



School of Humanities and Languages

**ARTS 3366: Advanced Moral Theory  
Semester 1, 2014**

---

1. Course Staff and Contact Details
2. Course Details
3. Learning and Teaching Rationale
4. Teaching Strategies
5. Course Assessment
6. Attendance/Class Clash
7. Academic Honesty and Plagiarism
8. Course Schedule
9. Course Resources
10. Course Evaluation and Development
11. Student Support
12. Grievances
13. Other Information
14. Appendix: codes to learning outcomes and graduate attributes

## 1. Course Staff and Contact Details

Course Convenor and instructor			
Name	Dr Melissa Merritt	Room	MB 341
Phone	9385-2764	Email	m.merritt@unsw.edu.au
Consultation Time	Thursdays, 1-3		

## 2. Course Details

Units of Credit (UoC)	6		
Course Description	<p>This course covers topics in advanced moral theory. The generic description for ARTS3366 (i.e., one that could cover various incarnations of this course) is as follows (from UNSW Handbook): What ought I do? How ought I live? Answers to the central questions of normative ethics typically draw upon moral theory, or the abstract underpinnings of ethical inquiry. This course introduces students to advanced topics in moral theory. Topics to be considered may include: the nature of moral obligation, egoism, the natural law tradition, the social contract tradition, consequentialism, utilitarianism, Kantian ethics, and virtue ethics. Relevant metaphysical and epistemological questions will be raised as well. Are there objective moral facts, or is morality simply a matter of subjective attitudes? Is human nature the basis of morality? Do we have free will? Is there only one correct moral outlook?</p> <p><b>This semester, the focus of the course is contemporary metaethics. Metaethics is the enquiry into the epistemological, metaphysical, psychological underpinnings and commitments of moral and normative thought.</b></p>		
Course Aims	1.	To provide a survey of some of the main problems and topics in contemporary moral meta-ethics.	
	2.	To relate contemporary discussion of these topics to historical sources (notably Kant, Hume, and Aristotle – but especially Kant this semester).	
	3.	To provide students with an introduction to philosophy research in its current state of play, and to teach more advanced skills of research and philosophical writing.	
Student Learning Outcomes	1.	Awareness of some of the central philosophical debates in moral theory.	
	2.	The ability to engage critically with historical and contemporary texts in moral theory.	
	3.	The ability to assess the merits and weaknesses of moral arguments.	
	4.	The ability to recognise and understand the metaphysical and epistemological underpinnings of various moral theories.	
	5.	The ability to compose clear and insightful analytical essays.	
	6.	The ability to communicate complex ideas in conversation clearly and succinctly.	
Graduate Attributes	1.	Ability to evaluate and critically analyse beliefs, ideas and information using a range of techniques of philosophical reasoning	

	<b>2.</b>	Ability to present coherent and persuasive arguments
	<b>3.</b>	Ability to read and interpret texts sensitively and carefully, especially appreciating the importance of intellectual tradition
	<b>4.</b>	Appreciation of the importance of reasoned enquiry and an ability to apply tools of philosophical analysis to a range of issues including those in contemporary debates
	<b>5.</b>	Appreciation of, and respect for, diversity
	<b>6.</b>	Respect for ethical practice and social responsibility
	<b>7.</b>	Skills of effective communication

### 3. Learning and Teaching Rationale

This is an advanced course in contemporary moral theory, focusing this semester on contemporary meta-ethics. One of my goals is to introduce philosophy students pursuing the BA to the current state of play in philosophical research. I am also interested in exploring the historical roots of many of the current debates, in particular with regard to Kant.

It is generally assumed that students will have taken a prior (second-year) course in moral theory. If you have no familiarity with the moral theories of Aristotle, Hume, Kant, and Mill course, please see me. It need not preclude your taking this course, but you may need to do some (potentially considerable) background work.

The course is structured around weekly meetings: we will meet once a week, for three hours, over the twelve weeks of the semester. Participation in class discussion is a requirement. You are also encouraged to interject (politely, of course) with questions and comments in the course of lecture. Indeed, my aim is not to have a firm division between “lecture” and “discussion” but to proceed as Socratically as possible.

### 4. Teaching Strategies

[Enter details here]

### 5. Course Assessment

Assessment Task	Length	Weight	Learning Outcomes Assessed	Graduate Attributes Assessed	Due Date
Threaded Discussions on Moodle	Around 200-300 words (over two posts)	9 over the course of the semester, weighted at 3% each, for a total of 27% of total grade in course	1-5	1-7	See course schedule.
Critical essay	1500 words	33% of total grade in course	1-6	1-4, 7	17 April
Final essay	2500 words	40%	1-6	1-4, 7	6 June

**Please Note:** In addition to fulfilling the above assessment requirements, students are expected to attend at least 80% of their lectures and tutorials in order to pass the course.

### Formal Examination

This course has no formal final examination

## Grades

---

All results are reviewed at the end of each semester and may be adjusted to ensure equitable marking across the School.

The proportion of marks lying in each grading range is determined not by any formula or quota system, but by the way that students respond to assessment tasks and how well they meet the objectives of the course. Nevertheless, since higher grades imply performance that is well above average, the number of distinctions and high distinctions awarded in a typical course is relatively small. At the other extreme, on average 6.1% of students do not meet minimum standards and a little more (8.6%) in first year courses. For more information on the grading categories see

<https://my.unsw.edu.au/student/academiclife/assessment/GuideToUNSWGrades.html>

## Submission of Assessment Tasks

---

**All written work for this course will be submitted online, via Moodle. Your critical essays and final essays will be submitted via Turnitin on Moodle. Your online threaded discussions will be posted on the discussion board on Moodle.**

Assignments must be submitted before 4:00pm on the due date. Assignments received after this time will be marked as having been received late.

## Late Submission of Assignments

---

Late assignments will attract a penalty. Of the total mark, 3% will be deducted each day for the first week, with Saturday and Sunday counting as two days, and 10% each week thereafter.

The penalty may not apply where students are able to provide documentary evidence of illness or serious misadventure. Time pressure resulting from undertaking assignments for other courses does not constitute an acceptable excuse for lateness.

## 6. Attendance/Class Clash

### Attendance

---

Students are expected to be regular and punctual in attendance at all classes in the courses in which they are enrolled. Explanations of absences from classes or requests for permission to be absent from classes should be discussed with the teacher and where applicable accompanied by a medical certificate. If students attend less than 80% of their possible classes they may be refused final assessment.

**Students who falsify their attendance or falsify attendance on behalf of another student will be dealt with under the student misconduct policy.**

### Class Clash

---

A student who is approved a permissible clash must fulfil the following requirements:

- a. The student must provide the Course Convenor with copies of lecture notes from those lectures missed on a regular basis as agreed by the Course Convenor and the student.

- b. If a student does attend a lecture for which they had secured a permitted clash they will still submit lecture notes as evidence of attendance.
- c. **Failure to meet these requirements is regarded as unsatisfactory performance in the course and a failure to meet the Faculty's course attendance requirement. Accordingly, Course Convenors will fail students who do not meet this performance/attendance requirement.**
- d. Students must attend the clashed lecture on a specific date if that lecture contains an assessment task for the course such as a quiz or test. Inability to meet this requirement would be grounds for a Course Convenor refusing the application. If the student misses the said lecture there is no obligation on the Course Convenor to schedule a make-up quiz or test and the student can receive zero for the assessment task. It should be noted that in many courses a failure to complete an assessment task can be grounds for course failure.

## 7. Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's thoughts or work as your own. It can take many forms, from not having appropriate academic referencing to deliberate cheating.

In many cases plagiarism is the result of inexperience about academic conventions. The University has resources and information to assist you to avoid plagiarism.

The Learning Centre assists students with understanding academic integrity and how to not plagiarise. Information is available on their website: <http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/plagiarism/>. They also hold workshops and can help students one-on-one.

If plagiarism is found in your work when you are in first year, your lecturer will offer you assistance to improve your academic skills. They may ask you to look at some online resources, attend the Learning Centre, or sometimes resubmit your work with the problem fixed. However, more serious instances in first year, such as stealing another student's work or paying someone to do your work, may be investigated under the Student Misconduct Procedures.

Repeated plagiarism (even in first year), plagiarism after first year, or serious instances, may also be investigated under the Student Misconduct Procedures. The penalties under the procedures can include a reduction in marks, failing a course or for the most serious matters (like plagiarism in an Honours thesis) or even suspension from the university. The Student Misconduct Procedures are available here:

<http://www.gs.unsw.edu.au/policy/documents/studentmisconductprocedures.pdf>

## 8. Course Schedule

To view course timetable, please visit: <http://www.timetable.unsw.edu.au/>

Meeting day:	Topic	Lecture Content	Assignments due	Required Readings
Week 1 6 March	Introduction	The distinction between normative ethics and metaethics		
Week 2 13 March	Korsgaard		Threaded discussion (hereafter <b>TD</b> )  TD1	Korsgaard, <i>Sources of Normativity</i> , Lectures 1 & 2 (pp. 7-89)
Week 3 20 March	Korsgaard		TD2	Korsgaard, <i>Sources of Normativity</i> , Lectures 3 & 4 (pp. 90-166)
Week 4 27 March	Kantian background		TD3	Kant, <i>Groundwork</i> §§I-II
Week 5 3 April	Realist criticism of Korsgaard		TD4	Rae Langton "Objective and Unconditioned Value"  Optional extra reading: William FitzPatrick, "The Practical Turn in Ethical Theory: Korsgaard's Constructivism, Realism, and the Nature of Normativity"
Week 6 10 April	Constructivism, Kantian and non-Kantian		TD5	Sharon Street, "Constructivism about Reasons"  <i>and</i>  Street, "Coming to Terms with Contingency"

Week 7 17 April	Expressivism		TD6	Alan Gibbard, "An Expressivistic Theory of Normative Discourse" <i>and</i>  Gibbard, "Normative Objectivity"
SEMESTER BREAK WEEK				
Week 8 1 May	Workshop on critical essays (peer review activity)		Critical essays due.	No new reading
Week 9 8 May	Sensibility theories		TD7	John McDowell, "Values and Secondary Qualities"
Week 10 15 May	Realism		TD8	William Fitzpatrick, "Robust Ethical Realism, NonNaturalism, and Normativity"
Week 11 22 May	Reasons Realism		TD9	Scanlon, <i>Being Realistic about Reasons</i> (pp. 1-52 [i.e., Introduction and Lecture 1])
Week 12 29 May	Reasons Realism			Scanlon, <i>Being Realistic about Reasons</i> (pp. 53-104 [i.e., Lectures 2-4]) <i>I am leaving Lecture 5 optional, but you might want to read it!</i>
Week 13	No class meeting during week 13. Final essays are due on the Friday of week 13.			



## 9. Course Resources

There are two **books** that you need to buy for this course, which are available from the bookstore: Christine Korsgaard, *Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), and T.M. Scanlon, *Being Realistic about Reasons* (Oxford University Press, 2014).

There are many **other required readings** – mostly journal articles – which will be made available as PDFs on Moodle.

I will also make available on Moodle some further supplementary readings (not mentioned here), which will be optional.

See the Moodle page for our course for complete bibliographic data on these readings, as well as supplementary (optional) readings.

## 10. Course Evaluation and Development

Courses are periodically reviewed and students' feedback is used to improve them. Feedback is gathered using various means including UNSW's Course and Teaching Evaluation and Improvement (CATEI) process.

## 11. Student Support

The Learning Centre is available for individual consultation and workshops on academic skills. Find out more by visiting the Centre's website at:

<http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au>

## 12. Grievances

All students should be treated fairly in the course of their studies at UNSW. Students who feel they have not been dealt with fairly should, in the first instance, attempt to resolve any issues with their tutor or the course convenors.

If such an approach fails to resolve the matter, the School of Humanities and Languages has an academic member of staff who acts as a Grievance Officer for the School. This staff member is identified on the notice board in the School of Humanities and languages. Further information about UNSW grievance procedures is available at:

<https://my.unsw.edu.au/student/atoz/Complaints.html>

## 13. Other Information

### myUNSW

myUNSW is the online access point for UNSW services and information, integrating online services for applicants, commencing and current students and UNSW staff. To visit myUNSW please visit either of the below links:

<https://my.unsw.edu.au>

<https://my.unsw.edu.au/student/atoz/ABC.html>

### OHS

UNSW's Occupational Health and Safety Policy requires each person to work safely and responsibly, in order to avoid personal injury and to protect the safety of others. For all matters relating to Occupational Health, Safety and environment, see <http://www.ohs.unsw.edu.au/>

### **Special Consideration**

---

In cases where illness or other circumstances produce repeated or sustained absence, students should apply for Special Consideration as soon as possible.

The application must be made via Online Services in myUNSW. Log into myUNSW and go to My Student Profile tab > My Student Services channel > Online Services > Special Consideration.

Applications on the grounds of illness must be filled in by a medical practitioner. Further information is available at:

<https://my.unsw.edu.au/student/atoz/SpecialConsideration.html>

### **Student Equity and Disabilities Unit**

---

Students who have a disability that requires some adjustment in their learning and teaching environment are encouraged to discuss their study needs with the course convener prior to or at the commencement of the course, or with the Student Equity Officers (Disability) in the Student Equity and Disabilities Unit (9385 4734). Information for students with disabilities is available at: <http://www.studentequity.unsw.edu.au>

Issues that can be discussed may include access to materials, signers or note-takers, the provision of services and additional examination and assessment arrangements. Early notification is essential to enable any necessary adjustments to be made.