

Phil 540: Expressivism: Emotions, Evaluations, and Linguistic Meaning Fall 2009

Professor Elisabeth Camp

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All readings for this course will be posted on Blackboard.

Course Description:

In this seminar, we will explore the virtues and drawbacks of expressivism, broadly construed. Most contemporary philosophers of language analyze meaning in terms of truth-conditional content: how the world would have to be for an assertion or other speech act to be satisfied. But in many cases, it's unclear just what ontologically respectable facts could make our utterances true. Further, much of our communicative activity appears to be aimed at affecting our interlocutors' hearts and actions as much as their minds. If some aspects of conventional linguistic meaning involve the expression of evaluative or emotional attitudes rather than (just) truth-conditional content, how should a theory of meaning analyze this? We'll begin with classic discussions of moral emotivism and more recent versions of expressivism in ethics, paying special attention to the Frege-Geach problem. Next, we'll turn to recent discussions of epithets, especially racial slurs, in the philosophy of language, tracing out similarities and contrasts with moral expressivism.

Course Requirements:

- Weekly readings; attendance; and active, sustained participation.
The readings in brackets are either background or supplemental. My hope is that the discussion leader and I will together narrow down the primary readings by the previous week, hopefully to just two assigned readings.
- Lead discussion for one week. This does NOT mean presenting a summary of all of the listed readings! Rather, it means identifying the broad philosophical issues in play, briefly locating the focal readings in relation to each other, and most importantly, raising questions. You should also prepare a handout, no more than 2 pages long, which can easily be reviewed in class, to help coordinate the discussion.
In preparing for this, I expect you to read all of the listed primary readings more than a week in advance, and to meet with me to discuss the most productive way to focus the discussion, so that we can tell the class at the previous meeting what they should focus on.
- A substantial paper, 20-25 pages long.
You should submit a tentative abstract by November 23rd; papers are due by December 21st. I prefer an electronic version, ideally in .doc format, so that I can give you electronic comments directly on the text.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

September 14: Introduction

[van Roojen: "Moral Cognitivism v. Non-Cognitivism", SEP]

I. Moral Expressivism

September 21: Old Expressivisms

Ayer: "Critique of Ethics and Theology" (*Language, Truth, and Logic*, ch. 6)

Stevenson: "The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms"

Hare: *The Language of Morals*, chs. 7, 8, 11, 12

[McNaughton: *Moral Vision* chs. 1-4 (background)]

September 28: The Frege-Geach Problem

Geach: "Assertion"

[Geach: "Imperative and Deontic Logic," "Ascriptivism"]

[Frege: "Sense and Reference", "Negation" (background)]

Searle: "Meaning and Speech Acts"

Hare: "Meaning and Speech Acts"

Schroeder: "What is the Frege-Geach Problem?"

October 5: New Expressivisms

Blackburn, *Spreading the Word*, chs. 5&6

Gibbard, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*, ch. 5

Gibbard: *Thinking How to Live* chs. 2-3

[Horgan and Timmons: "Cognitivist Expressivism"]

October 12: Challenges: Logic and Consistency

Schueler: "Modus Ponens & Moral Realism"

van Roojen: "Expressivism and Irrationality"

Unwin: "Quasi-Realism, Negation and the Frege-Geach Problem"

Hale: "The Compleat Projectivist"

[Blackburn: "Attitudes and Contents"]

[Gibbard: *Thinking How to Live* ch. 4]

[Unwin: "Norms and Negation: A Problem for Gibbard's Logic"]

[Hale: "Can There Be a Logic of Attitudes?"]

[Dorr: "Non-Cognitivism and Wishful Thinking"]

[Dreier: "Expressivist Embeddings and Minimalist Truth"]

[Rosen: "Critical Study, "Blackburn's Essays in Quasi-Realism"]

[Sinnott Armstrong: "Expressivism and Embedding"]

October 19: Fall Break

October 26: Challenges: Expressing and Meaning

Jackson and Pettit: "A Problem for Expressivism"

Smith and Stoljar: "Is There a Lockean Argument against Expressivism?"

Jackson and Pettit: "Locke, Expressivism, and Conditionals"

Cuneo: "Saying What We Mean: An Argument Against Expressivism"

[Dreier: "Lockean and Logical Truth Conditions"]

[Chrisman: "Expressivism, Truth, and (Self)-Knowledge," *Philosophers' Imprint*]

November 2: Hybrid Expressivisms

Copp: "Realist-Expressivism: A Neglected Option for Moral Realism"

Barker: "Is Value Content a Component of Conventional Implicature?"

Finlay: "Value and Implicature"

Ridge: "Ecumenical Expressivism: Finessing Frege"

[Ridge: "The Truth in Ecumenical Expressivism"]

Boisvert: "Expressive-Assertivism"

Schroeder: "Hybrid Expressivisms: Virtues and Vices"

[Van Roojen: "Expressivism, Supervenience, and Logic"]

November 9: Thick moral concepts

McDowell, "Non-Cognitivism and Rule-Following"

[Williams: "Knowledge, science, convergence," esp. 140-148 (background)]

Gibbard: "Thick Concepts and Warrant for Feelings"

Blackburn: "Through Thick and Thin"

[Dancy, "In Defence of Thick Concepts"]

[Altham: "The Legacy of Emotivism"]

[Burton: "Thick Concepts Revised"]

II. Pejorative Terms and Truth-Conditional Meaning

November 16: Inferentialism and Referentialism

Brandom: *Articulating Reasons* ch. 1 (esp. 69-72)

[Dummett: *Frege's Philosophy of Language*, 454]

[Boghossian: "Blind Reasoning"]

Williamson: "Reference, Inference, and the Semantics of Pejoratives"

Whiting: "Conservatives and Racists: Inferential Role Semantics and Pejoratives"

[Frege: "The Thought" (background)]

November 23: Multidimensionalism 1

David Kaplan: "Oops and Ouch"

Potts: *The Logic of Conventional Implicatures*, ch. 2 ("A Preliminary Case")

[Potts: "The Expressive Dimension", "Into the Conventional-Implicature Dimension"]

Bach: "The Myth of Conventional Implicature"

[Grice: "Logic and Conversation" (background)]

[Amaral, Roberts, and Smith: "Review of *The Logic of Conventional Implicatures*"]

[Horn: "Towards a Fregean pragmatics"]

[Neale: "Coloring and Composition"]

November 30: Multidimensionalism 2

Hornsby: "Meaning and Uselessness: How to Think About Derogatory Words"

Saka: "Hate Speech"

Richard: "Epithets and Attitudes"

[Richard: "What the Emotivist Should Have Said"]

[May: "Bad Words: Remarks on "Epithets and Attitudes""]

December 7: 'Externalisms'

Tirrell: "Derogatory Terms: Racism, Sexism and the Inferential Role Theory of Meaning"

Hom: "The Semantics of Racial Epithets"

Lepore: "Slurring Words"

Camp: "Presupposition, Complicity, and Literal and Figurative Insults"

[Mercier, "A Perverse Case of the Contingent A Priori: On the Logic of Emasculating Language"]