

# Philosophy 53341

Expressivism

Winter 2013

T 9:00-11:50

Instructor: Malte Willer  
Email: willer@uchicago.edu  
Office hours: T 3-5  
Office: Stuart 231-D

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Expressivism—the contemporary incarnation of the noncognitivist research program of philosophers such as Ayer, Stevenson, and Hare—and its comprehensive view about the nature of both normative language and normative thought have recently been applied to many topics elsewhere in philosophy, including logic, probability, knowledge, belief, and modality. After reviewing the key motivations behind metaethical expressivism, the class will focus on its semantic commitments. Of special interests will be the prospects of expressivism to resolve the Frege-Geach problem and, more generally, to arrive at a satisfying model of everyday discourse and reasoning. In addressing these questions, we will consider a number of non-classical semantic frameworks that have recently been proposed in philosophy of language, compare their vices and virtues, and see to what extent they are compatible with the key intuitions behind the expressivist agenda.

## BOOKS

The literature on expressivism is massive and it is unavoidable to omit a lot of interesting discussions. The following books are required and available for purchase at the Seminary Coop Bookstore (5751 S. Woodlawn Avenue):

- Gibbard, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (1990)
- Gibbard, *Thinking How To Live*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (2003)
- Schroeder, *Being For*, New York: Oxford University Press (2008)

The following book offers a very useful introduction to the key issues of expressivism and is recommended for purchase:

- Schroeder, *Noncognitivism in Ethics*, New York: Routledge (2010)

All of the above books as well as some other useful material are on reserve at Regenstein.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There will be a substantial research paper (15+ pages) due on March 15th, in Professor Willer's mailbox in the Philosophy Dept. Office (Stuart 202). The topic must be approved ahead of time. Topics must concern an issue discussed in the class and papers must make significant use of course readings.

## ROADMAP

The following schedule provides an overview over the topics that we will address during this semester as well as the assigned readings. Additional recommended readings will be announced in class. Readings may change as the semester goes on. Updated versions of this syllabus will be posted on Chalk as changes are made.

Date	Topic	Readings
Week 1	Early Noncognitivism	Ayer, <i>Language, Truth and Logic</i> , Ch. 6 Hare, <i>The Language of Morals</i> , Ch. 1 Stevenson, "The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms"
Week 2	The Frege-Geach Problem: Beginnings	Frege, "Negation" Geach, "Assertion" Hare, <i>The Language of Morals</i> , Ch. 2 Hare, "Meaning and Speech Acts" Searle, "Meaning and Speech Acts"
Week 3	Expressivism	Gibbard, <i>Wise Choices, Apt Feelings</i> , Chs. 1–5 Horgan & Timmons, "Cognitive Expressivism" Schroeder, "Expression for Expressivists"
Week 4	Higher-Order Attitudes	Blackburn, <i>Spreading the Word</i> , Ch. 6 Blackburn, "Attitudes and Contents" Schueler, "Modus Ponens and Modal Realism" Unwin, "Quasi-Realism, Negation and the Frege-Geach Problem" van Roojen, "Expressivism and Irrationality"
Week 5	Minimalist Truth	Horwich, "Gibbard's Theory of Norms" Stoljar, "Emotivism and Truth Conditions" Dreier, "Expressivist Embeddings and Minimalist Truth" Sinnott-Armstrong, "Expressivism and Embedding"
Week 6	Expressivism and Negation I	Gibbard, <i>Thinking How to Live</i> , Chs. 1–4 Unwin, "Norms and Negation: A Problem for Gibbard's Logic" Dreier, "Negation for Expressivists"
Week 7	Expressivism and Negation II	Schroeder, <i>Being For</i> , Chs. 1–6
Week 8	Biforcated Attitude Semantics	Schroeder, <i>Being For</i> , Chs. 7–12
Week 9	Hybrid Expressivism	Copp, "Realist Expressivism" Boisvert, "Expressive-Assertivism" Ridge, "Ecumenical Expressivism: Finessing Frege" Schroeder, "Hybrid Expressivism: Virtues and Vices"
Week 10	Wishful Thinking	Dorr, "Non-cognitivism and Wishful Thinking" Enoch, "How Noncognitivists Can Avoid Wishful Thinking" Lenman, "Noncognitivism and Wishfulness" Schroeder, "How Not to Avoid Wishful Thinking"