerning the following four questions or topics about ethics: what is the nature of ethical facts and properties? (the metaphysical question); how do we have knowledge about these properties (the epistemological question); Does our ethical talk represent the ethical facts they seem to? (the semantic question); what is the nature of the psychological states we are in when thinking about ethical facts, and how do they differ from other psychological states such as belief and/or desire? (the psychological question(s)). An answer to any one of these questions often has repercussions to the types of answers one can give to the others. These interlocking issues form the core of contemporary metaethics.

This course will introduce students to the main issues and positions in metaethics as attempts to answer the four questions above. We will cover, amongst other things, realism/anti-realism, naturalism/non-naturalism, cognitivism/non-cognitivism, error theory, moral fictionalism, and expressivism. The second half of the course will focus closely on the anti-realists' positions of expressivism and fictionalism. We will be particularly concerned with their similarities and differences, and how they can handle the so called Frege-Geach Problem.

Recommended Reading List:

The complete reading list, including primary and secondary literature, will be finalized at the beginning of the term.

- Kalderon, Mark 'Introduction' to *Fictionalism in Metaphysics* edited by Mark Kalderon.
- Mackie, J.L Chapter 1: 'The Subjectivity of Values' in *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*
- van Roojen, Mark, "Moral Cognitivism vs. Non-Cognitivism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*



Assessment:

- 2 x Essays. One mid-module (50%) and one at the end of term (50%).