PHIL 530A: Topics in Moral Philosophy: Loneliness and Belonging
2020-21 Term 1, Wednesdays 10am – 1pm
Course Guide

Provisional Syllabus (subject to change)

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COVID-19 notice: The plan is to hold the 3-hr weekly seminar as a synchronous event. However, I will adjust the teaching format, where possible, in response to students’ circumstances and needs.

Course Content
Aristotle stated that without friends we would not choose to live, even if we had all other goods. There is a growing body of psychological and neuroscientific evidence that backs this up: we human beings are fundamentally social creatures who need to live near and with each other in order to survive and flourish. This course, which is offered as a core course in Value Theory, will explore a range of key concepts and arguments in moral and political philosophy that relate to the ethical and political implications of being social. The content will be grouped under three main headings: 1) social rights, 2) social virtues, and 3) social policies. The course will consider such questions as:

- What is loneliness? Is it morally wrong for someone to suffer chronic, acute, unwanted loneliness?
- What social human rights, if any, do we have?
- Do children have a right to be loved?
- Do we have a right to associate or not with whom we please?
- What physical and temporal resources do we need to be social? Do we have a right to have shared free time together?
- Which is worse: the material deprivation or the social deprivation of homelessness?
- Is it virtuous to be sociable?
- Can we exercise autonomy without other people?
- What ethical issues are raised by institutional segregation such as medical quarantine, isolated dentention, and solitary confinement?
- Could we defensibly replace social contact with robots and virtual worlds?

The course will draw on debates in various branches of moral and political philosophy, and will examine key contemporary articles on the social aspects of being human.

Aims
Students will reflect closely on some key concepts and arguments in moral philosophy and political philosophy pertaining to human rights, needs, personal freedom, autonomy, conditions for flourishing, social justice, and the ethics of care. By the end of the course, students should be
able to engage analytically with the main philosophical theories that pertain to human sociality. Students should be able to develop, in a sustained and sophisticated way, arguments pertaining to the ethics and politics of sociability. Understanding will be developed through critical reading, presentations, and discussion.

**Reading Material**
Please access all readings through the UBC Library. Those which the library does not stock electronically will be provided as scans.

**Marks**
You will be asked to lead one seminar session during the term. Please prepare a presentation of **no more than 20 minutes** to introduce the week’s theme and summarise all of the required readings. Please provide three to five ‘impulse’ questions around which we can shape the ensuing discussion and serve as the moderator / guide for that day. You are welcome to provide a handout or share your screen with slides, etc. Please show that you have reflected carefully on the readings and theme in question and can convey a strong grasp of the central debates and key ideas. Students who provide excellent presentations and discussion facilitation can earn up to 5 extra credit points for the course.

The regular course mark (0-100 points) will be determined by the term paper. Please write a paper of **up to 5,000 words** that fits with the guidelines for an APA symposium paper. The 5,000 words is exclusive of footnotes and bibliography.

**Plagiarism** is a serious form of academic misconduct involving intellectual theft. Please ensure that you are familiar with the standards for good academic practice and the university’s norms and regulations: [https://artsone.arts.ubc.ca/about-arts-one/ubc-policies/ubc-plagiarism-policy/](https://artsone.arts.ubc.ca/about-arts-one/ubc-policies/ubc-plagiarism-policy/) and [https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/dissertation-thesis-preparation/plagiarism](https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/dissertation-thesis-preparation/plagiarism)

See Appendix below for advice on writing essays in philosophy.

**Topics**

**Week 1: Overview**
Introduction to the course

**Week 2: Loneliness and Belonging**
Loneliness
Belonging

**Week 3: Social Human Rights**
Rights theory
Social human rights
Social deprivation
Week 4: Children's Social Rights
You Can’t Say You Can’t Play

Week 5: Children’s Right to be Loved?
Children’s Needs and Rights

Week 6: Social Freedoms: Intimate Associations (I)
Freedom of Intimate Association
Shared Free Time

Week 7: Social Freedoms: Intimate Associations (II)
Grief, Love, and Resilience

Week 8: Social Freedoms: Collective Associations
Freedom of Collective Association

Week 9: Interactional Ethics
Interactional Vices

Week 10: Social Virtues
Altruism, Teamwork, Solidarity

Week 11: Ethics of Care
Social Conditions for Flourishing
Care and Caregiving

Week 12: Social Practices: Segregation
Segregation, quarantine, isolated detention, solitary confinement
Mediated contact

Week 13: Social Practices: Surrogates
Robots
Virtual Worlds

Readings

Background Reading
Philosophical works:
- Elizabeth Anderson (2010), The Imperative of Integration. Princeton.


Relevant empirical works:


**Web videos:**

- Cacioppo, John, ‘The Lethality of Loneliness’, TEDx talk: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0hxI03JoA0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0hxI03JoA0)

**Seminar Readings**

**Required Readings**

**Week 1: Overview**

Introduction to the course. No assigned reading.

**Week 2: Loneliness and Belonging**


**Week 3: Social Human Rights**


Week 4: Children's Social Rights

Week 5: Children’s Right to be Loved?

Week 6: Social Freedoms: Intimate Associations (I)

Week 7: Social Freedoms: Intimate Associations (II)

Week 8: Social Freedoms: Collective Associations

Week 9: Interactional Ethics
• Brownlee, Kimberley, ‘Interactional Vices’ (work in progress).

Week 10: Social Virtues
• Gardner, John (2002), 'Reasons for Teamwork', Legal Theory, Vol. 8, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1352325202084045h

Week 11: Ethics of Care

Week 12: Social Practices: Segregation
Week 13: Social Practices: Surrogates


Further Readings

Readings on Loneliness


Readings on Rights and Social Needs


Readings on Children's Rights


Readings on Intimate Associations
• Mill, J.S. On Liberty (various editions).

Readings on Love, Resilience, and Relationships; Relational Theories of Autonomy
• Taylor, Charles, Sources of The Self: The Making of the Modern Identity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), (Chapters 10 and 11.)
• Westlund, Andrea, ‘Rethinking Relational Autonomy’, Hypatia, 24 (2009), 26-49.
Readings on Collective Associations


Readings on Etiquette


Readings on Social Virtue, Ethics of Care, and Flourishing

• Needleman, J. (2007), ‘Why Can’t We be Good?’, Authors@Google Lecture Series, 30 April 2007:

**Readings on Segregation and Social Surrogates**

Appendix: Advice on Writing an Essay in Philosophy

Guides on Writing in Philosophy
- Joel Feinberg, Doing Philosophy
- Jim Pryor: http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html

Guides on Writing Clearly and Elegantly
- Williams, Style: Toward Clarity and Grace.
- Evans, Do I Make Myself Clear.

Basic Tips for Writing in Philosophy
- A Philosophy essay is not a murder mystery. It’s a reasoned defense of a claim.
- Announce your thesis (i.e. your central claim) at the beginning.
- Spend the rest of the essay defending that claim.
- Narrow your focus. Take charge of the question. Tell your reader at the outset what you will do and why you will do it (and also what you won’t do and why).
- Have a clear structure. After you’ve defended your first main point, briefly summarise what you’ve done and tell your reader what you will do next.
- Situate your view in relation to the literature, if appropriate.

Features of a good essay:
- A clear statement of the central claim that will be defended.
- A conceptual specification of the key terms necessary to defend that claim. (For instance, if your essay is about privacy, specify what you mean by privacy.)
- A clear, well-structured defence of the claim (i.e. the reasons for advancing it),
- Effective engagement with possible objections against the claim.

Suggested structure:
- In the first few sentences, set the scene and explain why the topic matters.
- Next, introduce the thesis, e.g. ‘In this essay, I shall argue that X.’
- Specify or refine that thesis. ‘By X, I mean…
- Finish the introductory section by listing the (2-5) steps that you will take in the essay to defend your claim.
- Then: go through those steps. Consider objections. Defend your view against those objections. (If you find an objection forceful and devastating for your view, then it’s time to go back to the drawing board and change your thesis.) Engage with the literature as appropriate.
- Conclude briefly by highlighting what you’ve achieved in the essay.
- Ensure your paper has been checked thoroughly for spelling and grammar.
• Adhere strictly to an accepted referencing style.
• Be willing to write several drafts. Figure out what you think while writing the bad first draft. First drafts are always bad. They are supposed to be bad! Then refine your ideas in the good second draft and refine them again in the excellent third draft.

Once you’ve followed the ‘rules’ for many years, and understand why they are the rules, then you may begin to break them.