

**WESTERN UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY  
Undergraduate Course Outline 2021-22**

**Philosophy Course Number: 9042B  
Classical Virtue Ethics**

**Winter 2022  
In-person lectures  
Tuesday 12:30-3:30 StH 1145.**

**Instructor: Devin Henry  
Office: StH 3141  
Office Hours (virtual): By Appointment  
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## **DESCRIPTION**

This course is a survey of approaches to classical virtue ethics. Virtue ethics is one of the three main approaches to normative ethics. What sets virtue ethics apart from the others is its focus on the agent and the qualities she possesses (e.g. character virtues, practical wisdom) rather than directly actions and their consequences (e.g. whether it maximizes the good or conforms to certain rules of conduct). Most versions of contemporary virtue ethics are ultimately grounded in, or derived from, the classical theories of the ancient Greeks. It is the purpose of this course to provide students with a foundation in the latter. The first few weeks of the course will concentrate on the central tenets of Socratic and Platonic ethics, while the remainder of the course will be a close reading of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (arguably the most influential work in the history of virtue ethics).

## **TEXTS**

### **Required:**

Plato, *Complete Works*.

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*.

\*The UWO Bookstore has hard copies of both texts available. Electronic versions are also available through the library. Since we will only be using a portion of *Plato's Complete Works* (which is expensive), you may want to use the electronic version for that.

## **OBJECTIVES**

This course has two objectives. The first is to give students of philosophy an introduction to the origins and foundations of their discipline, including the problems that define it. The second is to help students develop their ability to read and understand difficult philosophical texts and to reflect on the ideas and arguments they offer us. These are basic skills that every well-rounded philosopher should have.

## **REQUIREMENTS**

Three textual analyses*	15% each
Paper outline	10%
Term paper	40%
Abstract (500 words)	5%

\*At least two of these should be on Aristotle.

Due dates for graduate student assignments are at your discretion. Part of your development as a professional philosopher is learning how to plan out a writing project and manage your time in order to meet publisher's or conference deadlines. I am not going to do that for you. That said, there are a few general guidelines. The **final paper** should be handed in within a week following the last day of classes in order to give me enough time before I have to submit my grades. The **paper outline** is supposed to function as a "prospectus" that outlines what your project will be. So you should be submitting that at least two to three weeks before the final paper. That will give me time to comment and provide some guidance regarding your project. Before writing the outline, you also should be fairly far along in the research and planning phase: you should have a concrete idea of what you will argue and how the paper will be structured; and you may have written (or at least planned out) a rough draft. And so plan your time accordingly. Finally, the **abstract** should be handed in along with your final paper. Many journals require an abstract along with your submission that goes at the start of the published article, which gives the reader a quick synopsis of the main thesis and the arguments that support it. Accordingly, you should be thinking about writing this *after* you have completed your final paper. (There are plenty of examples in journals for you to consult, if you are unfamiliar with scholarly abstracts.)

### **ACADEMIC OFFENCES**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

Additionally,

A) If written work will be assigned in the course and plagiarism-checking software might be used, the following statement to this effect must be included in the course outline: "All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism-detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>)."

B) If computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams will be given, and software might be used to check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating, the following statement must be added to course outlines: "Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating."