PHIL 530A: Topics in Moral Philosophy: Loneliness and Belonging
2020-21 Term 1, Wednesdays 11am – 12.30pm

Updated Syllabus 08.11.2020

Instructor: Prof. Kimberley Brownlee
Email: Kimberley.brownlee@ubc.ca
Office hours: Wednesday 12.30pm – 1.30pm; Thursday 1pm – 2pm or by appointment

COVID-19 notice: The seminar will include a 1.5 hr weekly synchronous Zoom meeting (Wednesdays 11am - 12.30pm) as well as directed reading, overview videos, student-led group work, and dedicated office hours. The teaching format, where possible, will be adjusted 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 detention, 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.

Distinctive Elements of the 2020 Online Course

- At the start of term, you will be asked to participate in a 10 min one-on-one introductory meeting with me (times will be arranged by Doodle poll).
- Each Monday, I will post a 5-min introduction video for the topic of the week. Please watch the video before we have the weekly seminar on Wednesday.
- Complete the required readings before the weekly seminar.
  - Please bring notes and observations to the seminar and be prepared to be invited by name to contribute.
- Attend each 1.5 hr weekly synchronous seminar.
- Contribute to the course discussion board on Canvas.
  - Please post all course-related questions on the discussion board. Please feel free to respond to one another’s questions. Please only use email for private concerns, e.g. health issues.
- Dedicated office hours – these will be held as live Zoom chats immediately following the seminar.
- Arrange your own student-led meetings to co-author a bonus paper and to give each other feedback on your ideas for the main essay.

Marks

- Seminar presentation: 10 points
- Notetaker, moderator, and participation: 10 points
- Essay: 80 points
- Co-authored paper: up to 5 bonus points

Each student will lead one seminar during the term (0-10 points).

- Please prepare a presentation of no more than 15 minutes to introduce the week’s theme and summarise all of the required readings. Please show that you have reflected carefully on the readings and can convey a strong grasp of the central debates and ideas.
- Please provide three to five ‘impulse’ questions around which we can shape the ensuing discussion.
- You are welcome to provide a handout or share your screen with slides, etc.
- To earn full marks, students will give an excellent presentation and offer excellent discussion facilitation.
Each student will be asked to moderate one seminar (i.e. keep an eye on the Chat) and to serve as the notetaker for another seminar (when they are not the leader) (0-10 points).

- When you’re the notetaker, please send your notes on the discussion to me (clean prose, complete sentences, good grammar, etc.) no later than 24 hours after that seminar. I will post the notes on Canvas as a record.

For the term paper, (0-80 points) 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.
- See Appendix below for advice on writing essays in philosophy.
- The essays should be written in clean, professional prose in 12 point font, Times New Roman, etc.

Each student can earn up to 5 bonus marks by co-authoring with one or two fellow students in the course a short paper (up to 3,000 words) on one of the central themes/articles of the course. This content of the bonus paper should not duplicate material in students’ term papers.

- When the bonus paper is submitted, it must include a brief statement at the top about the authorship, i.e. the percentage authored by each student (the ideal is equal authorship).

Deadlines

Both the term paper and the bonus paper are due on Monday December 14 2020. Students may have an automatic extension until Friday January 8 2021. Bear in mind, however, that this latter date is a hard deadline (i.e. no extensions after this date except in extreme circumstances).

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious form of academic misconduct involving intellectual theft. Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation. Where direct quotations are made, they must be clearly delineated (for example, within quotation marks or separately indented). Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else's work as one's own. Plagiarism should not occur in submitted drafts or final works. A student who seeks assistance from a tutor or other scholastic aids must ensure that the work submitted is the student's own. Students are responsible for ensuring that any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. Students who are in any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult their instructor before handing in any assignments. Please see: http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959. 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/ and https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/dissertation-thesis-preparation/plagiarism
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

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

Background Reading

Philosophical works:

Relevant empirical works:

Web videos:
- Cacioppo, John, ‘The Lethality of Loneliness’, TEDx talk: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Oxl03JoA0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Oxl03JoA0)
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

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
• Reader, Soran, and Gillian Brock (2004), 'Needs, Moral Demands, and Moral Theory', Utilitas, 16: 3, 251-266.

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


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
• Guenther, Lisa (2013), Solitary Confinement: Social Death and Its Afterlives, University of Minnesota Press.

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.
• At the graduate level, your aim is to make a genuine contribution to philosophical debates.
• 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. Signpost. 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.
- Read professional philosophy articles as (good and bad) models of style and structure. Think about the articles you’ve most enjoyed reading. Dissect them to understand how they are built.

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