

## Philosophy 433: Moral Epistemology

Spring 2008

2-3:50 TR

East College 115

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**Text:** The required texts for the course are these:

1. Robert Adams, *Finite and Infinite Goods*
2. David Brink, *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics*
3. Frans de Waal, *Primates and Philosophers*
4. Richard Feldman, *Epistemology*
5. Marc Hauser, *Moral Minds*
6. Michael Huemer, *Ethical Intuitionism*
7. PHIL 433 course packet (available at Fine Print only)

**Description:** This course is an investigation into the following question: Can human beings have ethical knowledge, and, if so, how? To investigate this question properly, it is necessary to examine both the nature of ethical facts and the nature of knowledge. This course thus straddles the fields of meta-ethics and epistemology. It is also essential to draw on empirical investigations of human moral beliefs and attitudes and the processes that produce them. For this reason, our investigation will also take us into psychology (particularly evolutionary psychology), anthropology, and neuroscience.

**Requirements:** Everyone is expected to do all the assigned reading and to come to class prepared to discuss that reading. You will be required to write a substantial (3000-4500 words) term paper and three shorter (typically 1000-1500 words) writing assignments. There will also be a mid-term exam and a final exam. Your grade in the course will be determined as follows:

Three short writing assignments:	30% of course grade
Mid-term exam:	20% of course grade
Final exam:	20% of course grade
Term paper:	20% of course grade
Contribution to class discussion:	10% of course grade

## Grading Scale:

93-100	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
67-69	D+
63-66	D
60-62	D-
0-59	F

## Academic Integrity Policy (*Read This Carefully!*):

Cheating, plagiarism, submission of the work of others, and multiple submission (submitting the same paper for more than one class) each violates the DePauw policy on academic integrity. Of particular note here is plagiarism, which the student handbook defines as presenting the *words or ideas* of another person as if they were your own. The rule to follow here is: ***If you didn't think of it yourself, cite the source(s).***

The DePauw academic integrity policy requires that when a student violates the policy, the instructor must impose a penalty *more* severe than giving the student a *zero* (far worse than the typical F) on the assignment in question. Typically the penalty will be a zero on the assignment together with a further reduction of the student's grade in the course. This can often make it mathematically impossible for the student to pass the course. ***I take plagiarism seriously. If you violate the DPU academic integrity policy, I will catch you and I will act in accordance with the policy.***

## Schedule

### Day and Topic

#### Week One (January 28-February 1)

Tuesday: Course Introduction

Thursday: Three challenges to moral knowledge

*First short paper assigned in class*

### Reading Assignment

Feldman, 1-7;  
*Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, J.L. Mackie, pp. 36-42 (packet); *The Nature of Morality*, Gilbert Harman, pp. 3-17, 21-23

(packet)

**Week Two (February 4-8)**

Tuesday: Discussion of the three challenges  
*First short paper due at the start of class*

Thursday: Evidentialist approaches to knowledge      Feldman, 39-80

**Week Three (February 11-15)**

Tuesday: Non-evidentialist approaches to knowledge      Feldman, 81-107  
Thursday: David Brink's Naturalism      Brink, 156-167

**Week Four (February 18-22)**

Tuesday: Brink's Coherentism      Brink, 100-107; 122-133  
Thursday: Brink on the three challenges      Brink, 172-197  
*Second short paper assigned in class*

**Week Five (February 25-29)**

Tuesday: Kantian creatures, Humean creatures,  
and Rawlsian creatures      Hauser, 1-55  
Thursday: Trolley problems and the coherence of  
our moral beliefs      Hauser, 111-131  
*Second short paper due at the start of class*

**Week Six (March 3-7)**

Tuesday: Michael Huemer's objections to  
Naturalism      Huemer, 84-87; 94-95  
Thursday: Robert Adams's Supernaturalism: God  
as the Good      Adams, 13-38; 46-49

**Week Seven (March 10-14)**

Tuesday: Divine commands and moral obligation      Adams, 231-270  
Thursday: Adams' moral epistemology      Adams, 353-366

**Week Eight (March 17-21)**

Tuesday: Review for mid-term exam  
Thursday: Mid-term exam

**Week Nine (March 24-28)**

NO CLASS -- SPRING BREAK

**Week Ten (March 31-April 4)**

Tuesday: Emotion and moral judgment      "An fMRI Investigation  
of Emotional Engagement  
in Moral Judgment," Josh  
Greene, et. al. (packet);  
Hauser, 219-232

Thursday: Adams on the three challenges Adams, 70; 366-372  
*Third short paper assigned in class*

**Week Eleven (April 7-11)**

Tuesday: Huemer's Ethical Intuitionism Huemer, 1-13; 99-110  
Thursday: Huemer on the argument from queerness and Harman's challenge Huemer, 110-115; 199-202; 117-127  
*Third short paper due at the start of class*

**Week Twelve (April 14-18)**

Tuesday: Huemer on moral disagreement Huemer, 128-146  
Thursday: Sinnott-Armstrong's critique of moral intuitionism "Moral Intuitionism Meets Empirical Psychology," Walter Sinnott-Armstrong (packet)

**Week Thirteen (April 21-25)**

Tuesday: Evolution and morality *Primates and Philosophers*, 3-58  
Thursday: A fourth challenge to moral knowledge: An evolutionary debunking? *Taking Darwin Seriously*, Michael Ruse, pp. 250-258 (packet); "From neural 'is' to moral 'ought': what are the moral implications of neuroscientific moral psychology?" Josh Greene (packet)

**Week Fourteen (April 28-May 2)**

Tuesday: Resistance to the debunking *P&P*, 140-151; Huemer, 214-219  
Thursday: Why not intuitionism? Huemer, 240-253

**Week Fifteen (May 5-9)**

Tuesday: Catch-up day  
Thursday: Review for final exam

The final exam will be given on **Tuesday, May 13, at 1 pm**. Please make your travel plans accordingly.