

Philosophy and the Emotions (PHIL10253): Semester 1 (2025-26)

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Seminar schedule: Mondays 16:10-18:00, Appleton Tower 2.12

Tutorial schedule: 01 – Tuesdays 16:10-17:00, Lister Learning Centre 2.2

02 – Tuesdays 17:10-18:00, Lister Learning Centre 2.2

(tutorials to begin 16 Sept, to conclude 19 Nov)

Office: 40 George Square, 4.12

Office hours: In person: Wednesdays 10:00-11:00

Online: Tuesdays 13:30-14:30 (meeting information on Learn)

Course description

This course investigates philosophical controversies regarding the nature and significance of the emotions and the part the emotions play in human life. Among the questions we consider: Are emotions best thought of as states of our bodies, mental states, or causes of choice and action? In what sense can emotions be intentional, i.e., 'about' the world? Are our emotions under our control or responsive to reason? What role do the emotions play in knowledge, moral choice, or character? We will also consider how philosophers have analysed and evaluated specific emotions such as anger, fear, envy, curiosity, etc.

Learning outcomes

This course will provide students many opportunities to practice the fundamental skills of philosophical inquiry, including the extraction, expression, and evaluation of arguments articulated in philosophical texts; the crafting of compelling and convincing philosophical prose; and the development of their own informed point of view on philosophical issues. In addition, by the conclusion of the course, students should be able to:

1. Elaborate key disagreements among prominent philosophical theories of the nature of emotions
2. Draw critically informed conclusions regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the most prominent philosophical theories of the nature of emotions
3. Explain and evaluate rival views concerning the part that the emotions play in social, moral, and political life
4. Explain and evaluate rival views concerning the part that the emotions play in inquiry and knowledge
5. Offer substantial analyses of particular emotions, enabling the appraisal of the rationality, desirability, etc. of said emotions

Assessment

- First midterm essay, 35% of course mark (1,500 words): due via Learn, Thursday 9 Oct, 12 pm. Guidance to be distributed by 23 Sept.
- Second midterm essay, 35% of course mark (1,500 words): due via Learn, Thursday 30 Oct, 12 pm. Guidance to be distributed by 23 Sept
- Final revised essay, 30% of course mark (2,500 words): due via Learn, Monday 15 Dec by 12 pm. Guidance to be distributed by 4 Nov.

PPLS Skills Centre

PPLS has a Skills Centre that provides assistance to philosophy students with their academic work, including their written assessments. You are encouraged to make appointments with Centre staff to assist you. You may make up to two appointments per month with Skills Centre staff. More information here:

<https://skillscentre.ppls.ed.ac.uk/>

Course readings and schedule

Course readings can be accessed via the Library Resource List on the course Learn page.

As you likely know by now, reading philosophy can often be challenging. Here are some resources students report they've found useful in improving their reading experience (but feel free to contact me for more guidance about reading):

- <https://www.blogs.ppls.ed.ac.uk/2017/02/28/read-philosophy-step-step-guide-confused-students/>
- <https://philosophy.arizona.edu/sites/philosophy.arizona.edu/files/Rosati%2C%20How%20to%20Read%20a%20Philosophical%20Article%20or%20Book.pdf>
- <http://melissajacquart.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/How-to-Read-Philosophy-Handout.pdf>

The readings below are divided into **core** and **secondary**. The core readings lay out the central issues associated with the particular topic and articulate main positions. The secondary readings are often more difficult, operating at later points in the philosophical dialectic. I expect each of you to make **at least one good faith effort to read the core readings for each week**. Move on to the secondary readings only if you have good reason to think you've comprehended the core readings satisfactorily. Engaging with the secondary readings may also be helpful in developing your final revised essay (see above).

1 15 Sept

Our toolkit; introduction to the nature of emotions

Core readings	Secondary readings
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deonna & Teroni, <i>The Emotions: A Philosophical Introduction</i>, pp. 1-7, 14-20• Goldie, "Emotion"• Aristotle, <i>De Anima</i>, excerpts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Solomon, "What an Emotion Theory Should Do"• Kurth, <i>Emotion</i>, pp. 1-18• Scarantino & de Sousa, "Emotion," <i>SEP</i>, §2• Virág, Introduction, <i>Emotions in Early Chinese Philosophy</i>

2 22 Sept

Emotions as body-directed feelings

Core readings	Secondary readings
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Descartes, <i>Passions of the Soul</i>, excerpt• James, "What Is An Emotion?"• Prinz, "Embodied Emotions"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brady, <i>Emotion: The Basics</i>, pp. 16-25• Scarantino & de Sousa, "Emotion," <i>SEP</i>, §3• Kurth, <i>Emotion</i>, pp. 40-48

3 29 Sept

Emotions as judgments

Core readings	Secondary readings
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nussbaum, "Emotions as Judgments of Value and Importance"• Solomon, "Emotions as Evaluative Judgments"• Kurth, <i>Emotion</i>, pp. 23-33	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scarantino & de Sousa, "Emotion," <i>SEP</i>, §5• Calhoun, "Cognitive Emotions?"• Scarantino, "Insights and Blindspots of the Cognitive Theory of Emotions"• Furtak, "Emotion, the Bodily, and the Cognitive"• Knuuttila, <i>The Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy</i>, §§1.5-1.6

4 6 Oct

Emotions as perceptions

Core readings	Secondary readings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tappolet, <i>Emotions, Values, and Agency</i>, ch. 1 • Kurth, Crosby, & Basse, “Are Emotions Perceptions of Value (and Why this Matters)?” [skim pp. 5-8 and §4] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brady, <i>Emotion: The Basics</i>, pp. 28-32 • Whiting, “Are Emotions Perceptual Experiences of Value?” • Gubka, “There Are No Irrational Emotions” • Roberts, <i>Emotion in the Moral Life</i>, ch. 3

5 13 Oct

Recent theoretical developments: Attitudinal and attentional theories

Core readings	Secondary readings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deonna & Teroni, “In What Sense Are Emotions Evaluations?” • Brady, <i>Emotional Insight</i>, chs. 1 (§§1.1-1.2) and 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scarantino & de Sousa, “Emotion,” <i>SEP</i>, §9.1 • Kurth, <i>Emotion</i>, pp. 48-52 • Smith, “Are Emotions Embodied Evaluative Attitudes?”, pp. 98-105 • Scarantino, “Motivational Theories of Emotions in Philosophy and Affective Science” • Mitchell, “The Bodily-Attitudinal Theory of Emotion” • Peet & Pitcovski, “Emotion, Attention, and Reason” • Teroni, “In Pursuit of Emotional Modes: The Philosophy of Emotion after James” • Grzankowski, “Navigating Recalcitrant Emotions”

6 20 Oct

Knowledge, inquiry, and the epistemic emotions

Core readings	Secondary readings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morton, “Epistemic Emotions” • Vazard, “Everyday Anxious Doubt” • De Cruz, <i>Wonderstruck</i>, chs. 1-2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thagard, “The Passionate Scientist” • Brun & Keunzle, “A New Role for Emotions in Epistemology?” • Friedman, “Inquiry and Belief”

7 27 Oct

Sentimentalism and the role of emotion in morality

Core readings	Secondary readings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hume, <i>An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals</i>, §1 and Appendix I • Bennett, “The Conscience of Huckleberry Finn” • Brady, <i>Emotion: The Basics</i>, pp. 51-58 • Wong, “Moral Sentimentalism in Early Confucian Thought” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brady, <i>Emotion: The Basics</i>, 128-145 • Kurth, <i>Emotion</i>, ch. 6 • Johnston, “The Authority of Affect” • Nichols, <i>Sentimental Rules: On the Natural Foundations of Moral Judgment</i>, ch. 1 • May, <i>Regard for Reason in the Moral Mind</i>, ch. 2

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> D’Arms & Jacobson, “Whither Sentimentalism? On Fear, the Fearsome, and the Dangerous”
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8 3 Nov
Affective injustice

Core readings	Secondary readings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Archer & Matheson, “Commemoration and Emotional Imperialism” Gallegos, “Affective Injustice and Fundamental Affective Goods” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Archer & Mills, “Anger, Affective Injustice, and Emotion Regulation” Pismenny, Eickers, & Prinz, “Emotional Injustice”

9 10 Nov
Bad feelings, part I

Core readings	Secondary readings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thomason, <i>Dancing with the Devil</i>, pp. 1-61 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graver, <i>Stoicism and Emotion</i>, ch. 2 Gross, “Emotion Regulation: Current Status and Future Prospects” Ehrenreich, “Pathologies of Hope”

10 17 Nov
Bad feelings, part II

Core readings	Secondary readings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thomason, <i>Dancing with the Devil</i>, pp. 62-122 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seneca, <i>On Anger</i>, book I Nussbaum, “Transitional Anger” Cherry, <i>The Case for Rage: Why Anger is Essential to Anti-racist Struggle</i>, ch. 1 Bacon, “Of Envy” D’Arms & Kerr, “Envy in the Philosophical Tradition” Protasi, “Envy as a Civic Emotion”

11 24 Nov
Bad feelings, part III

Core readings	Secondary readings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thomason, <i>Dancing with the Devil</i>, pp. 123-172 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lueck, “Contempt, Respect, and Recognition” Virág “Virtuous Contempt and the Ritual Community in Confucius and Xúnzǐ” Spurgin, “An Emotional-Freedom Defense of Schadenfreude”