Norms and Normativity

Norms are ubiquitous both in our individual lives and when we act collectively, and the norms we accept shape our behaviour and thus also society as a whole. The norms in question are of many types and only a small subset have been crystallized into laws or explicitly stated standards. There are moral and ethical norms, and norms of practical rationality, but also epistemic norms that pertain to theoretical reasoning, aesthetic norms, and norms of interpretation, to mention a few. This course provides an introduction to the philosophical theorizing about norms. It has three parts. The first introduces the philosophical theorizing about norms, and focuses on norms as social practices. The second part covers norms in normative theorizing and justifications. The third part focuses on the notion of normativity and philosophical questions about normativity (metanormativity).

Part 1: Norms in society

Seminar A: The nature of norms

This lecture provides an overview of the course and an introduction to the nature of norms, with a particular focus on the similarities and differences between different kinds of norms. One important distinction is the one between 'positive norms', social practices that are real entities in the social world, and 'critical norms', norms that purport to be objectively valid and provide you with normative reasons to act. Another important distinction is the one between deontic norms, which are formulated in terms of deontic terms such as 'ought', 'right', and 'wrong' and axiological norms, which are cashed out in evaluative terms, such as 'best', 'worst, 'good', and 'bad'.

Teachers: Krister Bykvist, Folke Tersman, and Ragnar Francén

Where? Vår Gård

When? 9/10, 14-16.

Reading:

- Ch. 1- 2 in Brennan, Geoffrey, Lina Eriksson, Robert Goodin, and Nick Southwood *Explaining Norms*, Oxford University Press, 2016.

- Tappolet, Christine, 'Evaluative versus Deontic Concepts', *The International Encyclopedia of Ethics*. Edited by Hugh LaFollette, pp. 1791-1799.

Seminar B: Social practices and their normative role

There seem to be a crucial difference between moral norms such as one should not tell a lie and social practices such as existing norms about queuing and etiquette. But it seems hard to pinpoint exactly what this difference is, especially since social practices seem to generate moral norms in certain circumstances. For example, if you willfully violate the existing norms of queuing in a certain society in order to gain an advantage it seems that you not only violated an accepted social norm but also did something morally wrong. But what explains why a social practice is morally relevant?

Teacher: Katharina Berndt Rasmussen

Where? Vår Gård

When? 10/9, 14-16

Reading:

- Ch. 3-4 in *Explaining Norms.*
- Valentini, Laura (2019) 'Respect for persons and the moral force of socially constructed norms', *Noûs* 55 (2):385-408 (2019). https://philpapers.org/archive/VALRFP-3.pdf
- Manne, Kate (2013) "On Being Social in Metaethics" in R. Shafer-Landau (ed), Oxford Studies in Metaethics vol. 8, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 50-73. http://www.katemanne.net/uploads/7/3/8/4/73843037/03_shafer-landau_ch03.pdf

Seminar C: Explaining behaviour with norms

We often cite norms when we explain other people's actions. We say that they did what they did because they followed a certain norm. For, example, they told the truth because the followed the norm that one should not lie. But what is it to follow a rule? And what is the difference between following a rule and merely complying with a rule? Some argue that the best explanations of norm-governed behaviour should make use of tools from game-theory and economics. How fruitful is such an approach? Are there better approaches?

Teacher: Erik Angner

Where? Stockholm University

When? 14/9, 13-15

Literature:

- Chapters 9-11 *Explaining Norms.*
- Bicchieri, Cristina. "Norms, Conventions, and the Power of Expectations." In Philosophy of Social Science: A New Introduction, edited by Nancy Cartwright and Eleonora Montuschi, 208–29. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Bicchieri, Cristina, Ryan Moldoon, Sontuoso, 'Social norms', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/social-norms/#GameTheoAcco

Part 2: Normative theorizing and justifying norms

Seminar A: Normative theorizing and action-guidingness

One aim of normative theorizing is to find principles that are useful guides to decision-making. The first lecture in this section of the course is devoted to issues that are related to that aim. What does it mean for a normative theory to be action-guiding in the desired or relevant sense, and is the fact that a theory may play that role essential for it to be plausible or correct?

Teacher: Vuko Andric

Where? Institute for Futures Studies (https://www.iffs.se/en/)

When? 4/10, 13-15!

Readings:

- Feldman, Fred, 2006, “Actual Utility, the Objection from Impracticality, and the Move to Expected Utility”, *Philosophical Studies* 129(1), pp. 49–79.
- Feldman, Fred, 2012, “True and Useful: On the Structure of a Two Level Normative Theory”, *Utilitas* 24(2), pp. 151–171.
- Greaves, Hilary, 2016, “Cluelessness”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 116, pp. 311–339.

Seminar B: Normative explanations

Another aim of normative theorizing is to provide explanations of particular normative verdicts (i.e., verdicts to the effect that, say, a decision was appropriate). This is partly because exploring how such verdicts can be explained may facilitate the evaluation of them. The second lecture will focus on the nature of normative explanations, for example by by exploring how they relate to the types of explanations that are provided in other areas of philosophy.

Teacher: Olle Risberg

Where? Institute for Futures Studies

When? 15/9, 10-12

Readings:

- Fogal, Daniel and Risberg, Olle, 2020, “The Metaphysics of Moral Explanations”, *Oxford Studies in Metaethics* 15.
- Jenkins, Carrie S., 2008, “Romeo, René, and the reasons why: What explanation is”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 108 (1pt1):61-84.

Seminar C: *The methodology of normative theorizing*

The third lecture will we devoted to questions about how we may proceed to arrive at justified or warranted normative theories. The approach which is currently most popular in philosophy is commonly referred to as “the method of reflective equilibrium”. We will discuss the characteristics of this method and how it may be applied to different normative disciplines.

We will also discuss the role of intuitions both in the method of reflective equilibrium and in normative theorizing more generally.

Teacher: Folke Tersman

Where? Institute for Futures Studies

When? 14/9, 16-18!

Readings:

- Singer, Peter, 2005. "Ethics and Intuitions", *The Journal of Ethics* 9: 331-352.
- Tersman, Folke, 2018, "Recent Work on Reflective Equilibrium and Method in Ethics", *Philosophy Compass* 13 (6), 1-10, DOI:10.1111/phc3.12493.
- Tersman, Folke, 2008, "The Reliability of Moral Intuitions: A Challenge from Neuroscience", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 86, 389-405.

Part 3: Normativity and metanormativity

Seminar A: What is normativity?

An overarching aim in metanormative theorizing is to understand what normativity is. What characterizes normative language, concepts, properties and facts? In this lecture we discuss different views about, or explanations of, the nature of normativity. We also consider distinctions between different kinds of normativity, such as the distinction between *authoritative/robust* normativity, on the one hand, and *institutional/formal* normativity on the other hand.

Teachers: Ragnar Francén and John Eriksson

Where? University of Gothenburg

When? 26/9, 13-15

Reading:

- Copp, David and Justin Morton, "Normativity in Metaethics",*The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*(Fall 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), URL = https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/normativity-metaethics/
- Stephen Finlay "Recent work on normativity", *Analysis* 70 (2):331-346 (2010)
- Ragnar Francén & Victor Moberger, "The limits of the just-too-different argument", *Ratio* (forthcoming) (https://philpapers.org/rec/FRATLO-26)

Seminar B: From metaethics to metanormativity.

During the last 15 years or so, there has been a movement from metaethics – which focuses on meta-issues regarding ethics narrowly construed – towards investigating meta-issues about normativity in general, and other normative domains, such as aesthetics and epistemology. In this lecture we discuss parallels between issues in metaethics and other normative domains.

Teacher: John Eriksson

Where? University of Gothenburg

When? 27/9, 10-12

Reading:

- Paul Horwich, 2018, "Is TRUTH a normative concept?", *Synthese*, 195: 1127–1138
- Marián Zouhar, 2022, "Predicates of personal taste and normative meaning", *Synthese* 200.
- John Eriksson 2016, "Expressivism, Attitudinal Complexity and Two Senses of Disagreement in Attitude", *Erkenntnis* 81 (4):775-794.
- Pietroiusti, G. 2020. "Disagreement and conflict: how moral and taste judgments do not differ" *Theoria*: 837-846

Seminar C: Norms, Normativity and Motivation

One sense in which a person can internalize a norm, is that she can be disposed or motivated to act in accordance with it. This connects to the issue of explaining behavior in terms of norms, discussed earlier in the course. But many philosophers also think that there is a tight connection between normativity – or reasons to act – and motivation to act. On one kind of view, for a person to have a normative reason to perform some act, she must (perhaps under ideal circumstances) be able to be motivated to act accordingly. Another common view is that normative judgments necessarily give rise to motivation – at least if the judge is practically rational. In this lecture we discuss these matters, and to which extent normativity can be explained in terms of motivation to act.

Teacher*:* Ragnar Francén

Where? University of Gothenburg

When? 27/9, 13-15

Reading:

- Björklund et al. 2012, ”Recent Work on Motivational Internalism”. *Analysis* 72 (1):124-137
- Boult, C. and S. Köhler. 2020. "Epistemic Judgment and Motivation," *The Philosophical Quarterly*: 738-758
- Shawn Hernandez & N. G. Laskowski, “What Makes Normative Concepts Normative” *Southwest Philosophy Review* 37 (1) (forthcoming)
- John Eriksson, “Normativity and Emotions”, manuscript, will be distributed later.