Description:
A study of some important work in contemporary ethical theory by Thomas Nagel, Stephen Darwall, Allan Gibbard, Peter Railton, and Michael Thompson, all of whom will visit the seminar.

Course Admissions Policies:
Participation in this course is by permission of the instructors. The course is not open to undergraduates, either as enrolled students or auditors. Permission to enroll will be extended to philosophy graduate students; in other cases our decision will depend on the size of the course and the student's background in philosophy. Graduate students who wish to audit the course must commit to attending regularly, participating in discussions, and asking questions of the visitors.

Readings from:
T.M. Scanlon, “Reasons and Decisions”
____, New work on normativity and naturalism (new ms.)
____, “Practical Knowledge” (new ms.)
We have not ordered the books at the bookstore. Readings will be posted on or available through the course website and are on reserve in Robbins Library. If you are auditing the course and wish to access the readings through the web site, you must supply us with your Harvard e-mail address or ID so that we can add you to the class list. If you are auditing and are not a Harvard student, you can get an “XID” for this purpose. Please contact Simon Rippon to be added to the class list.

Written Assignments:

i) Questions for the speakers. All students, both auditors and enrolled students, are required to post questions for the speakers to the speaker’s blog on the course website, no later than noon on Thursday before the speaker’s visit.

ii) Weekly 2-3 page papers. Every enrolled student is required to hand in 2-3 double-spaced pages of writing (absolutely no more) each week. These short papers will be due by 5:00 each Wednesday, and must deal with the readings for the forthcoming Friday. Apart from that requirement, the topic is entirely up to you: you may summarize the material, give a reading of a difficult passage, criticize one of the arguments, or defend the author against a possible criticism - anything as long as it concerns the reading for the week in question. These papers will not be graded, but you must turn all of them in order to pass the course.

iii) Seminar Paper. A seminar paper of 15-20 pages is due on Wednesday, January 17, by 5:00 p.m.

Schedule

September 22: Introductory Meeting

September 29: Stephen Darwall
*The Second-Person Standpoint*
Chapter 4, “Accountability and the Second Person”
Chapter 5, “Moral Obligation and Accountability”

October 6: Steve Darwall Visit
*The Second-Person Standpoint*
Chapter 6, “Respect and the Second Person”
Chapter 10, “Dignity and the Second Person: Variations on Fichtean Themes”

October 13: Thomas Nagel,
*The View from Nowhere*, Chapter 8, “Value”
*The Last Word*, Chapter 6, “Ethics”
October 20: Thomas Nagel Visit
*The View from Nowhere*, Chapter 9, “Ethics”
*Equality and Partiality*, Chapter 4, “Legitimacy and Unanimity”
*Equality and Partiality*, Chapter 5, “Kant’s Test”

October 27: Allan Gibbard
*Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*, Chapter 3 “Analyses Broached”
*Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*, Chapter 4, “Normative Psychology”
*Thinking How to Live*, Chapter 3, “Planning and Ruling Out: The Frege-Geach Problem”
*Thinking How to Live*, Chapter 5, “Supervenience and Constitution”

November 3: Allan Gibbard Visit
“Moral Feelings and Moral Concepts”
T.M. Scanlon, “Reasons and Decisions”
Allan Gibbard: Reply

November 10: Veteran’s Day Holiday

November 17: Peter Railton,
“Naturalism and Prescriptivity”
“Normative Force and Normative Freedom: Hume and Kant but not Hume versus Kant”

November 24: Thanksgiving Holiday

December 1: Peter Railton Visit,
Some new work on normativity and naturalism

December 8: Michael Thompson
“Apprehending Human Form”
“What is it to Wrong Someone?”

December 15: Michael Thompson Visit
“Practical Knowledge” (new ms.)

*Final Paper due Wednesday January 17*