

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
Department of Philosophy
Undergraduate Course Outline 2024-25

PHILOSOP 4730F
Self and Social Transformation

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Information including instructor contact details and course location can be found on the course Owl BrightSpace: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/>

PREREQUISITE CHECKING

Antirequisite(s): Philosophy 3024F/G.

Prerequisite(s): At least 60% in 1.0 Philosophy course at the 2000-2999 level, or permission of the department.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the prerequisites for this course or have special permission to take the course without the prerequisites. Student Responsibility for Course Selection

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Racism, sexism, and classism are deeply ingrained in our habits and feelings. It seems that in order to change objective conditions we need to change ourselves and our communities. But given that our habits and feelings are often unconscious and resistant to change, how do we philosophically go about doing this? This class tries to answer this question. It starts theoretically with ancient Greek and ancient Chinese virtue ethics as well as Foucault's later work on self-transformation. It then takes these concepts/theories and sees them in action in contemporary movements of self/community transformation. We start with a paradigmatic political activist movement of self-transformation: the Black feminist transformative justice movement with the goal of prison abolition. But as we progress, we will explore less obvious and seemingly more mundane movements of self- and community transformation such as Saba Mahmood's dawa movement from Egypt, Weight Watchers, and finally "ballroom" culture from Detroit. Anthropological ethnographies of these movements will help show how we can self-reflexively shape our own habits and transform ourselves.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Mon., Sep. 9 - Intro (No readings)

- Dewey Quotation
- Maggie Nelson quotation
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCUIBX8E2BU>
- (0-1:58, 3:50-4:25, 8:53-22:30)

Wed., Sep. 11 - Sellars – What is Philosophy as a Way of Life?

Zacka and Herzog – Fieldwork in Political Theory: Five Arguments for an Ethnographic Sensibility
How to do a reading response
Brainstorm different activities to journal about

Intro to Foucault

Mon., Sep. 16 - Nguyen – Value Capture (A)

Wed., Sep. 18 - (B)

- Ericsson – Peak: Secrets from the New Science of Expertise (pg 8-16)
- History of Sexuality 1 – What is Power (pg 82-98)
- Cambridge Foucault Lexicon – Freedom, Normalization, Revolution

Mon., Sep. 23 - Koopman – Genealogy as Critique (7-11, 92, 96-97, 105-107, 126-130, 143-144, 148-149, 171-172, 174-175) (A)

Wed., Sep. 25 (B)

- Ericsson – Peak – The Rise of Extraordinary Performers, The Usual approach, Purposeful Practice, The Limits of Purposeful Practice
- Foucault – On the Genealogy of Ethics
- Cambridge Foucault Lexicon – Self
- Davidson - Ethics as Ascetics: Foucault, the History of Ethics and Ancient Thought

Mon., Sep. 30 – Day of Truth and Reconciliation

Wed., Oct. 2 (A)

- Davidson - Ethics as Ascetics: Foucault, the History of Ethics and Ancient Thought
- Koopman – Genealogy as Critique (An Ethics of Self-Transformation)

Obstacles to Self Transformation: Luck

Mon., Oct. 7 - (B)

- Ericsson - Peak (Harnessing Adaptability, Challenging Homeostasis, Shaping the Brain)
- Nussbaum – The Fragility of Goodness (Luck and Ethics, Aristotle: The Vulnerability of the Good Human Life)

Wed., Oct. 9 - (A)

- Sellars – Lessons in Stoicism
- May – Foucault’s Guide to Living

Mon., Oct. 14 - Thanksgiving

Wed., Oct. 16 – Fall Break

Mon., Oct. 21 - (B)

- Ericsson - Peak (The Gold Standard, The Challenge of the Violin, Good vs Better vs Best)

- Russell - Aristotle on Cultivating Virtue
- Foucault – Friendship as a Way of Life
- Aristotle – Ethics Book IX on Friendship

Wed., Oct. 23 - (A)

- Carreras - Aristotle on Other-Selfhood and Reciprocal Shaping
- Nussbaum – Fragility of Goodness (Friendship)

Mon., Oct. 28 – Another reading about modern friendship (TBA)

Wed., Oct. 30 – B)

- Michael Puett – The Path <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MfnSTr6-1g4>
- Angle – Follow Rituals
- Puett – Ritual and the Subjunctive

Mon., Nov. 4 Asad – Anthropology of the Body (42-top 49)

Mahmood – Politics of Piety Sections of book on Self Transformation and Practices (B)

– Velji – Proposing an Islamic Virtue Ethics Beyond the Situationist Debates (A)

Criticisms of Foucault

Wed., Nov. 6 - The Pickup Artist as Normatively Bad Self- Transformation

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_JQAx5uXB0&

Fraser – Foucault on Modern Power

McWhorter – Bodies and Pleasures – Foucault and the Politics of Sexual Normalization

Mon., Nov. 11 - Mixed collection of Black feminists on Transformative Justice (19 pgs + youtube videos)

Velji – Working paper on Transformative Justice and Self Transformation (A)

Wed., Nov. 13 - - Chambers – Sex Culture and Justice (1-8, 21-44) (A)

Mon., Nov. 18 - - Chambers – Intact: A Defence of the Unmodified Body (Introduction) (B)

Wed., Nov. 20 - – Preciado – Testo Junkie (A)

Mon., Nov. 25 - - Cressida Hayes – Foucault Goes to Weight Watchers (3-14, 63-88) (B)

Wed., Nov. 27 - – Mahmood – Politics of Piety (A)

(Optional reading) Velji – From Opposition to Creativity: Saba Mahmood’s Decolonial Critique of Teleological Feminist Futures

Mon., Dec. 2 - – Mahmood – Politics of Piety (B)

Wed., Dec. 4 - – **Movie Night!** Paris is Burning
Marlon Bailey – Butch Queens Up in Pumps
Judith Butler - Gender Is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion

TEXTS

All texts will be on OWL Brightspace.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

22% reading responses: 11 reading responses, 1 per week, to be emailed to me the night before. These involve 3 questions/responses to the reading. You will also get feedback on the first few.

11% discussion cards: These are 2 cards I will distribute in class, with either “agree”, “disagree”, “explain” on them. They must both be played by the end of class.

2% plan for what activity of self-transformation to journal about

11% Self-transformation journal: Due every Sunday – A premise of this course is that one gains insight and learns only by “doing”. This is a journal where you record on a regular basis your struggles and triumphs, methods, how you’re feeling, problems and solutions to some activity that you are trying to get better at. You can use some of this work toward your final project. A problem with only meeting once a week is that students sometimes cram all the reading the day before class. You should do at least a 1/3 of the readings in preparation. Part of what to write in the journal, especially as the weeks go on is how the theoretical readings are helping you or giving you insight into the activity you are doing.

16% Foucault Midterm: A diagnostic test to see if you’re understanding the material

3% plan/brainstorm different topics to write final project on (give some detail, but also pros and cons of doing)

5% Nonbinding outline of project or paper

5% Cover letter with final paper/project: You will attach a cover letter to the final version of their papers in which you discuss your writing process, the advice you received, and how they incorporated it. Also go back to your initial reflection and think about how you worked on your weaknesses and increased your strengths.

25% Final Paper/Project: If a paper, around 3000 words

OWL Brightspace

Students are responsible for checking the course site on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class. Students may access the OWL Brightspace Learner Support site for assistance: <https://brightspacehelp.uwo.ca/> For IT related issues, they may contact Western Technology Services Helpdesk directly: <https://wts.uwo.ca/helpdesk/>.

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.

AUDIT

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

No aids are permitted for this exam. Electronic devices of any kind (including calculators, cell phones and smart watches) are not permitted.

STATEMENT ON THE USE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

“In this course, the use of AI (automatic translation tools, grammar checkers, ChatGPT...) is prohibited. If plagiarism or unauthorized AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask for research notes and/or drafts of assignments after the assignment has been submitted. Students must keep all notes and first drafts until the assignment is returned to them.”

“For me, grading was never about grades; it was about the intensive feedback, the ongoing revisions of drafts, the individual conversations with students, that went into doing good work. Good work was never about writing good papers. It was about being able to order your world, to take the confusion that one is confronted with, and turn it into something meaningful and coherent. And to know that that doesn't just happen spontaneously or instinctively; it's a practice, requiring, well, work.

That's not simply a skill for college classes. That's a life-long practice, of being able to see a situation, pick out those elements that matter and lend it significance, and bring clarity out of chaos...

The only thing, in my life, that has even come close to what writing forces me to do is psychoanalysis, not therapy, but five days on the couch, with your analyst behind you saying almost nothing. Only on the couch have I been led to externalize myself, to throw my thoughts

and feelings onto a screen and to look at them, to see them as something other, coldly and from a distance, the way I do when I write.”

- Corey Robin <https://coreyrobin.com/2023/07/30/how-chatgpt-changed-my-plans-for-the-fall/>

Personally, I think the importance of writing your own work is threefold: 1) Writing is not discovering or uncovering fully formed ideas and arguments you already have. Writing itself generates the knowledge, helps us think through an idea. Writing *is* thinking. 2) Writing *should* allow us to manifest our own point of view, but this can only happen if we work to develop our own “voice”. 3) Just as it is going from a novice to an expert in any craft, becoming a writer is a self-transformative experience. I think using ChatGPT and other AI writing tools as a crutch when things get hard robs you of these three learning experiences and so, to that end:

ACCOMMODATION

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments 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 https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration.pdf

The Student Medical Certificate is available at

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

ACADEMIC CONSIDERATION

Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student’s control that have a substantial but temporary impact on the student’s ability to meet essential academic requirements.

1. Requests for academic consideration are made to the Academic Advising office of Faculty in which the student is registered.
2. Requests for academic consideration include the following components:
 - a. Self-attestation signed by the student;
 - b. Indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) relevant to the request;
 - c. Supporting documentation as relevant

Requests without supporting documentation are limited to one per term per course.

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a [Western](#)

Student Medical Certificate (SMC) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner. Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods as well as practice laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled in the last week of term always require formal supporting documentation.

Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

Western's Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays can be found here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf.

In the case of mid-term tests, notification is to be "given in writing to the instructor as early as possible, but not later than **one week** prior to the writing of the test".

COURSE ASSIGNMENT

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.

SCHOLASTIC 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

Statement on the use of plagiarism-checking software

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>).

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here:

https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) 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 (24/7 availability).

GENDER-BASED AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

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.