

## Course Description

### PHIL 534: Seminar in Ethics

Prof. S. Stroud  
Winter 2012

Wednesdays 9:35-11:25 am, Leacock 927  
office hours: Mondays 1:35-3:35 pm, Leacock 942

#### Topic

The topic of the seminar for this year will be *moral expertise*.

We will consider questions such as the following:

- Is there such a thing as moral or ethical expertise? Are some people more morally expert than others?
- If there is such a thing as moral or ethical expertise: what is its nature, how are we to understand it, and what does it consist in? What is the moral psychology of ethical expertise? --Under this heading we will be particularly interested in exploring the possibility that moral expertise is best understood as a kind of *practical knowledge* or *skill*—as primarily a form of *knowing how* rather than *knowing that* (the typical subject of contemporary epistemology).
- What are the roles of *experience* and of *reflection* in moral knowledge and ethical expertise?
- If there are moral experts, ought the rest of us to defer to their moral judgements and opinions? If not, why not?
- Does the phenomenon of moral disagreement undermine the notion of moral expertise?
- Do the questions just mentioned have an important bearing on metaethics or moral theory? (The answers to these questions have an obvious bearing on moral epistemology; but do they also have implications for, e.g., moral realism, or for which type of moral theory is correct?)

#### Prerequisites

- PHIL 334 (Ethical Theory) or equivalent
  - ideally, at least one further course in moral philosophy at the intermediate level or above
  - enrolment in Philosophy Department seminars is limited to Philosophy graduate students and final-year Philosophy undergraduates, except by express permission of the instructor
- Please see me if your background does not correspond to the above description.

#### Readings

We will read and discuss the majority (6 chapters) of Julia Annas' new book, *Intelligent Virtue* (Oxford University Press, 2011). It is available for purchase at Paragraphe Books and on three-hour reserve at Redpath.

The remaining readings will consist of journal articles and book chapters by such contemporary writers as Peter Singer, Bernard Williams, Rosalind Hursthouse, Hubert Dreyfus, Karen Jones, Alison Hills, Sarah McGrath, Julia Driver, and Jason Stanley and Timothy Williamson.

Students will be expected to retrieve for themselves all items that are electronically available in the McGill Library's collections. (Library materials can now be accessed by McGill users from any computer in the world using EZProxy.) When an item is available only in hard copy, it will be made available for photocopying.

### Course Requirements and Method of Assessment

Each student will be required to:

- give an oral presentation to the seminar on one of the course readings (including leading discussion of that reading)
- present a short abstract of your final paper at the next-to-last meeting of the seminar
- submit a final paper (on a topic of your own devising, but dealing principally with course readings) of 5000-6000 words by the last day of the term.

As in all seminar classes, the participation of all in class discussion is essential. Each student *must* carefully study the readings each week and contribute to our collective discussion of them. Accordingly, the method of assessment will include a component for class participation.

Final marks will be determined as follows:

- presentation to the seminar on one of the readings: 20%
- class participation (including presentation of an abstract of your final paper): 15%
- final paper: 65%

### Required Syllabus Statements

The University requires that the following notices appear on every syllabus:

- In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.
- McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information).
- In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.