

PHL 375 H1F: ETHICS
(PROBLEMS OF THE SELF)

Instructor: Etye Steinberg

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Course times: Tuesday 6-9, Thursday 6-9; location SS1072

Office Hours: Tuesday 4:30-5:30, Thursday 4:30-5:30, JHB, Philosophy Conversation Lab

Course Description:

This course explores problems of the self that pertain to practical theory. When someone acts out of character, they might apologize by claiming that “they weren’t themselves”. In other cases, we may excuse someone from responsibility “because she is just a child”, “he is a kleptomaniac so he can’t be taken as responsible for his actions”, or “she doesn’t know any better”. What are we to make of such statements? In what sense (if at all) are they true? When are our actions really ours? What makes us autonomous agents? What aspects of ourselves and our actions can we actually control? What can we be held responsible for and why? We will focus on such topics as the role our important projects and commitments play in our self-identity; the reflective capacities selfhood requires; whether or not one has any control over one’s attitudes and one’s self, and if so, what kind of control; how – if at all – can one be responsible for one’s self; and the nature of personal autonomy.

Required Readings:

Students are expected to do the relevant readings before each class, as well as bring the readings to class with them.

All readings will be made available through blackboard.

Course Evaluation:

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| 1. Attendance, participation, and in-class responses | 15% |
| 2. First paper (1200-1500 words), due May 28 th | 25% |
| 3. Second paper (1600-2000 words), due June 11 th | 35% |
| 4. Term test (in-class), June 18 th | 25% |

Important Dates:

May 18th: Last day to add F courses // Victoria Day

May 28th: First essay due

June 8th: Last day to drop F courses without academic penalty and have them removed from transcript

June 11th: Second essay due

June 18: Term test (in-class)

Reading Schedule:

May 12: Desires, Values, and Identification (1)

- Frankfurt (1971) "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person"
- Watson (1975) "Free Agency"

May 14: Desires, Values, and Identification (2)

- Bratman (1996) "Identification, Decision, and Treating as a Reason"

May 19: Reflection (1)

- Velleman (1989) *Practical Reflection*, chapters 1-2 (selections)

May 21: Reflection (2)

- Parfit (2001) "Rationality and Reasons"

May 26: Reflection (3)

- Moran (2001) *Authority and Estrangement*, chapter 2

May 28: Controlling the Self (1)

1st paper due

- Frankfurt (1982) "The Importance of What We Care about"
- Williams (1982) "Practical Necessity"

June 2: Controlling the Self (2)

- Taylor (1976) "Responsibility for the Self"
- Hieronymi (2006) "Controlling Attitudes"

June 4: Responsibility and the Self (1)

- Strawson (1962) "Freedom and Resentment"
- Wolf (1987) "Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility"

June 9: Responsibility and the Self (2)

- Hieronymi (2014) "Reflection and Responsibility"

June 11: Autonomy (1)

2nd paper due

- Schroeder, T. and Arpaly, N. (1999) "Praise, Blame, and the Whole Self"
- Bratman (2005) "Planning Agency, Autonomous Agency"

June 16: Autonomy (2)

- Buss (2012) "Autonomous Agency: Self Determination in the Passive Mode"

June 18: ***Term test (in-class)***

Policies:

- 1) **Paper Submission:** Papers should be submitted in class. Papers not submitted here should be submitted electronically for dating purposes, with a hard copy handed in at the next class. Late papers will be penalized 8% per day, including weekends.

If you have to miss an assignment deadline for medical or other valid reasons, you should inform me in advance. When circumstances do not permit this (e.g. in an emergency), you must inform me as soon as possible. Students who wish special academic consideration for health reasons must submit a completed University of Toronto Student Medical Certificate, available at: <http://www.healthservice.utoronto.ca/pdfs/medcert.htm>. Students who wish

special academic consideration on other grounds must submit relevant supporting documentation. Alternate arrangements will be made only in the case of circumstances that are both legitimate and unforeseeable. Examples of circumstances that do not meet one or both of these conditions are: extra-curricular activities, employment obligations, and deadlines in other courses.

Submission deadlines:

- First paper: May 28th)
- Second paper (June 11th)

- 2) **Academic Integrity:** Plagiarism and academic dishonesty are strictly prohibited. This includes (but is not restricted to): copying or paraphrasing extensive passages without acknowledgement; submitting a paper written in whole or in part by someone else; submitting a paper for credit in more than one course, without the permission of the instructor; copying the answers of another student in any test, examination or take home assignments. In any of these cases appropriate penalties will be applied. The Department and of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences regard ALL cases of plagiarism are subject to disciplinary measures at either the Department or Faculty level. Individual faculty members do not have the discretion to waive these measures. For more information, consult the University's website on academic integrity (or lack thereof): <http://sites.utoronto.ca/academicintegrity/academicoffenses.html>
- 3) **Accessibility Services:** Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or Accessibility Services at (416)-978-8060; <http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca> (accessibility.services@utoronto.ca). The earlier you make us aware of any potential accessibility issues, the more help we can provide.
- 4) **Contact, emails, etc.:** If you have a question about the material, please come see me during my office hours. In contacting me by email, you should use a U of T email address and include the course code in the subject line. In general, I am happy to answer you by email regarding quick clarifications about the course or administrative issues. However, please note that I will not answer your email (a) if the information is available on the website, on the syllabus, or on the assignment instruction sheet; or (b) if the question is best dealt with in class (either in our discussions or just before or after lectures) or during office hours. Such questions about the reading material deserve real, live discussion and debate.