

## Topics: Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*

Winter 2014, Phil 450-01

### Dr. Krisanna Scheiter

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Office Hours: MW 3-4pm  
and by appointment

Time: 11:45-12:50PM

Classroom: Lamont 002+  
Office: Lamont 308

### Course Description

What is the good human life? Is it a life of pleasure? A life of honor? Or is it something more than pleasure and honor? Do we need external goods to be happy or do we need only a good character? What role do friends play in the good life? Should we live a life of the mind or a life of public service? In this course we will study Aristotle's answers to the questions above focusing mainly on the *Nicomachean Ethics* and a few selections from the *Eudemian Ethics*. This is a discussion-based course and students will often take the lead, giving presentations on the primary text and/or one of the secondary texts we will be reading. All texts will be in English.

### Required Texts

- *Aristotle* *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translation, Introduction, and Commentary by Sarah Broadie and Christopher Rowe. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002.
- *The Blackwell Guide to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*. Edited by Richard Kraut. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
- Additional readings will be available on *Nexus*.

### Resources

**Writing Center:** The Writing Center (second floor of Schaffer Library) provides free one-on-one consultation, both by appointment and as available on a walk-in basis. I encourage you to visit the writing center for any and all writing assignments.  
<http://www.union.edu/Resources/Academic/writing/index.php>.

**Accommodations:** It is the policy of Union College to make reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities. If you have a specific disability that qualifies you for academic accommodations, please bring your accommodation ID card to your instructor's office hours as soon as possible. Your instructor will then discuss with you any necessary special arrangements. No accommodations will be provided to students who do not have an accommodation ID card from the Office of Student Support Services (x8785).

## **Assignments**

5% Participation

10% Nexus posts

20% Class Presentations

30% First Short Paper

35% Final Research Paper

## **Description of Assignments**

**Participation:** This is a discussion-based course. Active student participation will be a central feature of the learning experience. Class discussion, office hours (in which we discuss class material), and participation in the online forums all count towards your participation grade. In order to ensure successful participation, it is important that you attend to two main tasks:

- **Reading Assignments:** You should complete the assigned reading prior to the class for which they are assigned in order to contribute meaningfully to class discussion. If you have not read philosophy before, you may find the readings difficult at first. Don't give up! As you read try to identify core claims and arguments. Take notes, jotting down questions or critiques.
- **Class Discussion:** You should contribute to class discussions regularly and in a respectful manner, either by asking questions relating to the topic or contributing your own meaningful insights. Discussion will be based on the reading assignments. One way to prepare for class discussions is by trying to answer the study questions at the end of the reading assignments.

**Nexus:** In order to get the maximum amount of points you must post **by 9am** before class for 20 classes. (You do not have to post on Nexus for the readings you present in class and there are 3 readings you do not have to post or present on at all). I will not count posts that are entered after 9am. There is no way to make up a missed post. If you do not post on the discussion board by 9am you will not receive any points for that post. You should post at least one paragraph (approx. 5 sentences) in response to the readings for that day. You should respond to each other's posts on Nexus, but it must be clear from your post that you read the material (and are not just responding to another person's remarks). Each post is worth 10 points. I will take off points if the post does not reflect the reading and if there are numerous spelling and grammar mistakes. Please keep in mind that the discussion board is worth 10% of your grade so it is very important that you keep up with this assignments.

**Term Papers:** There are two papers for the course. The first paper is a short paper (4-5 pages) that is on a topic of your choice (to be approved by me). The second paper is a longer paper (12-15 pages) that can be an expansion of your first paper or a new topic (also approved by me). I will provide you with a grading guideline and a guide to writing philosophy papers, as well as a description of all the requirements you must meet before turning in the paper.

**Class Presentation:** Each student will give three presentations on the reading of the day and essentially lead the class in discussion of the paper. Each presenter must have a one-page handout highlighting the main arguments in the reading. In your presentation you should explain the thesis of the passage(s) you are presenting on and explain how the author argues for the thesis. You should also feel free to focus on specific parts of the reading (you do not have to present on the entire assignment). When presenting on secondary readings you should study the parts of Aristotle the paper refers to and tell us whether or not you agree with the author's interpretation of Aristotle. Both the handout and the presentation will be graded on organization and clarity as well as content (see rubric).

## **Expectations and Classroom Policies**

### **Attendance**

Attendance is mandatory and will be taken at the beginning of every class. You are permitted three unexcused absences (in which you do not have to notify me of your absence). Your grade will be dropped 3% for every unexcused absence after the first three. Excused absences are ones that have been approved by me in advance of the class.

### **Email**

- Please feel free to email me any time, but allow me 24 hours to respond.
- If you have questions about the class or the assignments please **check the syllabus** first before emailing.
- If you cannot find the information you need on the syllabus, then send me an email.
- If you have any questions about the content of the class or would simply like to discuss some philosophical thoughts of your own do not hesitate to come to my office hours or set up an appointment.

### **General Expectations**

- Come to class prepared, on time, and with your books.
- Turn off your phone, no texting, no laptops unless absolutely necessary, no newspapers, no talking to one another unless it is part of class discussion, no sleeping.
- You are expected to pay attention and engage respectfully with your classmates.
- If you must use your laptop for note taking, please be aware that you may not use the Internet *for any purpose* during class and you may wish to disable it if you will be otherwise tempted. Failure to abide by this requirement will result in loss of the privilege to use your laptop in class.

### **Plagiarism**

Students are expected to adhere to the Union College Academic Honor Code, which you can access at: [www.union.edu/academic\\_depts/ethics/union/Honor%20Code.php](http://www.union.edu/academic_depts/ethics/union/Honor%20Code.php)

## TOPICS AND READINGS

### INTRODUCTION

**January 6:** Introduction to Aristotle and his Ethical Works

### I. EUDAIMONIA

**January 8:** *NE* I.1-7; Chris Bobonich, "Aristotle's Ethical Treatises," *Blackwell*  
(Recommended: *EE* I)

**January 10:** *NE* I.8-13  
(Recommended: *EE* II.1-2)

**January 13:** Gavin Lawrence, "Human Good and Human Function," *Blackwell*  
(Recommended: Susan Meyer, *Ancient Ethics*, Nexus)

**January 15:** *NE* II.1-9  
(Recommended: *EE* II.3-9)

**January 17:** *NE* III.1-5  
(Recommended: *EE* II.10-11)

### II. DOCTRINE OF THE MEAN / VIRTUES OF CHARACTER

**January 20:** Susan Suavé Meyer, "Aristotle on the Voluntary," *Blackwell*

**January 22:** *NE* III.6-12  
(Recommended: *EE* III.1-7)

**January 24:** LIBRARY VISIT?

**January 27:** *NE* IV.1-9

**January 29:** Rosalind Hursthouse, "The Central Doctrine of the Mean," *Blackwell*

**January 31:** Continue *NE* IV

### III. JUSTICE

**February 3:** *NE* V 1-3

- February 5:** *NE V 4-7*
- February 7:** *NE V 8-11*
- February 10:** Charles M. Young, "Aristotle's Justice," *Blackwell*

#### IV. INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES

- February 12:** *NE VI. 1-5*
- February 14:** *NE VI 6-10*
- February 17:** *NE VI 11-13*
- February 19:** C.D.C. Reeve, "Aristotle on the Virtues of Thought," *Blackwell*

#### V. AKRASIA

- February 21:** *NE VII. 1-5*
- February 24:** *NE VII. 6-10*
- February 26:** *NE VII.11-14*
- February 28:** **No class (Make-up class March 4 common hour)**
- March 3:** A.W. Price, "Acrasia and Self-Control," *Blackwell*
- March 5:** **No class (Make-up class March 11 common hour)**

#### VII. HAPPIEST LIVES

- March 7:** *NE X.1-5*
- March 10:** Dorothea Frede, "Pleasure and Pain in Aristotle's Ethics"
- March 12:** *NE X.6-9*
- March 14:** W.F.R. Hardie, "Aristotle on the Best Life for a Man," Nexus
- March 18:** **Final Term Paper**