

Politics & Ethics
Political Science 4098 & Philosophy 4098
Fall – 2017

Introduction: Thoughtfulness and Moral Sensibility

The faculty of judging particulars (as Kant discovered it), the ability to say, “This is wrong,” “This is beautiful,” etc., is not the same as the faculty of thinking. Thinking deals with invisibles, with representations of things that are absent; judging always concerns particulars and things close at hand.

Hannah Arendt

Topics: The Origins of the Moral Sense
 The Nature of the Moral Sense
 Conscience & Consciousness
 Paradox of Egoism and Altruism
 Cultural Relativism
 Thoughtfulness & Judgment
 Philosophy and Politics

Readings: *Genesis*: 3 (<http://www.breslov.com/bible/Genesis3.htm#3>)
 Sophocles, *Antigone*
 Plato’s *Euthyphro*: (<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/euthyphro.html>)
 Matthew 25: 31-41
 **Gary Comstock, “You Should Not Have Let Your Baby Die, *The Stone*, *NYTimes*
 **Arendt: “Thinking and Moral Considerations” in *Responsibility and Judgment*

Reflection 1: Thinking and Moral Sensibility

Aristotelian Interlude I: Politics and the Good

Reading: *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I and Book 10, section 9

The Ethics of Virtue and the Virtue of Ethics

We are not concerned to know what goodness is, but how we are to become good men, for this alone gives the study [of ethics] its practical value.

Aristotle

Topics: Aretaic Ethics
 Aristotle’s Virtue Ethics
 Correspondence of Virtues to Principles
 Feminist Care Ethics

Readings: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books II, III, & IV
 <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.html>

Covenants and Contracts

Days are coming ... when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt... ; but this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days. . . . I will put my law within them.

Jeremiah

Readings: Deuteronomy 17: 14-20
Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapters 13 to 19.
(<https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/h/hobbes/thomas/h681/contents.html>)
Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, Excerpts
<https://online.hillsdale.edu/file/presidency/lecture-2/Second-Treatise-of-Government---John-Locke-recommended-reading---chapters-9-11.pdf>

The Principle of Duty: Deontological Ethics

Nothing can possibly be conceived in the world, or even out of it, which can be called good, without qualification, except a Good Will.

Immanuel Kant

Topics: The Categorical Imperative
Respect for the Individual
Respect for Autonomy
Humane Uncertainty of the Will and of Truth

Readings: Immanuel Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*, First Section
http://www.inp.uw.edu.pl/mdsie/Political_Thought/Kant%20-%20groundwork%20for%20the%20metaphysics%20of%20morals%20with%20essays.pdf

Utilitarian or Consequentialist Ethics

Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne.

Jeremy Bentham

Topics: The Calculus
Act Utilitarianism
Rule Utilitarianism
What Goods Shall We Maximize?

Readings: Jeremy Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Chapter 1
<http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/278>
John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Chapter 2
<http://www.utilitarianism.com/mill2.htm>

Reflections #2: Virtues, Rules, Covenants, and Consequences

Second Aristotelian Interlude: General and Particular Justice

Reading: *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book V

John Rawls and the Question of Distributive Justice

The natural distribution is neither just nor unjust; nor is it unjust that persons are born into society at some particular position. These are simply natural facts. What is just and unjust is the way that institutions deal with these facts.

John Rawls

Reading: John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*

Robert Nozick and the Question of Distributive Justice

Individuals have rights and there are things no person or group may do to them (without violating their rights). So strong and far-reaching are these rights that they raise the question of what, if anything, the state and its officials may do. How much room do individual rights leave for the state?

Robert Nozick

Reading: *Robert Nozick, Anarchy, State, and Utopia*

Reflections #3: Individual and State

Third Aristotelian Interlude: The Twofold Nature of Being

Reading: Aristotle, *Ethics*, Book VI

Human Flourishing – Happiness - Capabilities – Authenticity

Human activity always goes on in complex interdependence. The task of politics must be to imagine forms of interdependence that are human rather than slavish, and to forge those circumstances, where possible, in the world.

Martha Nussbaum

Topics: Modern Implications of Aristotle's notion of Happiness
Aquinas and Catholic Social Doctrine
Maslow and Self-Actualization
Nussbaum and Capability

Reading: Martha Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Developmental Approach*

Thoughtfulness & Judgment Revisited

For there is but one essential justice which cements society, and one law which establishes this justice. This law is right reason, which is the true rule of all commandments and prohibitions. Whoever neglects this law, whether written or unwritten, is necessarily unjust and wicked.

Cicero

God could create only by hiding himself. Otherwise, there would be nothing but himself. Holiness should then be hidden too, even from consciousness in a certain measure. And it should be hidden in the world.

Simone Weil

Readings: **Arendt: “Some Questions of Moral Philosophy”
 **Jane Gordon, “Hannah Arendt’s Political Theology”
 **Howes, Dustin. “Consider if this is a Person: Primo Levi, Hannah Arendt, and the Political Significance of Auschwitz”

FINAL (REFLECTION) EXAM: Wednesday, December 6, 3-5 PM: Distributive Justice

Course Objectives & Requirements

Our tasks in this course are many: to understand the relationship between thinking and moral judgment; to become acquainted with a variety of ethical theories; to consider the nature of Aristotle’s relevance to our understanding of ethics and politics in the 21st century. Most important, in the process of fulfilling those objectives, we shall constantly examine the role of moral thinking in our dialogue with ourselves and with our communities of discourse.

The course requirements are as follows:

First Reflection: 20% (On Sophia and Phronesis)

Second Reflection: 25% (On Hypotheticals and Judgment)

Third Reflection: 25% (On What We Value and Why?)

Final Reflection: 30% (Moving From Ontology to Praxis)

The Grading Scale for the course, and for each assignment, will be as follows (in percentiles).

97-100 = A+	77-79 = C+	Below 60 = F
93-96 = A	73-76 = C	
90-92 = A-	70-72 = C-	
87-89 = B+	67-69 = D+	
83-86 = B	63-66 = D	
80-82 = B	60-62 = D-	

Readings: The course includes a number of required readings available on internet sites or via electronic reserve. The former will be indicated by two asterisks, with links provided; the latter with one asterisk and on the electronic reserve library in Moodle. You should obtain four books for the course: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*; Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*; Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*; and Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*. Aristotle's *Ethics* is available on the internet and Nussbaum's, *Creating Capabilities* is an Electronic Book with the LSU Library

Office Hours:

My office hours are as follows: MWF 11:30 to 1:30 or, by appointment at your convenience. My office is Room 237 Stubbs Hall. Phone: 578-1944. E-Mail Address: poebk@lsu.edu.

Presence:

To be present is to be mindful, aware, sensitive, engaged. It begins, of course, in physical presence, but quickly moves to all of the aforementioned states of being, and more. This course needs your presence; the subject needs your presence. We need your presence. Mostly, you need your presence. Rather than be punitive in the absence of presence, I will give you yet another incentive, beyond meaning.

Beginning on the last day to add classes, I shall assume that everyone has the occasional desire to meet a friend, sleep late, or recover from a difficult moment. Thus, three absences will be discounted, unquestioned. Similarly, some will have other, good and excusable reasons for absence. They will be honored. The remaining class days of the semester will be counted and a 90% attendance rate will be granted four bonus points; 80% will be given three; 70% two bonus points; and 60% will be given one. Below 60% - none will be granted. The bonus points will be added to your course total.