

Ancient Ethics Honours: Spring Semester 2017

Course organiser: Dr Andrew Mason

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Office Hour: Monday, 2.00-3.30 (6.10, DSB).

Course Secretary: Ms Sam Bell

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Course Description

The course is based on a systematic coverage of the main themes of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Topics discussed will include the human good, moral and intellectual virtues, responsibility, pleasure, friendship, and the place of philosophy in the good life. The relation of Aristotle's views to those of other ancient philosophers will be discussed. The impact of ancient theories of virtue on later thought will also be considered.

Teaching will consist of a weekly lecture (Monday, 12.10-1.00 p.m., 1.20 Dugald Steward Building), and a tutorial, for which there will be two groups (Tuesday 2.10-3.00 and 3.10-4.00: places to be confirmed). A list of readings for tutorials will be published at the start of term. The tutorial in week 1 will be introductory; after this tutorials will move a week behind lectures, i.e. the tutorial in week 2 will be based on material from the lecture in week 1, etc.

There will be an additional fortnightly meeting for M.Sc. students (time and place to be arranged).

Assessment

Assessment consists of a midterm essay of 1500 words, due at noon on Thursday 2nd March (40%) and an end-of-term essay of 2500 words, due at noon on Thursday 27th April (60%). Midterm essay topics will be posted at the start of week 3, and final essay topics at the start of week 7.

Fourth year honours students who have chosen to submit a coursework dissertation (5000 word essay) in this course should follow the usual procedure for coursework dissertations. They should consult the course organiser about their plans for the dissertation before the decision deadline (Monday 27th February).

M. Sc. students will be assessed by an end-of-term essay of 2500 words, following the usual procedure for the M. Sc., and will have the opportunity to submit a midterm formative essay.

Reading

The primary reading is Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, which is available in numerous editions; the best are:

Crisp, Roger. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
Rowe, Christopher. *Nicomachean Ethics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
(With introduction and commentary by Sarah Broadie.)

Recommended secondary reading:

D.S. Hutchinson. 'Ethics' in J. Barnes, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle*.

J. Annas, *The Morality of Happiness*.

T. Irwin, *The Development of Ethics* (vol. 1).

G. Hughes, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Aristotle on Ethics*.

S. Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*.

A.O. Rorty, ed. *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*.

R. Kraut, ed. *The Blackwell Guide to Aristotle's Ethics*.

L.P. Gerson, ed. *Aristotle: Critical Assessments*, vol. 3.

G. Anagnostopoulos, ed. *A Companion to Aristotle*. (Contains articles on each major topic from the *Ethics*.)

Other reading, relevant to particular topics, may be recommended during the course.

Lecture Content

Week 1. Introduction; Aristotle's aim and methods in the *Ethics*: the human good; the concept of happiness.

Nicomachean Ethics. I.1-5 and first part of 7. (See also X.9.)

Week 2. The human good (continued); the human function; the concept of virtue; external goods.

Nicomachean Ethics I, especially chapters, second part of 7, 8-10, 13.

Week 3. Ethical virtue and the doctrine of the mean.

Nicomachean Ethics II, and III. 6-9.; see also III.10-12 and IV.

Week 4. The voluntary, choice, responsibility.

Nicomachean Ethics III.1-5.

Week 5. Justice.

Nicomachean Ethics V, especially chapters 1-4, final paragraph of 5, 6-9, 11.

Week 6. Intellectual virtue and practical reasoning.

Nicomachean Ethics VI, especially chapters 1-8, 11-13.

Week 7. Akrasia (lack of self-control).

Nicomachean Ethics VII chapters 1-10, especially 1-3, 7-8.

Week 8. Pleasure.

Nicomachean Ethics VII, 11-14, and X. 1-5.

Week 9. Friendship.

Nicomachean Ethics VIII and IX, especially VIII.1-8. IX.4-9, 12.

Week 10. Contemplation; philosophy and the good life.

Nicomachean Ethics X. 6-8.

Week 11. The impact of ancient ethics on modern thought followed by a question period for revision.