

Ryerson University
Department of Philosophy

PH 8109: Moral Philosophy (Fall 2013)

Contact Information:

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Course Description:

This course will primarily explore recent work in virtue ethics. However, we begin with Aristotle whose work has been the major inspiration for the revival of virtue ethics which began in Anglo-American moral philosophy in the late 1950's.

Course Readings

A number of course readings, as noted in the syllabus below by an asterisk, will be available through our Blackboard course shell. You are responsible for printing them if you would like hard copies. I shall scan and send you digital files of the other assigned readings by email at least a week before the relevant class. You are expected to bring the assigned readings to class each week, in either paper or electronic form.

The list of readings for particular classes in the tentative syllabus below likely will be revised as the course progresses, depending on the interests of the class and the pace of discussion.

Evaluation Scheme:

Grades will normally be determined in the following manner:

Task	Value	Due Date and Submission Information
<p>Short Critical Discussions</p> <p>In three weeks, distributed throughout the term, you will write a short paper (about 1,200 words or 4 pages) on one of the readings for that week, <i>in advance of the class meeting.</i></p>	<p>45% (15 % each)</p>	<p>One of your papers must be on a topic from each of the following: (a) weeks 2-4, (b) weeks 5-8, (c) weeks 9-12.</p> <p>Each paper will be due on Sunday by 10 p.m. before the next day's class. Email your paper to me at kornegay@ryerson.ca.</p> <p>Your papers will be posted anonymously on Blackboard before the class meets on Monday afternoon.</p>

Final Essay (12-15 pages)	45%	Email your essay or submit a hard copy to me by 5 p.m. on Dec. 10 th .
Contributions to Class Discussion	10%	

Late Penalty

- Short papers submitted late without sufficient justification will be penalized at the rate of 10% per day, including weekends. The major paper submitted without sufficient justification will incur a penalty of 3% per day including weekends.

Additional Course Requirement of a Class Presentation and Further Information on Short Papers and the Longer Essay: Each student is required to make a presentation of around 15 minutes to the class based on one of his or her short papers and to entertain questions or comments on it. The grade on the paper, on which the presentation is based, will be based on the written submission *only*. The student's performance as presenter and fielder of questions will be factored into his or her mark for class participation.

Ideally, we will have at least one volunteer for each class in weeks 2-12 and no more than two volunteers for any single week. When there is more than one presenter in a given week, they should consult each other to insure they do not present on the same topic.

I hope to recruit a volunteer for week 2 during the first class. Thereafter, students will be able to volunteer 1-2 weeks prior to the class in question by email or during class. This seems the best way to proceed so students can make informed decisions about the topics and the weeks of their presentations, especially since we might well get behind the syllabus, readings might be omitted, or new readings added given the pace of discussion and interests of the class.

At least one to two weeks prior to the presentation(s) and the submission of short papers by the presenter(s) and non-presenters as well, I shall post some *suggested* topics on the upcoming readings. Students will also have the choice of writing on a topic of their own devising based on the assigned readings. However, if you want to write on your own topic *and* are scheduled to present your paper the following week, you must gain approval of your topic from me by 5 p.m. on the Friday immediately prior to your Monday presentation.

I shall post some suggested topics for the longer essay at least 4 weeks before the paper is due. You may opt to write on a topic of your own devising, subject to my approval at least two weeks before the due date. In order to be approved, your proposed topic must be on some of the assigned reading(s) and have strong logical connections to course contents.

Assistance, Missed Classes and/or Evaluations

- Students are required to inform their instructors of any situation which arises during the semester which may have an adverse effect upon their academic performance, and must request any considerations and accommodations according to the relevant policies and well in advance. Failure to do so will jeopardize any academic appeals. **If your instructor is not relevantly informed, advice or accommodations cannot be given in a timely fashion.**
- A student should inform **his or her instructor**, in advance, when he or she will miss an assignment deadline for (1) medical or (2) compassionate reasons. When circumstances do not permit this (e.g., in an emergency) the student must inform the instructor as soon as feasible, so that an extension on an assignment can be granted.
- These alternative arrangements based on medical or compassionate considerations will *only* be made on the basis of circumstances that are both (1) legitimate and (2) unforeseeable. Some examples of circumstances that typically *fail* to meet one or both of these conditions are: extra-curricular activities, employment obligations, multiple deadlines, and computer malfunctions.
- Required Documentation

Medical certificates – If a student misses the deadline for submitting an assignment, or the date of an exam or other evaluation component because of illness, he or she must submit a Ryerson Student Medical Certificate AND an Academic Consideration Form within 3 working days of the missed date. Both documents are available at www.ryerson.ca/senate/forms/medical.pdf. **If you are a full-time or part-time degree student, then you submit your forms to your own program department or school, in this case to Prof. David Hunter, Program Director, M.A. in Philosophy or Amber Rebello, Philosophy Graduate Administrative Assistant.**

Compassionate grounds – If a student needs accommodation on compassionate grounds for a missed test, exam or deadline for an assignment, he or she must submit an Academic Consideration Form and supporting documents within 3 working days of the missed date. **If you are a full-time or part-time degree student, then you submit your forms to your own program department or school.**

Religious observance – If a student needs accommodation because of religious observance, he or she must submit a Request for Accommodation of Student Religious, Aboriginal and Spiritual Observance AND an Academic Consideration Form within the first 2 weeks of the class or, for a final examination, within 2 weeks of the posting of the examination schedule. If the required absence occurs within the first 2 weeks of classes, or the dates are not known well in advance as they are linked to other conditions, these forms should be submitted with as much lead time as possible in advance of the required absence. Both documents are available at <http://www.ryerson.ca/senate/forms/reobservforminstr.pdf>. **If you are a full-time or part-time degree student, then you submit the forms to your own program department or school.**

Students with disabilities – In order to facilitate the academic success and access of students with disabilities, they should register with the Access Centre

<http://www.ryerson.ca/student-services/accesscentre/index.html>. Before the first graded work is due, students should also inform their instructor through an “Accommodation Form for Professors” that they are registered with the Access Centre and what accommodations are required.

Student Code of Academic Conduct

The [Ryerson Student Code of Academic Conduct](http://www.ryerson.ca/academicintegrity) defines academic misconduct, the processes the University will follow when academic misconduct is suspected, and the consequences that can be imposed if students are found to be guilty of misconduct. Further information is also available at www.ryerson.ca/academicintegrity.

Academic misconduct includes:

- plagiarism (claiming words, ideas, artistry, drawings or data of another person as your own, including submitting your own work in whole or in part in more than one course)
- cheating
- misrepresentation of personal identity or performance
- submission of false information
- contributing to academic misconduct
- damaging, tampering, or interfering with the scholarly environment
- unauthorized copying or use of copyrighted materials
- violations of departmental policies on professional behavior and/or course requirements

Submission to Turnitin.com

Ryerson University subscribes to *Turnitin*, an on-line service which aids instructors in evaluating the originality of written work. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the *Turnitin* reference database, solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers.

- It is the expectation of the instructor of PH 8109 that *final* essays for this course will normally be submitted to *Turnitin*. Submissions should be made *via* the link in our course shell under ‘Assignments’ by the time that the essays have been submitted in hard copy.

In accordance with *Academic Council Policy #145*, Section 4.3.a.i.

(www.ryerson.ca/acadcouncil/current/pol145.pdf), students who do not want their work submitted to *Turnitin.com* must, by the end of the second week of class, consult with the instructor to make alternative arrangements. Also, students should be aware that “[w]hen an instructor has a reason to suspect that an individual piece of work has been plagiarized, the instructor shall be permitted to submit that work to any plagiarism detection service” (www.ryerson.ca/acadcouncil/current/pol145.pdf, Section 4.3.a.)

Students should be aware as well that the instructor reserves the right to conduct an oral examination on the contents of any submitted assignment.

Tentative Syllabus of Topics and Readings

Week 1 Introduction to Course and Aristotle's Virtue Ethics I: *Eudaimonia* and the Virtues

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. I. * (You may use any translation you might have or borrow. Also, Roger Crisp's translation is available as an e-book through our Blackboard course shell)

Week 2 Aristotle's Virtue Ethics II: Nature of Moral Virtue, Specific Virtues, and Moral Education

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bks. II; III, Chs. 5-12, Bk. IV, Chs. 1, 5.*
- Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 383-385, footnotes 501- 502 (on Aristotle's view of the cognitive dimensions of the emotions of fear and pity).
- L.A. Kosman "Being Properly Affected: Virtues and Feelings in Aristotle's Ethics" in Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, ed., *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 103-116.

Week 3 Aristotle's Virtue Ethics III: Character Profiles: Virtue, Vice, Moral Weakness/Incontinence (akrasia) and Moral Strength/Continence; Nature and Value of Pleasure; Practical Wisdom

- Aristotle, *N.E.*, Bk. VII, Chs. 1-10; Bk X, Chs. 1-6; Bk. VI.*
- T.H. Irwin, "The Virtues: Theory and Common Sense in Greek Philosophy" in Roger Crisp, ed., *How Should One Live?* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 48-50.*
- Rosalind Hursthouse, "Practical Wisdom: A Mundane Account," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol. 106, pp. 283-307.*

Week 4 Aristotle's Virtue Ethics IV: Practical Wisdom (continued); the Unity of the Virtues

- Aristotle, *N.E.*, Bk. VI.*
- T.H. Irwin, "The Virtues: Theory and Common Sense in Greek Philosophy" in Roger Crisp, ed., *How Should One Live?* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 37-55.*
- Neera Badhwar, "The Limited Unity of Virtue," *Nous* 30:3 (1996), pp. 306-329.*

Week 5 Dissatisfaction with Modern Moral Philosophy and the Revival of Virtue Ethics

- G.E.M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy" (1958) in Roger Crisp and Michael Slote, eds., *Virtue Ethics* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 26-44.

- Michael Stocker, “The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories” in Crisp and Slote, eds., pp. 66-78.
- Michael Slote, “Virtue Ethics, Utilitarianism, and Symmetry” in Crisp ed., pp. 99-110.*
- Michael Slote, “Some Advantages of Virtue Ethics,” Sections 3-4 in Owen Flanagan and Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, ed., *Identity, Character, and Morality: Essays in Moral Psychology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), pp. 439-447.
- Bernard Mayo, *Ethics and the Moral Life*, Ch. XI (London: MacMillan, 1958), pp. 200, 209-215.

Week 6 Foot on the Nature of the Virtues and on Kant; Hursthouse on Aristotle, Kant, Emotions, Membership in the Moral Community, and Virtue Ethics

- Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 398-399 in James W. Ellington, translation (Indianapolis: Hackett), pp. 10-12.
- Philippa Foot, “Virtues and Vices” (1978) in Crisp and Slote, eds., pp. 163-177.
- Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, Chs. 4-5 (Oxford, 1999), pp. 91-120.*
- Rosalind Hursthouse, *Beginning Lives*, Ch. 6, “Neo-Aristotelianism” (Oxford, 1987), pp. 218-221, 247-259.

Week 7 MacIntyre on the Nature of the Virtues

- Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, Ch. 14 (Notre Dame Univ. Press, 1981), pp. 181-203.
- Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, Ch. 10 (Chicago: Open Court/Carus, 1999), pp. 119-128.

Week 8 Definitions of ‘Virtue Ethics’ and Challenges to V-E

- Daniel Statman, “Introduction to Virtue Ethics” in Daniel Statman, ed., *Virtue Ethics: A Critical Reader* (Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1997), pp. 7-11
- Hursthouse, “Are Virtues the Proper Starting Point for Morality?” in James Dreier, ed., *Contemporary Debates in Moral Theory* (Blackwell, 2003), pp. 99-102.
- Christine Swanton, “Virtue Ethics, Value-centredness, and Consequentialism,” Sections I-III, *Utilitas*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (July 2001), pp. 214-225.*
- Robert B. Louden, “On Some Vices of Virtue Ethics,” in *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 21 (1984), pp. 227-236.*

Week 9 Hursthouse’s Aristotelian Virtue Ethics: Taking up some challenges to V-E

- Hursthouse, “Normative Virtue Ethics” in Crisp, ed., pp. 19-36.*
- Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, Part I, “Tragic Dilemmas,” pp. 71-79.*
- Hursthouse, “Virtue Theory and Abortion,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 20(1991), pp. 223-246.*
- R. Jo Kornegay, “Hursthouse’s Virtue Ethics and Abortion: Abortion Ethics without Metaphysics?” *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, Vol. 14 (2011), pp. 51-71.*

Week 10 Ethics of Care, Slote’s Agent-based Virtue Ethics, & Slote’s Application of His Theory to Famine Relief

- Nel Noddings, “An Ethic of Caring” (1984) in Mark Timmons, ed., *Conduct & Character: Readings in Moral Theory*, 4th edition (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 2003), pp. 244-255.
- Michael Slote, “Agent-Based Virtue Ethics” in Crisp and Slote, eds., pp.239-262
- Michael Slote, “Famine, Affluence, and Virtue” in Rebecca L. Walker and Philip J. Ivanhoe, eds., *Working Virtue: Virtue Ethics and Contemporary Moral Problems* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 279-296.

Week 11 Objections to Hursthouse’s and Slote’s Analyses of ‘Right’ Action

- Ramon Das, “Virtue Ethics and Right Action,” Sections I and II *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 81 (2003), pp. 324-334.*
- Christine Swanton, “A Virtue Ethical Account of Right Action,” *Ethics*, Vol. 112 (2001), pp. 32-37. *

Week 12 Driver’s criticisms of Hursthouse and Hursthouse’s Replies; Recent Work on Virtue Ethical Accounts of ‘Right’ Action or Further Objections to Virtue Ethics

- Julia Driver, “Virtue Theory,” in James Dreier, ed., *Contemporary Debates in Moral Theory* (Blackwell, 2003), pp. 113-123.
- Rosalind Hursthouse, “Are Virtues the Proper Starting Point for Morality?” in Dreier, ed., pp. 99-112.
- TBA

Suggested Topics for Short Papers and Class Presentations

Week 2

(1) The Nature of Aristotle’s Moral Virtues

How does Aristotle define ‘a moral virtue’? How does Aristotle defend his definition? Note that Aristotle’s moral virtues typically include dispositions to have correct emotional responses as well as to perform correct actions in certain types of life-

situations. Illustrate the emotive (or affective) dimensions as well as the conduct dimensions of Aristotelian virtues in the case of any two of the following virtues (and their pairs of vices): courage, self-control, or gentleness.

Raise an objection to Aristotle's position. Could A. satisfactorily reply to it?

(2) Aristotle's Doctrine of the Mean

What is this doctrine? Why is it not an arithmetical mean? What are some of the qualitative (as opposed to quantitative) features of the moral virtues in general? How does Aristotle employ this doctrine in his analyses of generosity, extravagance, and stinginess? What are some of the quantitative and qualitative aspects of generosity and its pair of vices?

Raise an objection to Aristotle's position. Could Aristotle satisfactorily reply to it?

(3) Aristotle's Definition of 'Virtuous' Action

How does Aristotle define a 'virtuous' action? Are virtuous actions intrinsically good? What role do correct intentions play in virtuous action? How does Aristotle make the case that pleasure is not the aim of virtuous action but a by-product of it? Why is the relationship between pleasure and manifestations of the virtue of courage atypical, according to Aristotle?

Raise an objection to A's position. Could Aristotle satisfactorily reply to it?

(4) Kosman on Aristotle's Views on Moral Education of the Emotions

What does Kosman find perplexing about Aristotle's view that correct moral training requires developing dispositions both (a) to act correctly and (b) to emotionally react correctly in a given virtue's sphere of life? What are some asymmetries between acting and 'emoting' that K. identifies? How does he envision the training to instill dispositions to proper action? How does K. flesh out Aristotle's theory in terms of how one might train oneself to have appropriate emotional dispositions?

Is there any evidence or reason to believe this kind of training would be effective?

(5) Nussbaum and Kosman on Aristotle's Analyses of Emotions and Implications for Moral Education

Explicate and contrast the accounts of Aristotle's analyses of emotions offered by Kosman and Nussbaum. Could one develop a richer account (than K.'s) of emotional training, on A.'s behalf, using relevant claims and arguments A. makes in the *N.E.* and Nussbaum's theory of the cognitive content of emotions?

Sample Suggested Topics for Short Papers and Presentations for Selected Weeks:

Week 6

Suggested Topics for Short Papers and Presentations

1. Exposition: Foot on the nature of the virtues, the virtues as corrective, and her concept of a virtue that does not operate as a virtue in some contexts

Critical analysis: (1) ways her position on the virtues compares with Aristotle's or (2) raise an objection to some aspect of her position, e.g., from Aristotle's perspective or your own, how she could respond, and assess whether her response is adequate (address (1) or (2), but not both)

2. Exposition: How does Foot analyse and assess the proposition: moral credit is proportional to effort required to act well? Include the distinction between types of difficulties she draws. How does she analyse the cases Kant considers? Does she agree with his rankings in terms of merit? Is Hursthouse's explication of Foot on Kant's case of the sorrowing philanthropist (pp. 90-99, esp. 95, 98) helpful?

Critical analysis: Does Foot's analysis capture Kant's intentions? Is her position on Kant reasonable?

3. Hursthouse on Kant, Aristotle, and the proper account of emotions within virtue (pp. 99-120)

Exposition: Hursthouse's analyses of benevolence, of Kant's happy philanthropist, and of his third philanthropist; the extent to which she brings Aristotle closer to Kant; her position on the nature of emotions, morally valuable emotions, and her main objections to Kant (pp. 99-120)

Critical analysis: raise a significant objection to some aspect of her position, offer a reply on her behalf, and assess the adequacy of her reply.

➤ *N.B.* Topic 4 might well end up being discussed in Week 7.

4. Hursthouse on 'human being', 'person', and the correct concept for membership in the moral community

What are some of the concepts of 'person' H. considers? What is the concept of 'human being' she prefers? How does she make the case that 'personhood' omits a range of morally relevant features that 'human being' includes? How does she argue that 'human being at the major stage' is a better concept than 'person' to capture full moral agency?

Critical analysis: raise a significant objection to some aspect of her position, offer a reply on her behalf, and assess the adequacy of her reply

Week 12 Suggested Topics on Swanton and Das on Hursthouse's and Slote's definitions of 'right' action; Driver-Hursthouse Debate

1. Explain the objections Swanton raises to Hursthouse's and Slote's definitions of 'right' action (pp. 34-36).
 - (a) How could Hursthouse reply? Is that reply adequate? (b) How could Slote reply? Is that reply adequate? (I suggest you choose one of (a) and (b), but *not* address both).
2. On page 36 Swanton indicates she believes Ross's distinction between a morally right and a morally good act is an insightful distinction. How does Ross draw this distinction? On page 50 of her article (yes, you were only asked to read pp. 32 to 37 top), Swanton writes,

As Justin Oakley points out in "Varieties of Virtue Ethics," [Ratio, 9 (1996): 128-152] the formula that an action is right if and only if it is what an agent with virtuous character would do in the circumstances is ambiguous between two interpretations. The formula could furnish what Oakley calls an 'external criterion' of right action, or the idea of "doing what the virtuous person would do" is to be understood as requiring more than "merely the performance of certain acts." Acting rightly also "requires our acting out of the appropriate dispositions and motives" [p. 136].

Swanton then claims that the latter or strong interpretation unfortunately would rule out a variant of Ross's distinction between a right and a good act.

Which of Oakley's two interpretations is more reasonably ascribed to Hursthouse in "Virtue Theory and Abortion"? How does Hursthouse reply to a challenge similar to Oakley's from Driver in "Are Virtues the Proper Starting Point for Morality?" pp. 108-109?

What do you think of Hursthouse's reply? From the point of view of Ross's distinction at least, Swanton prefers the weak to the strong interpretation. Are there grounds for preferring the strong to the weak one?

3. Explain the objection Das makes to Slote's definition of 'right' action on pages 326-327.

How would/could Slote reply? Is this reply adequate?

4. How does Das explain 'the insularity objection'? How does he make the case that Hursthouse's earlier definition of 'right' action, which he terms '(Q1)', is vulnerable to the insularity objection, but her later definition, which he terms '(Q2)', is not? He claims that (Q1) is vulnerable to counter-examples in which an agent seems to do the wrong act even though it isn't the result of culpable ignorance or another character

flaw. He suggests that (Q2) *might* also be vulnerable to these counter-examples (p. 331). Can you devise a counter-example that would satisfy Das's description? Could (Q2) avoid this problem?

5. Driver suggests an ethical theory needs to give an account of actions that are permissible, obligatory, supererogatory, and suberogatory. To what extent does she believe Hursthouse can give accounts of these types of actions?

To what extent does Hursthouse engage with these issues and challenges Driver isolates? Are Hursthouse's explicit replies adequate? In cases where she does not explicitly reply to Driver, how could she have replied? Would these replies be adequate?

6. Explain two objections Driver raises to Hursthouse's virtue ethics. How does Hursthouse reply?

Are Hursthouse's replies adequate?