

Ryerson University
Department of Philosophy

PH 8109: Moral Philosophy (Fall 2020)



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.

Topics in Aristotle's ethics will include the nature of the virtues and practical wisdom, the nature and training of the emotions, the nature of pleasure and its value as a qualified good, and his vexed doctrine of the unity of the virtues. Next we explore seminal papers by G.E. M. Anscombe and Philippa Foot, which motivated the revival of virtue ethics and marked its early development. We then move into the contemporary neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics of Rosalind Hursthouse and to a lesser extent into the sentimentalist virtue ethics of Michael Slote, which draws on Hume and care ethics. Topics in contemporary virtue ethics will include the search for, and challenges to, a virtue ethical account of 'right' action, whether virtue-ethics is a viable alternative to deontology and consequentialism in normative as well as applied ethics, and the distinction between virtue ethics and virtue theory. We will conclude with (1) objections to Hursthouse's virtue-ethics by Julia Driver, a prominent consequentialist, virtue-theorist and (2) Hursthouse's replies to some of those objections.

Course Readings

A number of course readings, as noted in the syllabus below by an asterisk, will be available through our D2L course shell under 'Resources'. The other readings will be emailed to students as attachments at least two weeks before the relevant class. You may use the computers and printer in the grad lounge to print out the readings. You are expected to bring the assigned readings to class each week in either hard copy 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 5-9, (c) weeks 10-12.</p> <p>Each paper will be due on Wednesday by 5 p.m. before the next day's class. Email your paper to me at kornegay@ryerson.ca.</p> <p>Your papers will be uploaded to our course shell on Wednesday evening before the class meets on Thursday afternoon. If you want your paper to be posted anonymously, then omit your name from the file.</p>
<p>Final Essay (about 3,500 words or 12 pages)</p>	<p>45%</p>	<p>Due date: April 23</p>
<p>Contributions to Class Discussion</p>	<p>10%</p>	

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 15-20 minutes to the class based on one of his or her short papers and to entertain questions or comments on it. I recommend that the presenting student prepare a handout, use the board or power-point. 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 no more than one volunteer for any single week. 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 Monday prior to your Thursday 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 at least two 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**
 - *Health 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. If you are a certificate or non-certificate student, then you submit your forms to the staff at the front desk of the Chang School.**

- *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. If you are a certificate or non-certificate student, then you submit your forms to the staff at the front desk of the Chang 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. If you are a certificate or non-certificate student, then you submit the forms to the staff at the front desk of the Chang School.**
- *Students who need academic accommodation support* should register with the [Academic Accommodation Support office](#) (formerly called the Access Centre). Before the first graded work is due, registered students should inform their instructors through an “Accommodation Form for Professors” that they are registered with Academic Accommodation Support and what accommodations are required.

Important Resources Available at Ryerson

- **The Library** provides research workshops and individual assistance. Inquire at the Reference Desk on the second floor of the library, or go to www.ryerson.ca/library/info/workshops.html
- **Student Learning Support** offers group-based and individual help with writing, math, study skills and transition support, and other issues.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Ryerson’s Policy 60 (now called the *Academic Integrity policy*) applies to all students at the University. The policy and its procedures are triggered in the event that there is a suspicion that a student has engaged in a form of academic misconduct.

Forms of academic misconduct include plagiarism, cheating, supplying false information to the University, and other acts. The most common form of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and penalties can be severe. In any academic exercise, plagiarism occurs when one offers as one’s own work the words, data, ideas, arguments, calculations, designs or productions of another without appropriate attribution or when one allows one’s work to be copied.

All academic work must be submitted using the citation style approved by the instructor. Students may refer to the Ryerson Library's list of [Citations and Style Guides](#) for more information. In this course, as is usual in other humanities courses, MLA is preferred; APA is inadequate. See also my *Guide for Writing an Argumentative Essay* posted on D2L.

It is assumed that all examinations and work submitted for evaluation and course credit will be the product of individual effort, except in the case of group projects arranged for and approved by the course instructor. Submitting the same work to more than one course, without instructor approval, is also considered a form of plagiarism.

Students are advised that suspicions of academic misconduct may be referred to the Academic Integrity Office (AIO). Students who are found to have committed academic misconduct will have a Disciplinary Notation (DN) placed on their academic record (not on their transcript) and will be assigned one or more of the following penalties:

- A grade reduction for the work, include a grade of zero for the work.
- A grade reduction in the course greater than a zero on the work. (Note that this penalty can only be applied to course components worth 10% or less, that any additional penalty cannot exceed 10% of the final course grade, and that information explaining that such a penalty will be assigned must be included on the course outline.)
- An F in the course
- More serious penalties up to and including expulsion from the University

For more detailed information on these issues, please refer to the full online text for the [Academic Integrity policy](#) and to the [Academic Integrity website](#).

Submission to Turnitin.com

Ryerson University subscribes to *Turnitin.com*, 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 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, Jan. 16 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 D2L course shell)

Week 2, Jan. 23 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. *N.B.* I will present Kosman's article in detail; it isn't an option for a student presentation. However, how Nussbaum would criticise it is an option..

Week 3, Jan. 30 Aristotle's Virtue Ethics III: Character Profiles: Virtue, Vice, Moral Weakness/Incontinence (*akrasia*) and Moral Strength/Continence; Nature and Value of Pleasure; Practical Reason, 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.*
- **Recommended:** Julia Annas, "The Phenomenology of Virtue," *Phenomenology and Cognitive Sciences*. 7.1 (2008), pp. 21-34.

Week 4, Feb. 6 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.*

- **Recommended:** Christopher Toner, “The Full Unity of the Virtues,” *Journal of Ethics* 18 (2014), pp. 207-227.

Week 5, Feb. 13 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 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. *N.B.* I will present a very brief exposition of Mayo’s relatively straightforward book excerpt; it isn’t an option for a student short paper or presentation.
- **Recommended:** Michael Stocker, “The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories” in Crisp and Slote, eds., pp. 66-78.

Winter Study Week Feb. 17-21

Week 6, Feb. 27 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.*
- **Recommended:** Rosalind Hursthouse, *Beginning Lives*, Ch. 6, “Neo-Aristotelianism” (Oxford, 1987), pp. 218-221, 247-259.

Week 7, Mar. 5 Definitions of ‘Virtue Ethics’, the Virtue Ethics-Virtue Theory Distinction 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 *only*.

- Christine Swanton, “Virtue Ethics, Value-centredness, and Consequentialism,” Sections I-II, *Utilitas*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (July 2001), pp. 214-119 *only*.*
- Robert B. Loudon, “On Some Vices of Virtue Ethics,” in *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 21 (1984), pp. 227-236.*

Week 8, Mar. 12 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*, Chapter 3 “Irresolvable and Tragic Dilemmas,” pp. 63- 83.* (Note there is some overlap between the end of the article and the beginning of Chapter 3.)

Week 9, Mar. 19 Hursthouse on Action Guidance and Abortion Ethics

- 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, Mar. 26 Slote’s Agent-based Virtue Ethics; Slote’s Application of His Theory to Famine Relief

- 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, April 2 Objections to Hursthouse’s and Slote’s Analyses of ‘Right’ Action and Some Replies on Their Behalf

- 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 *only*. *
- Jason Kawall, “Qualified Agent and Agent-based Virtue Ethics and the Problems of Right Action” in Stan Van Hooft, ed., *The Handbook of Virtue Ethics* (Durham, England: Acumen, 2014), pp. 130-136 *only*.

Optional:

- Jason Kawall, “Virtue Theory and Ideal Observers,” Introduction, Sections I, III, and V, *Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 109 (2002), pp. 197-199, 207-208, 212-222.) Available through RULA.
- Daniel Russell, *Practical Intelligence and the Virtues*, Ch. 2 “Right Action for Virtue Ethics” (Oxford, 2009), pp. 37-57. Russell’s book is available as an e-book through RULA.

Week 12, April 9 Driver’s criticisms of Hursthouse and Hursthouse’s Replies; Recent Work on Virtue Ethical Accounts of ‘Right’ Action

- 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.
- Jason Kawall, “Qualified Agent...” in Hooft, ed., 136-140.

Optional:

- Daniel Russell, *Practical Intelligence and the Virtues*, Ch. 2 “Right Action for Virtue Ethics” (Oxford, 2009), pp. 37-57. Russell’s book is available as an e-book through RULA.