

Ethics

**PHI 519/CHV 519
SEMINAR SPRING 2013
Mondays 1:30-4:20 in Marx 201
(with meetings on two Fridays, 4:00-6:50pm)**

An examination of select topics in normative ethics and surrounding areas. We will be concerned both with issues that confront ordinary moral agents (is it wrong to buy factory-farmed animal products?) as well as with those that arise for theorists (is the moral “ought” best understood as objective or subjective?). The seminar is divided roughly into four parts: (1) the relevance of *whether I make a difference* to facts about what I ought to do, with a special emphasis on the case of eating animals; (2) some puzzles concerning moral knowledge and justification; (3) the debate about the objective vs. the subjective “ought”; (4) the cognitive underpinnings of prejudice. Questions addressed include the following: How are we to best understand the ethics of seemingly wrong actions that make no detectible difference? Does the status of a moral argument or claim depend not just on its content, but on facts about who is making the argument? Is it possible to forget the difference between right and wrong? Is the “ought” of deliberation subjective or objective? Is the morally objective “ought” more fundamental than any subjective “ought” – or vice versa? What leads us to think of some social groups as marking real, fundamental, inherent differences between people? How are generic generalizations related to prejudice and stereotyping? What are the epistemic costs, if any, associated with racist beliefs?

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Schedule of Topics and Readings

1. Monday, Feb. 4. Introduction to the course; wrongness and difference-making.

Shelly Kagan, “Do I make a difference?” (*Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 2011.)

2. **Friday, February 15, 4:00-6:50pm.** The ethics of eating meat and accommodation.

Guest Professor Tyler Doggett (Vermont) will give a talk: “Letting Others Do Wrong”

Elizabeth Harman will also give a talk: “Eating meat as a morally permissible moral mistake”

Reading for this session:

Seana Shiffrin, “Egalitarianism, Choice-Sensitivity, and Accommodation”
(*Reason and Value: Themes from the Work of Joseph Raz*, eds. Pettit et al, OUP, 2004)

Elizabeth Harman, “The Moral Significance of Animal Pain and Animal Death”
(*The Oxford Handbook on Ethics and Animals*, eds. Beauchamp and Frey, OUP, 2011)

(The seminar will meet on Friday February 15 rather than Monday Feb 11.)

3. Monday, Feb. 18. Moral knowledge I: Ryle’s Puzzle.

Gilbert Ryle, “On Forgetting the Difference Between Right and Wrong.” (Essays in Moral Philosophy, 1958; reprinted in Collected Papers vol. 2, 2009.)

Sarah McGrath, “Forgetting the Difference Between Right and Wrong.”
(manuscript)

4. Monday, Feb. 25. Moral knowledge II: Speaker-Relativity.

Guest Professor Johann Frick (Harvard) will lead a discussion of his paper.

Johann Frick, “What we owe to Hypocrites: Contractualism and the Speaker-Relativity of Justification.” (manuscript)

John Smilansky, “The Paradox of Moral Complaint.” (*Utilitas*, 2006.)

5. Monday, March 4. Moral knowledge III: Moral Epistemology Workshop Preview.

Elizabeth Harman, “Ethics is hard. What follows?” (manuscript)

Sarah McGrath and Thomas Kelly, “Moral Knowledge without Reflective Equilibrium.” (manuscript)

6. Monday, March 11. Objective vs. Subjective “Ought” I

Guest Professor Janice Dowell (Nebraska) will lead a discussion of her paper.

Janice Dowell, “Flexible Contextualism About Deontic Modals” (*Inquiry*, forthcoming)

Monday, March 18. SPRING RECESS—NO SEMINAR MEETING

A Moral Epistemology Workshop will take place at Princeton March 18-19.

7. Monday, March 25. Objective vs. Subjective “Ought” II

Errol Lord (Princeton) will lead a discussion of his paper.

Peter Graham, “In Defense of Objectivism About Moral Obligation” (*Ethics*, 2010.)

Errol Lord, “A New Argument for Perspectivalism About Obligation” (manuscript)

8. Monday, April 1: Objective vs. Subjective “Ought” III

Reading:

Niko Kolodny and John MacFarlane, “Ought: Between Objective and Subjective” (manuscript)

Presentation:

Elizabeth Harman, “The Subjective ‘Ought’ is more Explanatorily Fundamental than the Objective ‘Ought’: What we learn from errands and Russian Roulette” (manuscript)

9. Monday, April 8: Generics and Prejudice

Sarah-Jane Leslie, “The Original Sin of Cognition” (in press, *Journal of Philosophy*)

Sarah-Jane Leslie, “Carving Up the Social World with Generics” (in press, *Oxford Studies in Experimental Philosophy*)

10. Monday, April 15: Gender Gaps and Conceptions of Ability

There is no reading for this session.

11. Monday, April 22: Generics and Societal Roles

Sarah-Jane Leslie, "Hillary Clinton is the Only Man in the Obama Administration" (in press, *Analytic Philosophy*)

Sarah-Jane Leslie, "Real Men: Polysemy or Implicature?" (in press, *Analytic Philosophy*)

12. **Friday, May 3, 4:00-6:50pm**

Guest Professor Tamar Gendler (Yale) will lead of discussion of some of her work.

(The seminar will meet on Friday May 3 rather than Monday April 29.)