

# PHI 4110/5110: CONTEMPORARY MORAL THEORY

## DISCOURSE, REASONS, AND PRACTICE

How do we determine what we ought to do? If we know what we ought to do, is this reason enough to do it? This course will engage discussions among contemporary moral theorists on the topic of practical reason. We will discuss questions of moral knowledge and moral motivation, spending a fair amount of time on matters of internal and external reasons, hypothetical and categorical imperatives, reflection and deliberation, and, ultimately, strategic versus communicative action. Readings will include essays from Elijah Millgram, Michael Smith, Bernard Williams, Michael Bratman, Philippa Foot, Christine Korsgaard, Onora O'Neill, Jürgen Habermas, and Joseph Heath, among others.

### REQUIRED TEXTS:

The following texts are required for satisfactory completion of the course. The books await your purchase at the bookstore.

- VPR = *Varieties of Practical Reasoning*, Elijah Millgram (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 2001)
- TMP = *The Moral Problem*, Michael Smith (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1994)
- MCCA = *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, Jürgen Habermas (MIT, 1995)
- CARC = *Communicative Action and Rational Choice*, Joseph Heath (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 2001)  
[Packet]

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- 20% Summaries
- 25% Midterm Paper
- 35% Final Paper
- 20% Participation

For graduate students paper requirements will be more rigorous. Details to follow.

As this is a philosophy course, there will be a premium on clear thinking and clear writing. You are expected to participate in class discussion, to spend time revising and working on writing assignments, to come to class prepared, and to engage your fellow students in civil, yet stimulating and energized, discourse. To facilitate discussion, you must complete two *one-page* article summaries, in outline format, during the course of the class for a grade. In the first week of class, I will circulate a sheet for you to sign up for these summaries. On the days that we are to have read these authors, you are expected to come to class with your summaries and to help guide the class in discussion. On the day of these summaries, you are to present a *protokol*, which means only that you will be responsible for bringing the rest of the class up to speed on the primary issues discussed in your article. If all goes as planned, there should be two or three summarizers sitting in the class on any given day. On the day of your summary come to class with photocopies of your summary for your fellow classmates.

**Disabled Students:** As per the policies of the University of Colorado, an interest in your personal success, and a general sense of equity, all students with disabilities will be accorded reasonable assistance to ensure that they maximize performance in this class. If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability please contact Disability Services so that I can work with them to address your needs. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities (303-492-8671, Willard 322, [www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices](http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices)). All information will be kept strictly confidential.

Professor: Benjamin Hale  
Spring Semester, 2006  
Classroom: MCOL E158  
Class Time: 3:00 – 4:15 MW

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		Date	Course Readings	
<b>Practice</b>	Practical v. Theoretical Reason; Instrumentalism & Other Views	Jan 18	Introductions, What is Practical Reasoning?	
		Jan 23-25	Elijah Millgram, Chp. 1, VPR, "Practical Reasoning: The Current State of Play" Michael Smith, Chp. 1, <i>The Moral Problem</i>	
		Jan 30-Feb 1	Christoph Fehige, Chp. 3, VPR, "Instrumentalism"	
		Feb 6-8	David Schmitz, Chp. 11, VPR, "Choosing Ends"	
<b>Reasons</b>	Internalism and Externalism	Feb 13-15	Philippa Foot, "Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives," (Photocopy)	
		Feb 20-22	Bernard Williams, Chp. 4, VPR, "Internal and External Reasons"	
		Feb 27-Mar 1	Christine Korsgaard, Chp. 6, VPR, "Skepticism about Practical Reason" (Recommended: Kant's <i>Groundwork</i> and Onora O'Neill, Chp. 14, VPR, "Consistency in Action")	
	Motivational Reasons and Normative Reasons	Mar 6-8	↕ <b>No Class</b> ↕	
		Mar 13-15	Michael Smith, Chp. 3, <i>The Moral Problem</i>	Michael Smith, Chp. 4, <i>The Moral Problem</i>
		Mar 20-22	Michael Smith, Chp. 5, <i>The Moral Problem</i>	Michael Smith, Chp. 6, <i>The Moral Problem</i>
		Mar 27-29	<b>SPRING BREAK!</b>	
	<b>Discourse</b>	Discourse Ethics and Communicative Action	Apr 3-5	Jürgen Habermas, "Discourse Ethics," 43-115, MCCA
Apr 10-12			Jürgen Habermas, "Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action," 116-194, MCCA	
Apr 17-19			Robert Brandom, Chp. 20, VPR, "Actions, Norms, and Practical Reasoning"	
Communicative v. Strategic Action		Apr 24-26	Joseph Heath, Chp. 5, "Foundations of Discourse Ethics"	
		May 1-3	Joseph Heath, Chp. 7, "Cognitivism and Convergence"	

(Related Habermas essays for further reading: "On the Pragmatic, the Ethical and the Moral Employments of Practical Reason" and "Remarks on Discourse Ethics," in *Justification and Application*; "Intermediate Reflections," in TCA, V1: 273-338; "Foundations of Social Science" and "Authority of the Sacred," in TCA, V2: 3-76.)