

# Philosophy 491: Seminar for Majors in Philosophy

## Moral Revolutions and Toxic Virtues

### Draft syllabus: subject to revision

Winter Term 1 2025-6

Professor Sylvia Berryman

Office Hours MW 11-12, BUCH E-269

Mon 2-5pm, BUCH

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The Majors Seminar in philosophy was established to offer philosophy students a research experience as the capstone of their undergraduate education. We will be reading some new literature from the field of virtue ethics concerning the possibility and process of ethical transformation. Students will take an active part in the seminar, present their research to the class and think together about the problems of positive and negative change in a society's ethical ideals.

Text (required): Anthony Appiah, *The Honor Code*

Other readings available on the course website

#### **Readings** (subject to minor revision):

Class 1, Sept 8th

Appiah, 'The End of Duelling', *The Honor Code*

Class 2, Sept 15th

Appiah, 'Foot-binding,' 'Honor Killings,' *The Honor Code*

Class 3, Sept 22nd

Appiah, 'The Abolition of Slavery'; Hochschild, *Bury the Chains* chapter.

Class 4, Sept 29th

Moral Revolutions: Appiah's critics

**Short paper on Appiah due Sunday Oct 5th, 7pm**

Class 5, Oct 6th

Historical Ethics: Blackburn, Chappell

#### **Oct 13th Thanksgiving**

Class 6, Oct 20th

Virtue Ethics: Which virtues? Hursthouse, Annas

Class 7, Oct 27th

Group presentations, chapter on toxic virtues

Class 8, Nov 3rd

Group presentations, chapter on toxic virtues

## **Nov 10th midterm break. Paper proposals due Nov. 14th**

Class 9, Nov 17th

Virtue Ethics: some surprises.

Arpaly, *Unprincipled Virtue*; Tessman, *Burdened Virtues*

Class 10, Nov 24th

Class workshop

Class 11, Dec 1st

Class workshop

## **Final Paper due Friday Dec 12th**

### **Evaluation:**

Relative weighting of the assignments to be decided collectively during the first class

Short paper:            Group Presentation:    Workshop:            Final paper:            Participation:

A short paper (4-5 pages) will evaluate Appiah's work. Student final papers, presented in draft at a class workshop, will research a particular case of toxic virtues. Students are required to write their own papers and not to rely on text-generating programmes, which is considered cheating.

### **Policies:**

Students seeking accommodation because of disabilities are asked to contact the instructor as soon as possible. Late penalties may be waived in cases of medical or family emergencies. This is a small-class seminar: preparation and thoughtful participation are an essential part of the course. A respectful classroom environment is essential to communication and learning: students are expected to be considerate of diverse perspectives in discussion and to help maintain an inclusive academic environment.

### **Plagiarism:**

*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.*