

PHIL 122E
Winter 2024
MW 3:30-4:50pm
Olmstead 1116

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HMNSS 3218
Office hours MW 5-6:15pm, o.b.a.

Ancient Ethical Theory



Intensive study of some topics of ancient Greek ethics: responsibility, shame and guilt, virtue and moral education, justice, beauty, and wisdom. We'll put a special emphasis on how the most important and influential philosophers of classical Greece—Plato and Aristotle—shaped our ethical environment, for better or worse; and on the role that these thinkers assigned to friendship and love in ethical life.

Requirements

Reading and lectures

Carefully reading the assigned texts is important in this course. The lectures go beyond the content of the assigned readings. Regular attendance at lecture is expected, and participation is encouraged. If you anticipate logistical difficulties being able to regularly attend lecture, let me know and we will try to work something out.

Students should exercise courtesy to their instructors and fellow classmates by avoiding the use of distracting applications during lecture, including email, web browsing, chat programs, etc.

Midterm Essay

A short writing exercise (roughly 1500-2000 words in length) will be due around midterm. It will account for 45% your final grade. I'll be handing out possible essay topics in advance.

Final Exam

We'll have a take-home final exam during the end-quarter exam period. You'll have a few days during finals week to write it. It will account for 55% of your final grade.

Late Assignments

Late writing assignments will be penalized one third of one letter grade (i.e., A- becomes B+) every 24 hours, starting ten minutes after the deadline. Exceptions to the lateness policy will be made in cases I deem exceptional.

Accessible Education Information

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations should submit their request for accommodations to the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) as soon as possible, as it may take up to two weeks for the SDRC to review the request. You can request a letter of accommodation on the R'Ability website.

For more information, please visit the SDRC website (www.sdrc.ucr.edu), visit the CAE at 1228 Student Services Building, or contact them by phone at (951) 827-3861.

Texts

There are three required books for this course:

1. Plato, *Republic*, trans. G.M.A Grube, rev. C.D.C. Reeve (Hackett, 1992)
2. Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Nehamas & Woodruff (Hackett, 1989)
3. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. and ed. Roger Crisp from the *Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy* series (Cambridge, 2004)

Everything else is available online.

Schedule of Topics¹

Introduction

1. Introduction to Ancient Greek Ethics: No reading

Homeric and Archaic Ethical Life

2. Two apologies: Responsibility in the Homeric epics

- Homer, *Odyssey* Book XXII, “Bloodshed”, trans. Emily Wilson (Norton and Sons, 2017)
- Homer, *Iliad* Book XIX, trans. Anthony Verity (Oxford University Press, 2011)
- E.R. Dodds, “Agamemnon’s Apology”, in his *The Greeks and the Irrational* (University of California Press, 1951)

3. Shame and guilt

- Sophocles, from *Aias*, trans. James Scully, in *The Complete Plays of Sophocles: A New Translation* by Scully & Robert Bagg (Harper Perennial, 2011)
- Euripides, from *Hippolytus*, trans: Gilbert Murray (Longmans, Green & Co, 1904)
- A.H. Adkins, “The Agathos and the Sanction of Homeric Society” and “The Claims of the Agathos”, in his *Merit and Responsibility* (Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 48-57.
- Bernard Williams, “Mechanisms of Shame and Guilt”, endnote 1 to his *Shame and Necessity* [SN] (University of California Press, 1993)

4. Slavery, sex, and wealth

- Aristotle, Bk. 1, chs. 4-7 from *Politics*, trans. C.D.C. Reeve (Hackett, 1998)
- Williams, “Necessary Identities”, ch. 5 in SN

¹ Schedule is subject to change

- K.J. Dover, “Status”, III.E in his *Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle* (Hackett, 1974) (optional)

Plato

5. Can virtue be taught?

- Plato, *Meno*, trans. David Sedley & Alex Long, in *Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy: Meno and Phaedo* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).
- Gregory Vlastos, from “Elenchus and Mathematics”, in his *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 108-125.
- Plutarch, “Alcibiades”, available online at the Internet Classics Archive < <http://classics.mit.edu/Plutarch/alcihiad.html> > (optional)

6. Moral skepticism and the limits of the elenchus

- Plato, from *Gorgias*, trans. Terence Irwin (Clarendon Press, 1979), 482c4-491d4.
- Plato, *Republic* I
 - Cephalus and Polemarchus (327a-336a)
 - Thrasymachus’s challenge (336a-354c)
- Julia Annas, from “Book One” in her *An Introduction to Plato’s Republic* (Clarendon Press, 1981), pp. 50-57. (optional)

7. Justice in the polis

- Plato, from *Republic* II, III, & IV
 - Skepticism about justice (II, 357a-368c)
 - Human nature (II, 368b-374e)
 - Education and character (III, 401b-412b)
 - The ideal city (III, 412b– IV, 427d)

8. Justice in the soul

- Plato, from *Republic* IV & IX

- Virtues of the ideal city (IV, 428b-434d)
- The nature of the soul (IV, 436a-441c)
- Virtues of the soul (IV, 441c-442d)
- Reason's aims (IX, 580d-587e)
- Justice in the city, justice in the soul (IV, 434d-436a)
- G.M.A. Grube, from "The Nature of the Soul" from his *Plato's Thought* (Hackett, 1980), pp. 120-139.
- Annas, from "The Defence of Justice" in her *An Introduction to Plato's Republic* (Clarendon Press, 1981), pp. 153-162.

9. Love

- Alexander Nehamas & Paul Woodruff, "Introduction" in *Symposium*
- Plato, *Symposium*
 - Introduction and the first four *encomia* (172a-194e)
 - Agathon's *encomium* and the elenchus (194e4-203b)
 - Socrates's *encomium* (203b-212c)
 - Alcibiades again (212c-223d)

Aristotle

10. The goal of human life

- *Nicomachean Ethics*, from Book 1
 - Eudaimonia: the best good (1.1-1.2)
 - Endoxa regarding eudaimonia (1.5)
 - The function argument (1.7)
- Gerald Hughes, from "The Fulfilled Life", in *The Routledge Guidebook to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* (Routledge, 2001/2013) , pp. 20-44

11. Virtues of character

- *Nicomachean Ethics*, from Books 2 & 3
 - Preliminary analysis: parts of the soul and parts of virtue (1.13)

- The nature of virtue (2.5-2.6)
- Classification of character-related virtues (2.7-2.9)
- Character-related virtues: courage (3.6-3.9)
- Giles Pearson, from “Courage and Temperance”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics* (Cambridge, 2014) , pp. 110-123

12. Virtues of thinking

- *Nicomachean Ethics*, from Books 6 & 10
 - Sound reason and its target (6.1-6.2)
 - Phronesis and sophia (6.5, 6.7)
 - The subordination of phronesis to sophia (6.12-13)
 - Happiness revisited (10.6-9)
- Sarah Broadie, “The Crown of Happiness”, from her *Ethics with Aristotle* (Oxford, 1991)

13. Friendship

- *Nicomachean Ethics*, from Books 8-9
 - Definition and classification (8.1-8.8)
 - Friendship’s nature and causes (9.4-9.8)
 - Friendship and happiness (9.9-9.12)