

Declan O’Gara

Philosophy PhD Student, University of Edinburgh.

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Areas of Specialisation

Metaethics, Moral Epistemology, Philosophy of Well-being.

Areas of Competence

Normative Ethics, Applied Ethics, Philosophy of Mind, Philosophy of Language.

Education

- PhD** **University of Edinburgh.** Philosophy, 2021-Present.
Thesis: *In Defence of Error*
Supervisors: Debbie Roberts, Guy Fletcher.
Expected submission April, 2026
- MA** **University of Manchester.** Philosophy. 2019-2020.
Taught Masters.
Thesis: *‘If God does not exist, everything is permissible’ The Problem with Atheistic Moral Realism*
Dissertation supervisor: Stephen Ingram
- BA** **University of Manchester.** Philosophy. 2016-2019.
Thesis: *How can we morally appraise people from radically different societies?*

Publications

“The problem with the ‘Now What’ problem” *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 2025.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10677-025-10509-9>

“On Blackburn’s response to Mackie’s moral error theory” *Philosophia*, Forthcoming.

Under review

“Defensive debunking arguments: Why Moorean objections to the moral error theory fail” R&R *Philosophical Studies*.
This is a paper where I develop a new debunking argument which can be deployed against objections to the moral error theory which turn on our moral beliefs.

Conference presentations

The problem with the ‘Now What’ problem
- XXII Taller d’Investigació en Filosofia, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2025.

Why Moorean arguments against the error theory fail

- Open Minds XVII, University of Manchester, 2024.
- Understanding Value XI, University of Sheffield, 2024.

A defence of the prudential companions in guilt argument against Kalf

- Gateway Graduate Conference, University of Missouri St Louis, 2023.

Shifting the burden of proof in metaethics

- Normativity Workshop, University of Edinburgh, 2022

Invited talks

Defensive debunking arguments

- Frankfurt Normativity Workshop, Frankfurt School of Finance and Management, 2026

Honours and Awards

James Forrester Scholarship. 2021-2025

Awarded every 3-4 years for Ethics PhD's at Edinburgh. Provided tuition fees and monthly stipend for four years.

Ong Eng Bin Scholarship 2016-2019

Undergraduate bursary of £1000 per year.

Teaching Experience and Teaching Awards

Course Designer

Moral Philosophy, 2023-2024, University of Edinburgh. As part of Lecturing Apprenticeship Scheme. Together with Matthew Chrisman we designed the course by choosing topics and selecting readings. I also delivered one of the seminars.

Teaching Assistant

For each of these courses I ran weekly seminars, with between 2 and 4 groups of around 15 students. The tutorials were entirely designed and ran by me, based on the topic of the lectures from the preceding week. I also marked all of the assignments for the students in my classes, usually one mid-term and one final.

Morality and Value, 2021-2022 and 2022-2023, University of Edinburgh.

Greats (History of Philosophy), 2021-2022, University of Edinburgh.

Mind, Matter, and Language 2023-2024, University of Edinburgh.

Introduction to History of Philosophy A, 2025-2026, University of Edinburgh.

Introduction to History of Philosophy B, 2025-2026, University of Edinburgh.

Tutor

PPLS Skills Centre, 2022-Present, University of Edinburgh.

At the skills centre I run one on one appointments with undergraduate and postgraduate students, giving writing advice for upcoming or previous assignments.

Teaching Awards

Nominated for Edinburgh Teaching Award 2022-23 and 2023-24.

Organisation and Outreach

Organiser of Work in Progress Seminar, 2022-2024.

Bi-weekly work in progress presentation for PhD students at the University of Edinburgh. During my time running the seminar I secured funding, and more than doubled the average attendance.

Judge for Ethics Cup, 2023.

The Ethics Cup is a competition where high school students compete with students from other schools to solve moral dilemmas. I served as a judge for the Edinburgh heat, marking the students across a number of categories.

Sutton Trust Project Day, 2025.

The Sutton Trust is a charitable organisation which promotes social mobility for young people coming from underprivileged backgrounds. Along with a colleague I designed and delivered an introduction to philosophy over a full day to a group of students.

Student Representative for Masters Programme, 2019-2020

During my masters I served as the representative for my co-hort. This involved communicating feedback from my peers to the school, representing their interests as well as helping to improve the course for future students.