

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate and Graduate Course Outline 2023-24

Phil 4730F/9129A: Topics in Moral Psychology

TRUST AND SOCIAL BONDS

Fall Term 2023	Instructor: N/A
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DESCRIPTION

Crucial to our well-being and survival are social bonds that allow us to depend on one another. The COVID-19 crisis has made this fact all too clear. But these bonds depend on trust, which in some societies or relationships is in short supply. *How can trust be enhanced where it is lacking or preserved where it exists, particularly during social crises like that of a pandemic?* This course will centre on this question, which is interdisciplinary. We will be focused primarily (though not exclusively) on what philosophy can contribute by way of an answer. We will be asking, in particular, what *feminist* philosophy can contribute, where a feminist approach takes for granted that attitudes like trust and distrust are formed against a social background that oppresses certain groups of people and privileges others.

A key piece of the puzzle about how to promote or protect trust is to understand what trust is, which is arguably a question for philosophers. It is at least a question that many philosophers have tried to answer. Most of them have understood trust to be a species of reliance and therefore something that differs from mere reliance, which we can have on things like cars and which, unlike trust, cannot be betrayed. There is much controversy in philosophy about what kind of reliance trust is, if it is in fact any single kind of reliance. In this course, we'll consider how trust itself might differ depending on the types of social bonds that it engenders. We will also explore how trust could be strengthened depending on what trust is like in different social contexts.

Some background reading: McLeod, C. "Trust," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, substantial revision 2020, originally published 2006, URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/trust/>.

MATERIALS

All materials, along with a course schedule, will be available on OWL under Course Content.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, you (a student in the course) will be able to,

- Comprehend debates in philosophy concerning trust and other topics related to the course (e.g., testimony, stereotyping, attachment or belonging)
- Assess and stimulate discussion about arguments that appear in these debates
- Construct your own clear and persuasive argument on a topic of your choice
- Engage in rigorous, respectful debate about heated topics that concern trust and social bonds

In addition, through your assignments (see below under Requirements), you will develop or hone the following skills:

- Critical analysis and writing (through the reflections on readings and the final paper)
- Confident public speaking (through your class participation and presentation for those who do a presentation)
- Synthesis and consolidation of significant amounts of material (through the summary or presentation of a required reading and the final paper)
- Thoughtful engagement with others on controversial issues (through forums and participation)

REQUIREMENTS

The course assignments are very similar for Phil 4730F and Phil 9129A. The grading will take into consideration whether the student is enrolled in Phil 4730F or Phil 9129A.

Phil 4730F:

1. Reflections on readings: 20%
2. Forums and participation: 10%
3. Summary of a required reading: 20%
4. Final paper (in three parts): 50%
 - a. Paper topic: 5%
 - b. Paper outline: 10%
 - c. The Paper: 35%

Phil 9129A:

1. Reflections on readings: 20%
2. Forums and participation: 10%
3. Presentation of a required reading: 20%
4. Final paper (in three parts): 50%
 - a. Paper topic: 5%
 - b. Paper outline: 10%
 - c. The Paper: 35%

Details in assignments will be available under Course Details on OWL.

GENERAL COURSE POLICIES

A Note on Course Content

In this course, we will be dealing with some controversial moral and political issues. While rigorous debate across differing perspectives is expected and encouraged, it is crucial that all members of the class participate respectfully and in a non-dogmatic way. In other words, you will need to be charitable toward others and their views, be open to the fact that your own views may be mistaken, and never express hatred or prejudice. If, at any point, you find that our discussions are distressing to you, then I encourage you to speak with me. Should your needs exceed my professional capacities, then I will do my best to help you find the support you need.

Etiquette for Email and Classes

Please be sure to be professional when sending emails. When emailing, put the relevant course number in the subject line (Phil 4730F or Phil 9129A), include an appropriate greeting (e.g., “Dear Professor McLeod” or “Dear Carolyn”), and sign your name at the end so that I know who is emailing me (!). Please also avoid emailing on Saturdays.

The expectation for our classes is that you will be alert, prepared, and actively participating. To that end, you should minimize distractions (e.g., from your cell phone—silence it and keep it out of sight—and from your computer—turn off alerts that might pop up on your screen). You should have copies of the weekly material at hand and be prepared to ask or answer questions about it.

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES

The Department of Philosophy policies that govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses are available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Accommodation

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds *for any missed assessments worth 10% or more of their final grade* must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. *Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.* Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student’s Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

When a course requirement conflicts with a religious holiday that requires an absence from the University or prohibits certain activities, students should request accommodation for their absence in writing at least two weeks prior to the holiday to the course instructor and/or the Academic Counselling office of their Faculty of Registration. Please consult University's list of recognized religious holidays (updated annually) at

<https://multiculturalcalendar.com/ecal/index.php?s=c-univwo>.

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Accessible Education, which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities can be found at [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic Accommodation disabilities.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/Academic_Accommodation_disabilities.pdf).

Evaluation of Academic Performance

At least three days prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty, students will receive an assessment of work accounting for at least 15% of their final grade. For 3000- or 4000-level courses in which such a graded assessment is impracticable, the instructor(s) must obtain an exemption from this policy from the Dean and this exemption must be noted on the corresponding course syllabus. In rare instances and at the Dean's discretion, other courses could receive a similar exemption, which also must be noted in the course syllabus.

Course Assignments

The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments will be accepted for credit in a course. Instructors will be required to return assignments to students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

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

Plagiarism Checking

All required papers may be subject [and will be subject in this course] 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>.

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. *If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past)*, you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.