

PHH 4141: SEMINAR ON ARISTOTELIAN VIRTUE
J. ROTHSCHILD
FALL 2022 SYLLABUS

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Jennifer Rothschild, jrothschild@ufl.edu, 352-173-1831 M 2-4 pm; W 9-10 am FLO 307
To reserve a time slot during my office hours, use the sign-up sheet on my office door. During office hours, open time slots are available for drop-ins.

COURSE TIMES AND LOCATIONS

MWF 4 (10:40-11:30a) FLG 0275

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In the first half of this course we will try to understand Aristotelian virtue (what it is and how to build it). In the second half of the course, we turn to failures of virtue and their ways of disordering us or even ordering us badly.

The course is designed as an advanced undergraduate course in philosophy, with high expectations for reading preparation, class attendance and participation, and of course, philosophical writing.

Prerequisite: completion of one 3000-level course in Philosophy or permission of the Philosophy Department. Recommended but not required: prior completion of one course in Moral Philosophy and Ancient Greek Philosophy.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Readings/videos for all weeks will be available on our course Canvas site, under *Files*.

You should also purchase a copy of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, as we will move in and out of that book all semester long. There are many good translations of this book. Those by Irwin and Ross are the standards. I typically use Broadie & Rowe though it is, unfortunately, expensive. The newer Reeve translation is excellent, but difficult to cite.

All readings are required readings. You are expected to bring the current reading with you to class every day.

GENERAL EDUCATION OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Student Learning Objectives (SLOs):

Students in this course will do advanced undergraduate work in philosophy across the following categories, all of which will be assessed via written assignments and participation in discussion:

- *Content*: Students demonstrate fluency in the terminology, concepts, methodologies and theories used within the discipline.
- *Communication*: Students communicate knowledge, ideas, and reasoning clearly and effectively in written or oral forms appropriate to the discipline.
- *Critical Thinking*: Students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

SEMINAR WEEKLY FORMAT

Readings will be assigned for the week instead of for the day (exceptions are clearly marked on the syllabus). You should plan to do all the reading before you come to class on Monday, and then revisit the reading again as necessary throughout the week.

Monday class: I will do more talking on Mondays than on the other days, offering some orientation toward the week's readings. Some Mondays will be more like attending lecture, and some will be a combination of lecture and discussion.

Tuesday: You will submit your discussion questions for the week by email no later than 5 pm.

Wednesday & Friday class: Discussion. The aim will be for you to learn to run your own discussion, with floating chair. I will intervene for steering, focusing, and organizational purposes. We will use your submitted discussion questions to anchor us, particularly as we get going on Wednesday.

Short Papers: You will need to do four short papers in weeks 1-12 of the course on weeks of your choosing. On a week you turn in a paper, it is due to me on Canvas by 11:59 pm on Friday.

EVALUATION

Points:

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| 1. Participation Grade (including attendance & discussion questions) | 200 points |
| 2. 4 Short Papers (2 pages, 50 points each) | 200 points |
| 3. Seminar Paper Proposal | 50 points |
| 4. Seminar Paper (12-15 pages) | 500 points |
| 5. Seminar Paper Presentation | <u>50 points</u> |

Total: 1000 points

If you would like to check in on your participation or discussion question points at any time in the semester, please check in with me.

grades		% of points
A	4.0	94-100
A-	3.67	90-93
B+	3.33	87-89
B	3.0	84-86
B-	2.67	80-83
C+	2.33	77-79

C	2.0	74-76
C-	1.67	70-73
D+	1.33	67-69
D	1.0	64-66
D-	0.67	60-63
E	0.0	0-59

If your total number of points for the course falls between two grades in the end, I will round to the nearest mark. X.5 rounds up; for example, 93.5 percent of all points will earn you an A. Any 93 below 93.5 is an A-.

UF policy on assigning grade points: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

1. Participation Grade

Attendance and discussion are vital to learning the material, to the classroom conversation, and to your grade for the course. This is true in any philosophy course, but it is critical in a seminar. You should consider yourself responsible for the conversation in the room every time we meet.

(a) Attendance

I will keep a record of attendance for the course. Your grade will not be penalized if you have an excused absence from class. You are also allowed three “free” unexcused absences over the course of the semester—no questions asked, no penalty. Unexcused absences after your third and until your ninth will cost you 20 points apiece (2% of your overall grade each). At ten unexcused absences, your attendance and participation grade becomes a zero.

What counts as an excused absence?

If you miss class and your absence is an excused absence, your absence will not count against you.

Documentation of an excused absence needs to be provided within one week following an unforeseeable absence (such as an illness or family emergency); documentation for all foreseeable excused absences (a mock trial tournament, a basketball game) must be provided prior to the date of absence. Documentation must include required dates of absence. Most excused absences are of these kinds:

1. *Health.* If your health causes you to miss class, a note from your doctor will count as documentation for this. Medical notes should not include private medical details.
2. *Some UF Activities* are excused absences. (Ask instructor to see whether particular activities count.) You must provide a note for activities absences *prior to the day of absence*. Notes may come from the activity supervisor, such as a coach. Students with regular activities will have some extra writing assignments to make up for missed classes.
3. *Religious observances.* See me at the beginning of the semester about this.
4. *Personal.* The Dean of Students office will send me a note of excuse if you have personal reasons for needing one, such as a family emergency or an ongoing medical issue. Note: I do not get involved in adjudicating good personal reasons from bad ones. I let the DOS handle that. All other absences are typically unexcused, including some very good reasons to miss a class, like an important job interview or a leadership seminar or your grandmother’s 80th birthday weekend. I support your interest in these things, and understand why you might prioritize them over attending class, but that does not make them excused absences.

I cannot stress this enough: if you have something come up and need to miss several classes, please be proactive about arranging for excused absences instead of losing points. If you have questions, talk to me.

(b) Participation in Discussion

I will also keep a participation record for the course on a +, check, - scale. Students who come to class having prepared the reading, with a copy of the reading, who are consistently engaged and listening, and who make a contribution to class discussion (quality, not quantity) will get a + for the day. The neutral mark denotes prepared for discussion, attentive, but mostly silent. The – mark will find you on those days where your attention is elsewhere or where you are unprepared for discussion. At the end of the semester, students with mostly + marks should expect to receive A-range points for participation, students with mostly neutral marks should expect to receive B-range points for participation, and students with mostly –

marks should expect to receive C-range points or lower for participation. (Your attendance deductions will stack with this, for example, a B-range participation grade may be further lowered by more than three unexcused absences.)

(c) Weekly Discussion Questions

Discussion questions about the weekly reading will be due to me each Tuesday by 5 pm via email. Each student should send 1-2 questions per week focusing our attention on some fundamental aspect of the reading. Discussion questions will be graded on the same +, check, - scale outlined above.

2. Four Short Papers (2 pages each)

These are response papers, due by 11:59 pm each Friday, focused on the material from the current week. You may choose the weeks in which you write your papers, within limits: by week 3 you must have one in, by week 6 the second, by week 9 the third, and by week 12 the fourth.

Topics for response papers are your choice within limits: they should work on something of philosophical import, something focused (big picture topics are too big for short papers), something specific to the reading and/or class discussion. On later papers, consider focusing on something related to ongoing themes of the course. Good uses of reading papers include: getting clear on a foundational argument in the reading; raising an important objection to the reading; animating the stakes of an important idea in the reading; piecing together an important convergence or development in one or more readings; careful consideration of the theory through a core example; focused consideration of a topic you are considering for your longer seminar paper; and so on.

3. Seminar Paper Proposal

A 2-page proposal for your final paper is due on Friday of week 13 in class and on Canvas. Your proposal should identify a philosophical problem worth anchoring a seminar paper, explain the texts / terms / arguments you with consider in approaching the problem, and offer a proposed solution to the problem (thesis).

4. Seminar Paper (12-15 pages)

One paper will be due at the end of the semester on a topic developed in consultation with the instructor. Except by instructor permission, papers should not be research papers on outside material but should focus on the reading for the course. Papers should not be drafts of ideas; successful papers will likely be started early and heavily revised. Due on Canvas December 11th at 11:59 pm, in hard copy the next day by 5 pm at FLO 307

5. Seminar Paper Presentation

In our final two weeks of the course, students will deliver short presentations on their final papers and field questions on their central arguments.

LATE WORK

In general you should assume that late work will not be accepted without penalty or even without credit at all. If there is a foreseeable conflict with a due date for any reason, including activities, religious observances, and so on, you should make alternative arrangements with me well in advance so that we can set an early deadline. Computer errors (including disk, printer, or e-mail problems) are not acceptable excuses for late work. Extensions on written work will only be considered if you have a documented reason for your request, and if you take the initiative to make contact me as soon as the need arises.

CONTACTING ME

Meeting. I encourage you to come see me, in office hours if possible. I will talk to you about the reading, about the assignments, about specific strengths and weaknesses of essays that have been returned to you with comments, about your interest in or struggles with this course or with philosophy more broadly.

Email. Please email me if you have administrative questions your syllabus and other documents cannot answer, if you want to arrange a meeting, or if you need to inform me of relevant difficulties on your end. If you have substantive philosophical questions, email is not the best place for these; please come visit me in office hours so that we can have a better conversation.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

All electronic devices, including phones, computers, tablets, and recording devices need to be silenced and off the tabletop during class.

WORKING TOGETHER

You are encouraged to talk to one another outside of class about philosophy and about this course as much as possible. This includes discussion of paper topics, and it includes reading drafts of one another's work. If you do work together, please be mindful of the following:

- (1) Your final product must be your own original work, and not a repetition of someone else's ideas or essay.
- (2) Each essay must be a piece of written thinking in itself. Sometimes conversation in advance of writing can make you feel like the conclusions of that conversation are now established, such that you can now talk about them by stating them (or assuming, or implying). But your essays need to "show your work"—if the argument is not explicitly on the page, you haven't made the argument. I need to see the important pieces of reasoning.
- (3) You must be willing to endorse what ends up in your paper. Beware of letting others persuade you to go in the wrong direction. You are ultimately responsible for both the understandings and misunderstandings in the papers you turn in.

CLASSROOM CONDUCT

Philosophy is sometimes mistakenly understood to be a combative exercise. That style does not impress me at all. I encourage you to direct your first effort toward trying to understand and develop both the contributions of the authors we read and the contributions of others in the class. Where those are limited, of course, good philosophy also happens when you (respectfully) disagree, note tensions, make distinctions, reshape the question, and so on. Students who repeatedly act in ways which attempt to incite unnecessary conflict or to dominate the discussion and/or other people, will receive a zero for participation.

ACADEMIC HONESTY UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that

are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class. You should expect the minimum penalty for academic dishonesty to be a grade of E for the class (not just the assignment). All incidents of academic dishonesty will be reported to Student Judicial Affairs.

STUDENTS REQUIRING ACCOMMODATION

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

STATEMENT OF INCLUSION

The instructor of this course is committed to providing a course and classroom in which diverse students feel welcome, are empowered to engage, and have the opportunity to thrive. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to better support you.

ONLINE COURSE EVALUATIONS Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

PROVISIONAL SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Wk	TOPIC	READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS
1	Introduction to Virtue	No reading
2	Naturalism	Thompson, excerpts from <i>Life and Action</i> Boyle, “Essentially Rational Animals”
3	Skill and Virtue	M 9/5: no class – holiday Annas, excerpts from <i>Intelligent Virtue</i> Last week to submit your first short paper
4	Habituation	Burnyeat, “Aristotle on Learning to Be Good” Sherman, excerpts from <i>The Fabric of Character</i> Müller, “Teaching Virtue”
5	Virtuous Enough?	Müller, “Aristotle’s Conception of Ethical and Natural Virtue” Russell, excerpts from <i>Practical Intelligence and the Virtues</i>
6	Aiming for the Good	Boyle and Lavin, “Goodness and Desire” Hursthouse, excerpts from <i>On Virtue Ethics</i> Last week to submit your second short paper
7	Sociality of Virtue	M 10/3: Excerpts from <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> VIII & IX W 10/5: Philosophy Workshop: Gavrilos F 10/7: Philosophy Workshop: Rothschild, “Essential Sociality of Virtue”
8	Psychic Conflict	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> VII.1-10 Murdoch on M&D, excerpts from “the Idea of Perfection” Breaking Bad, Season 1 Episode 1, “Pilot” (58:00) Homer’s Brain, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Juj0yeI_9Fg (6:48)
9	Unity of Vice	Excerpts from <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> III, VII, IX Poe, “The Cask of Amontillado” Arendt, excerpts from <i>Eichmann in Jerusalem</i> Last week to submit your third short paper
10	Vicious Orders	Act of Killing (film), Oppenheimer Dangerous Liaisons (film), Frears
11	Other Non-Rational Orders	Excerpts from Plato, <i>Republic</i> Sophocles, <i>Electra</i>
12	Talking to the Non-Rational	Lear, “Integrating the Non-Rational Soul” Gendler, “Alief in Action” F 11/11: no class – holiday Last week to submit your fourth short paper
13	Moral Progress?, transition to seminar papers	M 11/14: discussion topic: Can we become better? (no new reading) W 11/16, F 11/18: Paper pitches Seminar Paper Proposals Due F 10:40 am in class and on Canvas
14	Proposals	M 11/21: Writing Day W-F 11/23-25: no class – holiday
15	Paper Presentations	M-W-F
16	Paper Presentations	M-W

Final Seminar Papers Due to me by Sunday, December 11th at 11:59 pm. You must deliver a hard copy to my office by Monday, Dec 12th at 5 pm.