

Philosophy 490: Honours Seminar

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and Contemporary Virtue Ethics

Professor Sylvia Berryman
Wednesday 2-5pm
Office Hours Wed 12-1 and by appointment

Winter Term 2 2023-4
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Aristotle's ethics has long been regarded as the centerpiece of his thought, articulating a view of the good life based on an account of human nature and the place of human beings in the cosmos. In the twentieth century, it has been said to offer a viable alternative to the dominant views in modern ethical thought. This course will focus on a close reading of the *Nicomachean Ethics* in translation, accompanied by some of the central interpretative essays of recent scholarship. The last four weeks will consider the applicability of Aristotelian thought to current ethical theory, with readings chosen by the seminar.

Texts: Ross/Urmson (trans.), *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics* (Oxford World Classics)
Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*
additional readings to be made available on the Canvas website.

Readings (subject to revision):

Week 1 Jan 10th *NE* Book 1.1
Velleman, 'The Guise of the Good'

Week 2 Jan 17th *NE* Book 1.2-13
Nagel, 'Aristotle on Eudaimonia'
Ackrill, 'Aristotle on Eudaimonia'

First Short paper due Friday Jan 22nd

Week 3 Jan 24 *NE* Book 2&3
Burnyeat, 'Aristotle on Learning to be Good'

Week 4 Jan 31st *NE* Book 4&5
Urmson, 'Aristotle's Doctrine of the Mean'
MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics* Ch. 1

Week 5 Feb 7 *NE* Book 6
Sorabji, 'Aristotle on the Role of Intellect in Virtue'
Wiggins, 'Deliberation and Practical Reason'

Week 6 Feb 14 *NE* Book 7
Wiggins, 'Weakness of Will, Commensurability, and the Objects...'

Reading Week Feb 19-23

Week 7 Feb 28th *NE* 8 & 9
Cooper, 'Aristotle on Friendship'

Week 8 Mar 6th	NE 10 Annas, 'Aristotle on Pleasure and Goodness'
Week 9 Mar 13th	Murdoch, 'Metaphysics and Ethics' Anscombe, 'Modern Moral Philosophy' Foot, 'Moral Arguments'
Week 10 Mar 20	Williams, <i>Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy</i> ch. 4 McDowell, 'Two Sorts of Naturalism' Nussbaum, 'Aristotle on human nature & the foundations of ethics'
Week 11 Mar 27th	tbd
Week 12 Apr 3rd	tbd
Week 13 Apr 10th	tbd

Grade Distribution:

4 short papers	40%
Class presentation	10%
Seminar participation	10%
Revised paper	40%

Presentations will be a chance to introduce one of the secondary readings. Short papers should argue a position on the topic of the week. You should write at least four, but you can write as many as you like and I'll give you credit for the best ones. Your longer paper is typically a revised and expanded version of one of these short papers. This format gives you a chance to try out a number of ideas and get quick feedback during the term in a low-stakes format.

Course Policies:

As upperlevel Arts students, you are expected to be familiar with practices of good scholarship and to understand how to avoid plagiarism, which is unacceptable. Please contact me asap in case of illness or necessary absences; I appreciate hearing early in the term of any needed accommodations.

UBC's Policy Statement:

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. A link about Academic Misconduct: <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959>