Virtue Ethics Graduate Seminar (PHIL 6180)

Spring 2021
Dr. Carissa Phillips-Garrett
Tuesday, 4-6:30pm PST

Contact Information and Student Office Hours
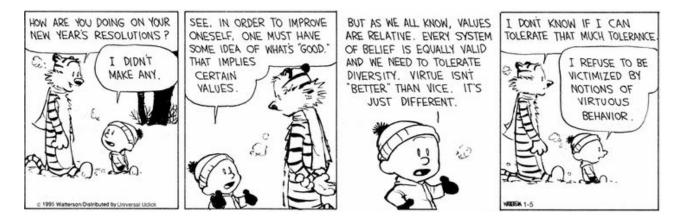
Class Location: Zoom (meeting ID: 895 1777 3340, password: arete)
Contact Email: Carissa.Phillips-Garrett@lmu.edu
Personal Zoom Meeting ID: 302 441 1225

- Office hours on Zoom: by appointment
- To make a Zoom appointment, sign up here:
  https://outlook.office365.com/owa/calendar/na@lmu0.onmicrosoft.com/bookings/

Course Description

In this course, we will examine virtue ethics as a distinctive ethical theory, along with questions about the nature of virtue. Some questions we will explore are:

- What is the relationship between virtue and flourishing? Are the virtues necessary for flourishing? Is virtue sufficient for flourishing?
- Is the project of ethical naturalism a plausible one? To what extent does the success of neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics depend on it? What is the role of self-transcendence in pursuing virtue?
- What role should emotion play in determining an adequate ethics? Do our emotions tell us what is virtuous, or is there an external measure of virtue that our emotions should be in line with, or can we act virtuously in spite of our sentiments and feelings?
- Can virtue ethics provide an adequate account of right action?
- On what concept of a character trait does virtue ethics rely, and does situationist psychology undermine it?
- What are different approaches to virtue ethics, and which (if any) provide the most compelling, coherent account?

Course Learning Objectives

In successfully completing this course, you will develop your capacities to:

(1) Understand and appreciate the major approaches and debates within virtue ethics.
(2) Listen and analyze the arguments of others, both in reading texts and in verbal conversation.
(3) Think philosophically and creatively.
(4) Write clearly, precisely, and concisely.
(5) Present philosophical ideas and engage in philosophical conversation.

Required Materials

All readings will be posted on Brightspace, either as a PDF or a link to online material. If possible, I highly recommend printing the PDFs, for a few reasons:

- We are all more likely to skim when we are reading in an electronic format vs. reading a printed work, and reading for academic and careful engagement requires careful and thorough reading (see this article in Scientific American on the difference between reading in digital format vs. print format; a literature review of the relevant studies is found here).
- Our eyes are more likely to get tired when reading online, and especially now that we are having classes in an online format, we are all spending more time staring at a screen than we used to.
- When discussing texts during class, it is easier to flip between pages if you have a physical copy vs. a digital copy.

Since we will be meeting synchronously via Zoom and you will be submitting work electronically, you must also have a computer capable of using Zoom, Internet access that is capable of using video, and a quiet space free of distractions during our weekly meetings. We will also use a shared Google document for the class, so you will need a Google login.

All LMU students have access to Office 365 and Zoom accounts free of charge. The best way to access these tools is by logging in through myLMU. For Zoom, you will need to create a Zoom account by logging in through myLMU first.

Assignments

Weekly Writing (20%), Virtue Presentation *&* Literature Assessment (10%), Paper Presentation/Q*&*A (10%), Paper (35%), Paper Commentary (10%), Participation (15%)

Weekly Writing: During weeks 2-13, short weekly writing prompts will be distributed. The focus here will be on producing crisp, concise, and careful philosophical prose, and later on, in developing your own ideas. Writing assignments will be graded on an Exemplary/Satisfactory/Incomplete scale.

Virtue Presentation *&* Literature Assessment: Each student will choose one particular virtue and will make a short presentation (around 15 minutes) explaining the virtue and *one* debate in the literature

about that virtue. A one page précis and brief evaluation of *one* article on that virtue in terms of its quality and philosophical contribution will be due along with the presentation itself.

Paper: Each student will write a 3,000-word conference-length paper that will be presented and revised. An initial abstract must be submitted by the end of Week 8, and the presentation draft must be submitted to the instructor and fellow students two weeks before the scheduled presentation date. After the presentation, written comments, and verbal Q&A, a revised and expanded (5,000 words) version of the paper will be due by Friday, May 7th.

Paper Oral Presentation/Q&A: Each student will be given 20 minutes to present his or her paper during Week 15 or 16, respond to her colleague's commentary for 5 minutes, and engage in Q&A with the audience for 20 minutes. The grade will consist in both the presentation itself and response to the comments and Q&A following.

Commentary: Each student will comment on another student's paper: a written draft of the comments (1,500 words) will be due one week prior to the paper presentation, and the student will present the commentary in Weeks 15 or 16 (10 minutes).

Participation: Philosophy is an interactive discipline, and this class offers the opportunity to create a learning community together. We all have a responsibility to push our conversation forward by co-creating the intellectual community that we build together. Active participation requires preparation for the class (the kind of careful, charitable, and critical engagement with the readings that prepares you to discuss the ideas and arguments presented) and your full focus while in conversation so that you can listen well to what others are saying, respond helpfully to your fellow participants, and develop your own ideas. I recognize that some students are less comfortable than others speaking in class, but reading and thinking carefully in advance allows you to reflect on the ideas prior to class. Contributions can take many forms, such as:

- Asking careful and critical questions about the ideas and arguments put forward in the text or fellow class participants
- Helping other participants to work out their ideas through careful questions
- Criticizing, correcting, or responding to the arguments presented in the text and by other class participants
- Developing a positive interpretation of the arguments or ideas in the text
- Connecting the current text or questions to ideas explored elsewhere, either earlier in the class or in the world outside of the classroom
- Exploring your own philosophical ideas

Grading Scale
For final grades, total points out of 100 total points correspond to the following grades:

A+ = 97-100	A = 93-96	A- = 90-92	B+ = 87-89
B = 83-86	B- = 80-82	C = 70-79	F = 69 and below

Communication with Me

- For questions about the course generally (where the answer may benefit other students), please post your question in the Brightspace online forum.
- If you have other questions or comments, I encourage you to reach out to me by email at any time (carissa.phillips-garrett@lmu.edu), but please first check that the answer is not found on Brightspace.
- If a classmate posts a question that you know the answer to, I encourage you to respond and answer the question as well if you see it before me.
- I will respond to emails within 24 hours, excluding weekends and holidays. I aim to respond within 12 hours during normal business hours, but do not depend on this; I encourage you to begin assignments early and contact me/post on Brightspace as soon as you recognize you have a question.
- I am also available to talk on Zoom, either right after class or by appointment. To make an automated booking for a Zoom meeting with me, make an appointment at https://outlook.office365.com/owa/calendar/na@lmu0.onmicrosoft.com/bookings/. It will ask you to select your meeting length, select a time to meet, and then add in any details I should know (for example, if you want to discuss a particular assignment you have already submitted, letting me know in advance allows me a chance to review it before we meet). Please schedule any meetings 14 hours in advance so that I can plan my day accordingly (e.g., if you want to meet at 10am, please schedule by 8pm the day before). If you want to meet more urgently than that, please email me directly.
- All meetings will be conducted via Zoom, using my personal meeting room; the ID for this is 302-441-1225, and the Zoom link is https://lmula.zoom.us/j/3024411225. If you are put in a waiting room when you arrive to the link, this is not a technical problem; this is just because I am in a meeting with someone else and will be with you in a minute.
- Brightspace or your official LMU email will be used for all communication, so it is your responsibility to check both on a daily basis. You can also set your Brightspace settings so that you receive notification when something new is posted, but I also encourage a habit of logging in each day as well.
- I will post all course announcements and updates in our Announcement feed that appears on the course home page. You can also opt to receive these announcements as emails or texts by adjusting your notification preferences. To do this, click on the box with your initials or picture which appears in the top, right hand corner of the Brightspace page and select "notifications."

Communication with Each Other

One aim in a class like this one is to build a community that is both intellectual and personal. So, in addition to talking with me, I encourage you to engage with one another as well. Obviously, we'll do this together in our synchronous Zoom sessions, but I encourage us to do this outside of class as well, both about the course material and about other things. Since you'll get to know your fellow classmates a bit more, connecting outside of class also may have the benefit of making in class discussion more comfortable for everyone and creating a better discussion environment.

- I encourage you to share your contact information with the other members and be in contact with one another outside of our official class time.
- Additionally, I have set up a channel for us to chat and discuss using the Microsoft Teams app (which comes in versions for phone, tablet, and computer). You should receive a notification when you are added, and I encourage you to use this to keep discussing the course material (in the "Class Discussion" thread) or ask questions about class content or policy (see the "Questions about the Class" thread) or non-course-related topics (in the "Café" thread).
- We'll talk during our class time about how to access Teams and how to use it to its best advantage. Please let me know if you have any questions.
- Additionally, if you would like to set up an individual chat discussion just for the students, consider organizing a GroupMe or WhatsApp group.

Attendance Policy

As conversational partners, we all have a responsibility to participate in pushing the discussion forward in the classroom. This only happens if we are all engaged, however, and a necessary (but not sufficient!) condition of this is being present for the discussion. Given this, attendance and participation at all sessions is expected. Life happens, of course, so come talk to me if you'll be unable to make a particular session.

Late Assignment Policy

I know that life happens, so you have one free, no-questions-asked, no-excuse-needed late submission allowed per semester that extends your assignment due date for 48 hours (though you do need to communicate via email that you are doing that prior to the submission deadline and when you submit your assignment, remind me that you are using your late pass). If you have particular extenuating circumstances that might justify an extension of longer than 48 hours, please let me know that you will be requesting an extension of more than 48 hours. For any other late assignments, please see the rubric for that assignment.

To be counted as being submitted on time, the file must be received in the appropriate, working format, and it is your responsibility to verify this. If there are technical issues, inform me immediately in an email with the file/content that you are attempting to submit and a screenshot of the problem, and contact the IT Help Desk as well. This allows us a chance to resolve the issue prior to the deadline. If this is done before the deadline, a one-time exception may be made to the late policy, but no other exceptions will be made.

Class Participation Expectations

- Come to our class discussions prepared to talk about the readings assigned for that day. Preparing for discussion means that you should have read and annotated the text carefully and thought about what questions you have and in what ways you can contribute to the discussion.

- Login to Zoom several minutes prior to class to allow for any technological difficulties. Please make sure that your arrival is not disruptive to the rest of the rest of the class by being on time yourself.
- Arrive prepared to focus for the duration of the class period. Behaviors that distract and interrupt the learning environment are inappropriate, and are grounds for receiving a 0 for in-class participation. Sometimes unexpected things come up that may require you to leave (e.g., an emergency phone call that could not be rescheduled or a sudden and acute illness), but prepare for the things that you can (e.g., plan to use the bathroom prior to class or during our scheduled break). Missing our synchronous class time together should be rare and only for a very good reason, not a regular occurrence, and it will be reflected in your attendance record and Seminar Contribution grade.
- Use language that is respectful and inclusive. It is perfectly fine to disagree with views expressed (either by the readings or other students), but target the argument you disagree with, not the person.

Technology Use

The use of computers, tablets, or smartphones are essential in order to participate in our online course. However, our current technology creates a strong temptation to "multi-task" during class time—checking emails, sending texts, and looking at the latest Instagram photos. This activity can be distracting to other students during our synchronous sessions and disrespectful to the person speaking during this time, be it the professor or a classmate, so please refrain from using technology for anything other than our current course material.

Academic Honesty

All students will be expected to follow LMU's Academic Honesty Policy, found at https://academics.lmu.edu/honesty/. This document outlines the university's expectations for the integrity of your academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. While it is expected that you will discuss the issues in the course with other students both in and out of class, all written work you turn in must be *your own*. Please come talk to me if you have questions about what this means! Passages taken from another source must be *explicitly quoted and cited*. Any questions about what constitutes plagiarism should be addressed prior to handing in your written assignments. Ignorance of what is required will not be accepted as an excuse. Also, even if it your own work, work submitted for credit in this course cannot have been submitted for another course. Finally, unless it is explicitly allowed, work written up for an earlier assignment in this course also cannot be used wholesale for a later assignment and all work must be submitted according to the assignment directions in a working file. Again, please ask prior to submission if you have any questions.

One tool I may use this semester is Turnitin. Loyola Marymount University has partnered with the third-party application Turnitin to help maintain our standards of excellence in academic integrity. Turnitin is a suite of tools that provide instructors with information about the authenticity of

submitted work and facilitates the process of grading for instructors. Submitted files are compared against an extensive database of content comprising of over 165 million journal articles, 1 billion student papers, and 62 billion current and archived websites. Turnitin produces a similarity report and a similarity score. A similarity score is the percentage of a document that is similar to content held within the database. A similarity report gives the instructor more information about any potential matches and their sources. Turnitin does not determine if an instance of plagiarism has occurred. Instead, it gives instructors the information they need to determine the authenticity of work as a part of a larger process. All submissions to this course may be checked using Turnitin.

Special Accommodations

Students with an identified disability who require accommodations in this course should promptly direct their request to the Disability Support Services (DSS) Office. Any student who currently has a documented disability (ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Learning, Physical, or Psychiatric) needing academic accommodations should contact the DSS Office (Daum Hall 2nd floor, 310-338-4216) as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. Please visit www.lmu.edu/dss for additional information.

Reading & Assignment Schedule

Week 1 (January 12): Introduction to Virtue Ethics
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* III.1-5 & one chapter from Book IV (your choice); Elizabeth Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy"

Week 2 (January 19): Eudaimonist Virtue
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Books I-II & X.6-9

Week 3 (January 26): Virtue & Motivation
Philippa Foot, "Virtues and Vices"

Week 4 (February 2): Eudaimonism & Right Action
Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, chapter 1; Rosalind Hursthouse, "Virtue Theory and Abortion" *(you can skim until the section titled "Abortion")*; Julia Annas, "Being Virtuous and Doing the Right Thing"

Week 5 (February 9): Eudaimonism & Naturalism
Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, chapters 9 & 10

Week 6 (February 16): Virtue Ethics & Objectivity
Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, chapter 11

Week 7 (February 23): Non-Ideal Virtue Theory

Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, chapter 3; Christine Swanton, *Virtue Ethics*, pp. 14-15 *(the bit on ideal world theory)*; Lisa Tessman, "Feminist Eudaimonism: Eudaimonism as Non-Ideal Theory"

Week 8 (March 2): NO CLASS (Spring Break)

Week 9 (March 9): Moral Luck *&* Flourishing
Marilyn Friedman, "Feminist Virtue Ethics, Happiness, and Moral Luck"; Susan Stark, "Virtue and Emotion"

Week 10 (March 16): Agent-Based Virtue Ethics
Michael Slote, *Morals from Motives*, chapters 1 *&* 3

Week 11 (March 23): Platonic Virtue Ethics
Plato, *Republic* 507b–509c; Iris Murdoch, "The Sovereignty of Good over Other Concepts"

Week 12 (March 30): Relativism *&* Virtue
Alasdair MacIntyre, "The Nature of the Virtues"; Martha Nussbaum, "Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach"; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* IV.3

Week 13 (April 6): Virtue Ethics *&* Egoism
Julia Annas, "Virtue Ethics and the Charge of Egoism"; Glen Pettigrove, "Is Virtue Ethics Self-Effacing?"

Week 14 (April 13): Cultivating Virtue
Daniel Russell, "Aristotle on Cultivating Virtue"

Week 15 (April 20)
Paper Presentations *&* Comments

Week 16 (April 27)
Paper Presentations *&* Comments