

PHIL 388/463: Conceptions of Virtue

Fall 2018

Instructor: Dr. Richard Kim

Thursdays 2:30-5:00 pm

Mundelein Center 308

Office Hours: Crown 362; Tuesdays and Thursdays 10-11am or by
appointment

Phone: 219-252-0177

Course Description:

This course examines virtue ethics using both historical and contemporary sources. Our primary sources will be from Aristotle, Aquinas, Buddhist and classical Chinese thinkers, along with contemporary commentators and scholars. We will also reflect on some central topics that continue to be debated by contemporary moral philosophers. Three key questions will guide this course: (1) What is the relationship between virtue and human flourishing (or well-being)? (2) What is the relationship between virtue and human nature? (3) What is the relationship between virtue and moral development?

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course you should understand some historically prominent lines of thought on the virtues, the basic history of contemporary virtue ethics, and central contemporary debates in virtue ethics.

Course Materials

Required Texts:

Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy 2nd edition (eds.) Philip Ivanhoe and Bryan Van Norden

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (Oxford World's Classics) translated by David Ross and Lesley Brown

All other reading assignments will be available on Sakai.

Course Requirements:

Option 1: Take-home midterm: 30%

Take-home final: 30%

Essay (5-7 pp.): 30%

Reading Response: 10%

Option 2: Presentation: 15%

Final Paper (15-20 pages): 75%
Reading Response: 10%

Note for Option 2: You must meet with me individually to discuss the topic you will write on for your final paper. A draft of the final paper will be due in Week 12. You will receive extensive comments on this draft and will turn in a final version on the last class date. You are also responsible for a 20 minute presentation based on the topic of your paper on the final day of class. A 10 minute response will follow each presentation.

The reading responses must be posted in the Sakai discussion forum **before noon every Thursday**. For each reading that week you must make one comment. (For example, if we have three essays for that week, I will expect three comments total.) They can be either a clarificatory question about the text or a philosophical challenge to an argument we find in the readings. We will use these comments as part of our in-class discussion. As long as you post the comments in time, you will gain full credit.

Late-Work Policy:

For every day that an assignment is late, unless you have a legitimate excuse, I will deduct one letter grade. For example, an "A" will become a "B" and so on.

Week 1, August 30: Concept of Virtue

Christian Miller, 'Virtue as a Trait' (Oxford Handbook)
Bridget Clarke, 'Virtue as a Sensitivity' (Oxford Handbook)
Matt Stichter, 'Virtue as a Skill' (Oxford Handbook)

Week 2, September 6: Aristotle: Virtue and Moral Development

Selections from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (Books 1 and 2)
Martha Nussbaum, 'Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach'
M.F. Burnyeat, 'Aristotle on Learning to Be Good'

Week: 3, September 13: Aristotle: Virtue and Human Nature

Julia Annas, 'Virtue Ethics: What Kind of Naturalism?' (Virtue Ethics Old and New)
Rosalind Hursthouse, 'Human Nature and Aristotelian Virtue Ethics' (Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement)

Week 4, September 20: Aquinas: Virtue and Theology

Selections from Aquinas on the Treatise of Virtue
Candace Vogler, 'Turning to Aquinas on Virtue' (Oxford Handbook)
John Cottingham, 'Human Nature and the Transcendent'

Week 5, September 27: Early Confucianism: Virtue and Moral Development

Selections from the *Analects*, *Mengzi*, *Xunzi*

Philip, J. Ivanhoe, 'Confucian Moral Self-Cultivation: Kongzi, Mengzi, Xunzi' (Ch. 1-3, *Confucian Moral Self-Cultivation*)
Bradford Corkelet, 'Confucianism, Buddhism, and Virtue Ethics'

Week 6, October 4: Early Confucianism: Mencius and Xunzi on Human Nature

A.C. Graham, 'The Background of the Mencian Theory of Human Nature'
Irene Bloom, 'Mengzian Arguments on Human Nature'
Eric Hutton, 'Does Xunzi Have a Consistent Theory of Human Nature?' (*Virtue, Nature, and Moral Agency*)

Week 7, October 11: Buddhist Virtue Ethics

Pali Canon, 'The Ten Perfections'
Thich Nhat Hanh, 'The Six Paramitas'
Matthew Mackenzie, 'Buddhism and the Virtues' (Oxford Handbook)

[Mid-Term Exam Handed Out: Due 8/25]

Week, 8 October 18: Roots of Contemporary Virtue Ethics

Elizabeth Anscombe, 'Modern Moral Philosophy'
Philippa Foot, 'Virtues and Vices'
Alasdair MacIntyre, 'The Nature of the Virtues'

Week 9, October 25: Roots of Contemporary Virtue Ethics Continued

Michael Stocker, 'The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories'
Bernard Williams, 'Morality, the Peculiar Institution'
John McDowell, 'Virtue and Reason'

Week 10, November 1: Virtues and Human Flourishing

Philippa Foot, 'Happiness and Human Good,' (Ch. 6, *Natural Goodness*)
Julia Annas, 'Living Happily' (Ch. 8 of *Intelligent Virtue*); 'Living Virtuously, Living Happily' (Ch. 9 of *Intelligent Virtue*)

[Essay Assignment]

Week 11, November 8: Varieties of Virtue Ethics

Christine Swanton, 'Pluralistic Virtue Ethics'
Michael Slote, 'Agent-based Virtue Ethics'
Linda Zagzebski, 'Exemplarist Virtue Theory'

Week 12, November 15: Feminist Virtue Ethics

Karen Stohr, 'Feminist Virtue Ethics'
Annette Baier, 'What Do Women Want In A Moral Theory?' (*Nous*)
Erin Cline, 'Feminist and Confucian Perspectives on Parents, Children, and Moral Cultivation' (Ch. 4, *Families of Virtue*)

[Essay is Due]

November 22, THANKSGIVING NO CLASS

Week 13, November 29: The Situationist Critique of Virtue Ethics

Maria W. Merritt, John M. Doris, and Gilbert Harman, 'Character'

Nancy Snow, 'Situationism and Character: New Directions'

Edward Slingerland, 'The Situationist Critique and Early Confucian Virtue Ethics'

[Final Exam Handed Out, DUE 12/10]

Week 14, December 6: Particular Virtue X. We will determine X by vote.

[PRESENTATIONS]