

The Philosophy of Simone Weil

Course Guide 2017/2018

Dr. David Levy, david.levy@ed.ac.uk

Office Hour: Tuesday 4-5

Course Secretary: Ann-Marie Cowe, annmarie.cowe@ed.ac.uk

Course Overview

This course considers the philosophical aspects of the thinking of Simone Weil, the twentieth-century writer best known for her spiritual writings. However, Simone Weil was trained in philosophy, taught philosophy, and always returned to a philosophical method in her thinking. She is not a theologian because she is not mainly interested in God's account of creation or His intercession in the world, not least because her vision is of a divine abdication or self-removal from the world.

We will examine her mature philosophical thought by reading some of her essays from 1940-1943 (except in week 4 when our readings are from 1934 and 1937). Weil offers a philosophically radical account of the nature of a human person in its capacity to think, act, contemplate, etc. This account in turn leads to her consideration of the nature of labour, work, force, love, study and the needs of the soul. Her ideas in this area flow from her rejection of Descartes' account of human beings. Though she is a modern thinker, she is influenced by Plato, especially in her account of the political sphere. There, her interest in justice, politics, society and our needs are defined by considering the nature of a human person, not the body politic. Our abiding focus will be her essay masterwork, known usually as "Human Personality." In the last week we will consider her impact on subsequent thinkers, especially Iris Murdoch.

Requirements

The format of this course is a lecture and a tutorial. It requires your participation in both. There is no required text for this course. Each week there are one or two *required* readings indicated below. I will discuss the readings in the lecture and we will discuss the *texts* in more detail in the tutorials. Please bring the texts to the tutorials, if not also the lectures.

☞ You must read these articles or chapters in preparation for discussion each week.

The discussion in class is no substitute for reading this material carefully. The readings are deceptively difficult and not like ordinary journal articles in philosophy. Where the reading is not online through the library, I will put electronic copies on LEARN.

Assessment

Exam

This course will be assessed solely on the basis of an exam given in the April/May 2017 diet of examinations.

Coursework Dissertation

Students who qualify (usually fourth year single honours philosophy students) may submit a Coursework Dissertation *instead* of sitting the exam. Coursework Dissertations are submitted online, please check with the teaching office for further details on submission. The title of your dissertation must be approved in advance by submitting it to me in person or by email. Generally, any question listed below for discussion in a seminar is a suitable short dissertation title.

Formative assessment

In addition, everyone should submit two exam answers for last year's exam--available from the Library online. These can be e-mailed to me at any point during the term. This "formative exam" will not count toward determining your mark for this class or the class of degree you are ultimately awarded. However the formative exam is an excellent opportunity to improve your philosophical writing and try arguments you may ultimately use in the exam or short dissertation. I strongly urge you to submit two formative exam essays. If you submit your essays by the end of teaching week 9, I will return them to you in class in teaching week 11. If you submit the essay by the end of teaching week 11, I will return the essay to you via the philosophy office in week 1 of the second term.

MSc assessment

MSc students are assessed by a single essay of 2500 words. The title of your essay must be approved in advance by submitting it to me in person or by email.

Visiting student assessment

Visiting students will be assessed by exam as described above for home students.

Contacts

You may contact me by email at david.levy@ed.ac.uk. My office is in room 5.10 of the Dugald Stewart Building. I am available Tuesday of each week from 4 until 5 to discuss more or less any philosophical topic, related to this course or not. To ensure that I can see you, I ask that you send me an email confirming that you intend to visit and advising me of the topic for discussion. Unfortunately, I am not often available at other times, though you can seek a special arrangement to meet if it proves necessary.

If you have questions about the mechanics of submitting assignments, exam timetables and other logistical matters please contact the course secretary, Sam Bell.

Miscellaneous

Regrettably, the behaviour of some obliges me to to make the following requests.

Please do not text during class. It is disrespectful. Turn off the ringer of your phone and put the phone away.

Please do not use your laptop computers in class for anything besides making notes or related activity. If I notice that you are using your laptop for something potentially distracting to your neighbours such as Facebook or YouTube, I will ask you to close your laptop. Tweeting is not a related activity no matter how interesting the seminar material.

Our Motto

“To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts ... but so to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates ... It is to solve some of the problems of life, not just theoretically, but practically.”

—Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

Weekly Readings

Please read *both* readings where two are indicated. Note that the reading in week 5 on the *Iliad* is long, so begin early.

Abbreviations for books:

AA = *Simone Weil: An Anthology*, ed. Siân Miles, Grove Press; Virago, 1986; reprinted Penguin Classics 2005.

R = *The Simone Weil Reader*, ed. George A Panichas, Moyer Bell Ltd, 1977.

LPW = *Simone Weil: Late philosophical writings*, ed. Eric Springsted, University of Notre Dame Press, 2015.

SE = *Simone Weil: Selected essays 1934-43*, ed. Richard Rees, Oxford University Press, 1962, reprinted in new edition 2015.

SW = *Simone Weil*, ed. Eric Springsted, Orbis, 1998.

Week 1: No reading, consider reading a biographical summary in one of the texts below or above, or review some of the background reading.

Week 2: “Human Personality” available in AA, R, SE, and LPW [as “What is sacred in every human being?”] and as an appendix to David McLellan, *Simone Weil: Utopian Pessimist*, Macmillan, 1990.

Week 3: (i) “Essay on the Notion of Reading,” *Philosophical Investigations* 13:4, 1990, 297-303. Also in LPW. (ii) “Some Reflections around the Concept of Value: On Valéry’s Claim that Philosophy is Poetry,” *Philosophical Investigations* 37:2, 2014, 105-112.

Week 4: (i) "Analysis of Oppression" available in AA and R and Simone Weil, *Oppression and Liberty*, ed. Arthur Wills, Routledge 1958. "The Power of Words" available in AA, R, SE.

Week 5: "The Iliad or the poem of force" [sometimes "the poem of might"] available in AA, R and *The Iliad or the poem of force: A Critical Edition*, ed. James Holoka, Peter Lang, 2003; *War and the Iliad: Simone Weil & Rachel Bepaloff*, NY Review of Books, 2005; Simone Weil, *Intimations of Christianity among the Ancient Greeks*, Routledge 1957.

Week 6: (i) "The Love of God and affliction," available in R and SW [in a longer version]; and Simone Weil, *Waiting for God*, Putnam, 1951; Simone Weil, *Awaiting God*, Fresh Wind, 2012; (ii) "Prerequisite to Dignity of Labour," available in AA and LPW [under the title "The First Condition for the Work of a Free Person"].

Week 7: (i) "Draft for a Statement of Human Obligations" in AA, SE, SW; (ii) and "The Needs of the Soul" especially the first half dozen or so pages up to 'Order' available in AA and as Part One of Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots: Prelude to a declaration of duties to mankind*, Routledge, 1952.

Week 8: "The Legitimacy of the Provisional Government," *Philosophical Investigations* 10:2, 1987.

Week 9: "Are We Struggling for Justice?" *Philosophical Investigations* 10:1, 1987.

Week 10: "Human Personality" available in AA, R, SE, and LPW [as "What is sacred in every human being?"] and as an appendix to David McLellan, *Simone Weil: Utopian Pessimist*, Macmillan, 1990. [Yes, we're reading and discussing it again.]

Week 11: Iris Murdoch, "On 'God' and 'Good'," in *The Sovereignty of Good*, Routledge, 1970, 46-76; reprinted in Iris Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics*, ed. Conradi, Chatto & Windus, 1997, 337-362; originally in *The Anatomy of Knowledge*, ed. Marjorie Green, Routledge, 1969.

General Reading

There is no single, philosophy textbook on Weil's philosophy. The closest thing is:

Peter Winch, *Simone Weil: "The just balance,"* Cambridge University Press, 1989.

A good general book on Weil by an analytic philosopher is:

Palle Yourgrau, *Simone Weil,* Reaktion 2011.

An eccentric, short, yet masterful book on Weil's thought is:

Robert Chenavier, *Simone Weil: Attention to the Real,* tr. B. Doering, University of Notre Dame Press, 2012.

There are many books that are biographies of varying kinds, among which the most comprehensive is by Weil's friend, Simone Petrement. Any is likely to be interesting—though unnecessary for this course—except the one by du Plessix Gray, which I do not recommend. Other introductions with biographical material are listed below as additional readings for Week 1.

Much of the philosophical underpinnings of Weil's thought are more or less explicit in these notes made by her students in her classes on philosophy:

Simone Weil . *Lectures on Philosophy.* Translated Hugh Price. Cambridge University Press, 1978.

The single richest book of secondary literature in a familiar philosophical idiom is:

Bell, Richard (ed). *Simone Weil's Philosophy of Culture: Readings Toward a Divine Humanity.* Cambridge University Press, 1993.

If you read French, then you will find that many of the original essays can be found online by searching here: <http://classiques.uqac.ca/>

Additional Books by Simone Weil

This list is not exhaustive in conjunction with those mentioned above, but this covers the large bulk of those available in English.

Weil, Simone. *Awaiting God: A New Translation of Attente de Dieu and Lettre a Un Religieux*. United States: Fresh Wind Press, 2013.

———. *First and Last Notebooks*. United States: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2015.

———. *Formative Writings, 1929-1941*. Translated Dorothy Tuck McFarland and Wilhelmina van Ness. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987.

———. *Gravity and Grace*. London: Routledge, 1952, rev. edition 2002.

———. *Intimations of Christianity Among the Ancient Greeks*. London: Ark Paperbacks, 1987.

———. *Lectures on Philosophy*. Translated Hugh Price. Cambridge University Press, 1978.

———. *On the Abolition of All Political Parties*. Translated Simon Leys. Australia: Black, 2013.

———. *Oppression and Liberty*. London: Routledge, 1988.

———. *Seventy Letters*. United States: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2015.

———. *Simone Weil: Late Philosophical Writings*. Edited by Eric O. Springsted. United States: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015.

———. *The Need for Roots: Prelude to a Declaration of Duties Towards Mankind*. Translated A. F. Wills. London: Ark Paperbacks, 1987.

———. *The Simone Weil Reader*. Edited by George A. Panichas. New Haven, CT: Moyer Bell, 1977.

———. *Waiting for God*. Translated Emma Craufurd. New York: Perennial Library, 1973.

Secondary Reading and Questions

Week 1: Introduction

Palle Yourgrau, *Simone Weil*, Reaktion 2011.

Robert Chenavier, *Simone Weil: Attention to the Real*, tr. B. Doering, University of Notre Dame Press, 2012.

"Introduction" in *Simone Weil: An Anthology*, ed. Siân Miles, Grove Press; Virago, 1986; reprinted Penguin Classics 2005.

David McLellan, *Simone Weil: Utopian Pessimist*, Macmillan, 1990.

Mario von der Ruhr. *Simone Weil: An Apprenticeship in Attention*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006.

Abosch, Heinz, A Kenny, and Kimberly A. Kenny. *Simone Weil: An Introduction*. New York: Pennbridge Books, 1994.

Hellman, John, *Simone Weil: An Introduction to her thought*, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1982.

Pétrément, Simone. *Simone Weil: A Life*. Translated by Raymond Rosenthal. New York: Schocken Books, 1989.

Fiori, Gabriella. *Simone Weil, an Intellectual Biography*. University of Georgia Press, 1989.

Perrin, J. M., Gustave Thibon, *Simone Weil as We Knew Her*. London: Taylor & Francis, 2003.

Tomlin, E. W. F. *Simone Weil*. Cambridge: Bowes & Bowes, 1954.

Plant, Stephen. *Simone Weil*. London: Fount, 1996.

Nevin, Thomas R., *Simone Weil: Portrait of a Self-exiled Jew*, University of North Carolina Press, 1991.

White, George Abbott (ed.), *Simone Weil: Interpretations of a Life*, University of Massachusetts Press, 1981.

It is useful to re-acquaint yourself with some important works to which Weil was responding, specifically:

Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, especially Meditation II; or *Principles of First Philosophy*, especially Part I, Art. 7.

Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*.

Plato, *Republic*, especially 493a-e, 509d1-511, 514-521.

Week 2: Human Personality

Hamilton, Christopher, "Simone Weil's 'Human Personality': Between the Personal and the Impersonal," *Harvard Theological Review*, 2005.

- Burns, Steven, "Justice and Impersonality: Simone Weil on Rights and Obligations," *Laval théologique et philosophique*, 49:3, 1993, 477–486.
- Dargan, Joan, *Simone Weil: Thinking Poetically*, State University of New York Press, 1999.[Chapter 1]
- Hermesen, Joke J., "The Impersonal and the Other," *The European Journal of Women's Studies*, 6, 1999, 183-200.
- Teuber, Andreas, "Simone Weil: Equality as Compassion," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 43:2, 1982, 221-237.
- Peter Winch, *Simone Weil: "The just balance,"* Cambridge University Press, 1989.[Esp. chapter 9]
- Andrew, Edward. "Simone Weil on the Injustice of Rights-Based Doctrines," *Review of Politics*, 48, 1986, 60-91.
- Rozelle-Stone, A. Rebecca and Lucian Stone, eds. *The Relevance of the Radical: Simone Weil 100 Years Later*. United Kingdom: T.& T.Clark, 2009.[Esp. chapter 3]
- Dietz, Mary G. *Between the Human and the Divine: The Political Thought of Simone Weil*. New York, NY, Rowman & Littlefield, 1988.[Esp. part I]
- Brucek, Katherine T., *The Redemption of Tragedy: The Literary Vision of Simone Weil*, State University of New York Press, 1995.[Chapter 3]
- Dilman, Iham, *The Self, the Soul and the Psychology of Good and Evil*, Routledge, 2005.
- Springsted, Eric, "Of Tennis, Persons and Politics," *Philosophical Investigations*, 16:3, 1993, 198-211.
- Hamilton, Christopher, "Raimond Gaita on Saints, Love and Human Preciousness," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 11, 2008, 181–195.
- Pirruccello, Ann, "'Gravity' in the Thought of Simone Weil," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 57:1, 1997, 73-93.
- Sharp, Ann Margaret, "Simone Weil on Friendship," *Philosophy Today*, 22, 1978, 266-275.
- McCullough, Lissa, "Simone Weil's Phenomenology of the Body," *Comparative and Continental Philosophy*, 4:2, 2012, 195–218.
- Sutherland, Stuart, "Saintliness and Sanity," *Scottish Journal of Religious Studies*, 1:1, 1980, 45-61.
- Andic, Martin, "Simone Weil and Kierkegaard," *Modern Theology*, 2:1, 1985, 20-41.
- Cockburn, David, "Self, World and God in Spinoza and Weil," *Studies in World Christianity*, 4:2, 1998, 173–186.

Week 3: Reading and Value

- Peter Winch, *Simone Weil: "The just balance,"* Cambridge University Press, 1989. [Esp. chapters 2-4]
- Little, JP (Janet Pat), "Simone Weil and the Limits of Language," in Dunaway, JM, Springsted, EO (eds.), *The Beauty That Saves: Essays on Aesthetics and Language in Simone Weil*, Mercer University Press, 39-54, 1996.

- Andic, Martin, "Simone Weil and Shakespeare's Fools" in *The Beauty That Saves: Essays on Aesthetics and Language in Simone Weil*, Mercer University Press, 197-215, Chapter 13, 1996.
- Rozelle-Stone, A. Rebecca and Lucian Stone, eds. *The Relevance of the Radical: Simone Weil 100 Years Later*. United Kingdom: T.& T.Clark, 2009. [Esp. chapter 9]
- Bell, Richard (ed). *Simone Weil's Philosophy of Culture: Readings Toward a Divine Humanity*. Cambridge University Press, 1993. [Chapter 4, 5, 6]
- Allen, Diogenes. and Springsted, Eric O., *Spirit, Nature, and Community: Issues in the Thought of Simone Weil*, State University of New York Press, 1994. [Chapter 4]
- Springsted, Eric, "Contradiction, Mystery and the Use of Words in Simone Weil," *Religion and Literature*, 17:2, 1985, 1-16.
- Hermesen, Joke J. "Who is the Spectator? Hannah Arendt and Simone Weil on Thinking and Judging," in J. J. Hermesen (ed.), *The Judge and the Spectator: Hannah Arendt on Thought and Action*, Leuven: Peeters, 1999.
- Bowden, Peta, "Ethical Attention: Accumulating Understandings," *European Journal of Philosophy*, 6:1, 1998, 59-77.
- Cockburn, David, "In the Beginning Was the Deed," *Philosophical Investigations*, 36:4, 2013, 303-319.
- Cockburn, David, "Self, World and God in Spinoza and Weil," *Studies in World Christianity*, 4:2, 1998, 173-186.
- Stewart-Robertson, Charles, "Philosophical Reflections on the Obligation to Attend," *Philosophy Today*, 31, 1987, 54-68.

Week 4: Oppression and the Power of Words

- Dietz, Mary G., *Between the Human and the Divine: The Political Thought of Simone Weil*. New York, NY, Rowman & Littlefield, 1988.[Esp. part II]
- Radzins, Inese, "Simone Weil's Political Theology," *Political Theology*, 17, 226-242, 2016.
- Finch, Henry Leroy. *Simone Weil and the Intellect of Grace: A Window on the World of Simone Weil*. Edited by Martin Andic. New York: Continuum, 2001. [Esp. chapter 6]
- Bell, Richard (ed). *Simone Weil's Philosophy of Culture: Readings Toward a Divine Humanity*. Cambridge University Press, 1993. [Chapter 4]
- David McLellan, *Simone Weil: Utopian Pessimist*, Macmillan, 1990. [Chapter 4]
- Blum, Lawrence A and Victor J Seidler. *A Truer Liberty: Simone Weil and Marxism*. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Grote, Jim, "Prestige: Simone Weil's Theory of Social Force," *Spirituality Today*, 42:3, 1990, 217-232.
- Doering, E. Jane and E. O. Springsted (eds.), *The Christian Platonism of Simone Weil*, University of Notre Dame Press, 2004.[Esp. chapters 4, 6, 7]
- Rhees, Rush and Mario Von Der Ruhr. *Discussions of Simone Weil*. State University of New York Press, 2000. [Esp. part one]

Peter Winch, *Simone Weil: "The just balance,"* Cambridge University Press, 1989. [Esp. chapter 7]

Rozelle-Stone, A. Rebecca and Lucian Stone, eds. *The Relevance of the Radical: Simone Weil 100 Years Later.* United Kingdom: T.& T.Clark, 2009. [Esp. chapter 9]

White, George Abbott (ed.), *Simone Weil: Interpretations of a Life,* University of Massachusetts Press, 1981. [Chapter by White]

Meltzer, Françoise, "The Hands of Simone Weil," *Critical Inquiry*, 27:4, 2001, 611-628.

Springsted, Eric, "Of Tennis, Persons and Politics," *Philosophical Investigations*, 16:3, 1993, 198-211.

Springsted, Eric, "Contradiction, Mystery and the Use of Words in Simone Weil," *Religion and Literature*, 17:2, 1985, 1-16.

Hamilton, Christopher, "Power, Punishment and Reconciliation in the Political and Social Thought of Simone Weil," *European Journal of Social Theory*, 11:3, 315-330, 2008.

Week 5: The Iliad

The Iliad or the poem of force: A Critical Edition, ed. James Holoka, Peter Lang, 2003 [This has a section by section reading and commentary on the Weil's essay, with the French text included.]

Simonsuuri, Kirsti, "Simone Weil's Interpretation of Homer," *La Pensée*, 2012, 166-177.

Poole, A., "War and Grace: The Force of Simone Weil on Homer," *Arion*, 3rd series, II:1, 1992, 1-15.

Dietz, Mary G. *Between the Human and the Divine: The Political Thought of Simone Weil.* New York, NY, Rowman & Littlefield, 1988. [Esp. part III, chapter 5]

Hammer, Dean and Michael Kicey, "Simone Weil's *Iliad*: The Power of Words," *The Review of Politics*, 72:1, 2010, 79-96.

Peter Winch, *Simone Weil: "The just balance,"* Cambridge University Press, 1989. [Esp. chapter 11]

Rozelle-Stone, A. Rebecca and Lucian Stone, eds. *The Relevance of the Radical: Simone Weil 100 Years Later.* United Kingdom: T.& T.Clark, 2009. [Esp. chapter 10]

Finch, Henry Leroy. *Simone Weil and the Intellect of Grace: A Window on the World of Simone Weil.* Edited by Martin Andic. New York: Continuum, 2001. [Esp. chapter 5]

Doering, E. Jane and E. O. Springsted (eds.), *The Christian Platonism of Simone Weil,* University of Notre Dame Press, 2004. [Esp. chapter 10]

Doering, Jane E. *Simone Weil and the Specter of Self-Perpetuating Force.* University of Notre Dame Press, 2010. [Be careful, this interpretation is problematic]

Corbí, Josep E., "First-Person Authority and Self-Knowledge as an Achievement," *European Journal of Philosophy*, 18:3, 325–362, 2009.

Dilman, İlham, "Simone Weil: Freedom with the confines of necessity," in *Free Will: An Historical and Philosophical Introduction,* Routledge, 206-220, chapter 13, 1999.

Meaney, Marie Cabaud, *Simone Weil's Apologetic Use of Literature: Her Christological Interpretations of Ancient Greek Texts*, Oxford University Press, 2007.[Esp. chapters 1 and 5]

White, James Boyd. *Living Speech: Resisting the Empire of Force*. Princeton University Press, 2006.

White, George Abbott (ed.), *Simone Weil: Interpretations of a Life*, University of Massachusetts Press, 1981. [Chapters by Ferber and Summers]

Grote, Jim, "Prestige: Simone Weil's Theory of Social Force," *Spirituality Today*, 42:3, 1990, 217-232.

Merton, Thomas, "Pacifism and Resistance in Simone Weil," in *Faith and Violence*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1968, 76-84.

Irwin, Alexander, *Saints of the impossible: Bataille, Weil, and the politics of the sacred*, University of Minnesota Press, 2002.[Esp. chapters 2 & 5]

Week 6: Affliction and Dignity of Labour

McCullough, Lissa. *The Religious Philosophy of Simone Weil: An Introduction*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2014. [This is the clearest account of Weil's philosophy of religion]

Bell, Richard (ed). *Simone Weil's Philosophy of Culture: Readings Toward a Divine Humanity*. Cambridge University Press, 1993.[Esp. chapters 1-3 & 11, 12]

Vetö, Miklós. *The Religious Metaphysics of Simone Weil*. Translated Joan Dargan. State University of New York Press, 1994.

Pirruccello, Ann, "'Gravity' in the Thought of Simone Weil," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 57:1, 1997, 73-93.

Cameron, Sharon, "The Practice of Attention," *Critical Inquiry*, 29:2, 216-252, 2003.

Rozelle-Stone, A. Rebecca and Lucian Stone, *Simone Weil and Theology*, T.& T.Clark, 2013.

Pirruccello, Ann, "Simone Weil: Presence and Absence in Attention," *Philosophy East and West*, 45:1, 1995, 61-72.

Vetö, Miklós, "Simone Weil and Suffering", *Thought*, XL,1965, 275-286.

Painter, Rebecca, "Fiction And The Growth of Moral Consciousness: Attention And Evil," in A.T. Tymieniecka (ed.), *Analecta Husserliana*, XCII, 235–257, 2006.

Burns, Steven, "Virtue and Necessity," *Laval théologique et philosophique*, 32:3, 1976, 261-275.

Cockburn, David, "Simone Weil on death," *Mortality*, 2:1, 63-72, 1997.

Cockburn, David, "Self, World and God in Spinoza and Weil," *Studies in World Christianity*, 4:2, 1998, 173–186.

Allen, Diogenes. and Springsted, Eric O., *Spirit, Nature, and Community: Issues in the Thought of Simone Weil*, State University of New York Press, 1994.[Esp. chapters 6 & 7]

Springsted, Eric O., *Simone Weil and the Suffering of Love*. Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 1993.

Springsted, Eric, *Christus Mediator: Platonic Mediation in the Thought of Simone Weil*, Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983.

McCullough, Lissa, "Simone Weil's Phenomenology of the Body, *Comparative and Continental Philosophy*, 4:2, 2012, 195–218.

Pirruccello, Ann, "Making the World My Body: Simone Weil and Somatic Practice," *Philosophy East and West*, 52:4, 2002, 479-497.

Pirruccello, Ann, "Overcoming Self: Simone Weil on Beauty," in A.W. Astell (ed.), *Divine Representation: Postmodernism and Spirituality*, New York:Paulist Press 1994, 34-46.

Sharp, Ann Margaret, "Simone Weil on Friendship," *Philosophy Today*, 22, 1978, 266-275.

Andrew Davison, "The mediating possibilities of absence in the thought of Simone Weil," *Theology*, Vol CXII:865, 3-13, 2009.

Week 7: Human Obligations and the Needs of the Soul

Bell, Richard (ed). *Simone Weil's Philosophy of Culture: Readings Toward a Divine Humanity*. Cambridge University Press, 1993. [Esp. chapters 7, 9, 10]

Dietz, Mary G. *Between the Human and the Divine: The Political Thought of Simone Weil*. New York, NY, Rowman & Littlefield, 1988.[Esp. part IV]

White, George Abbott (ed.), *Simone Weil: Interpretations of a Life*, University of Massachusetts Press, 1981. [Chapter by O'Brien]

Peter Winch, *Simone Weil: "The just balance,"* Cambridge University Press, 1989. [Esp. chapter 7]

Rhees, Rush and Mario Von Der Ruhr. *Discussions of Simone Weil*. State University of New York Press, 2000. [Esp. part one]

Finch, Henry Leroy. *Simone Weil and the Intellect of Grace: A Window on the World of Simone Weil*. Edited by Martin Andic. New York: Continuum, 2001. [Esp. chapter 7]

Andic, Martin, "The Love of Truth," *Cahiers Simone Weil*, XVIII.4, 1995, 389-418.

Vetö, Miklós, "Uprootedness and Alienation in Simone Weil," *Blackfriars*, 43:507, 1962, 383-395.

Schmidt, L. and Maratto, S., "The Measure of Justice: The Language of Limit as Key to Simone Weil's Political Philosophy," *ARC: The Journal of the Faculty of Religious Studies*, McGill University, 28, 2000, 53-66.

Meltzer, Françoise, "The Hands of Simone Weil," *Critical Inquiry*, 27:4, 2001, 611-628.

Springsted, Eric, "The Religious Basis of Culture: T.S. Eliot and Simone Weil," *Religious Studies*, 25:1, 1989, 105-116.

Springsted, Eric, "'Thou hast given me room': Simone Weil's Retheologization of the Political," in *Cahiers Simone Weil*, 20, 1997, 87–98.

Moulakis, A., *Simone Weil and the Politics of Self-Denial*, University of Missouri Press, 1998.

Week 8: Legitimacy

- Bell, Richard (ed). *Simone Weil's Philosophy of Culture: Readings Toward a Divine Humanity*. Cambridge University Press, 1993. [Chapter 10]
- Dietz, Mary G. *Between the Human and the Divine: The Political Thought of Simone Weil*. New York, NY, Rowman & Littlefield, 1988.[Esp. part IV]
- Heifetz, A. and Enrico Minelli, "Overlapping Consensus Thin and Thick: John Rawls and Simone Weil," *Philosophical Investigations*, 2015.
- Rhees, Rush and Mario Von Der Ruhr. *Discussions of Simone Weil*. State University of New York Press, 2000. [Esp. part one]
- Finch, Henry Leroy. *Simone Weil and the Intellect of Grace: A Window on the World of Simone Weil*. Edited by Martin Andic. New York: Continuum, 2001. [Esp. chapter 7]
- Springsted, Eric, "Of Tennis, Persons and Politics," *Philosophical Investigations*, 16:3, 1993, 198-211.
- Lassman, Peter, "Politics and 'the fragility of the ethico-cultural'," *History of the Human Sciences*, 13:1, 125-139, 2000.
- Schmidt, L. and Maratto, S., "The Measure of Justice: The Language of Limit as Key to Simone Weil's Political Philosophy," *ARC: The Journal of the Faculty of Religious Studies*, McGill University, 28, 2000, 53-66.

Week 9: Justice

- Bell, Richard (ed). *Simone Weil's Philosophy of Culture: Readings Toward a Divine Humanity*. Cambridge University Press, 1993. [Chapter 9]
- Bell, Richard, *Simone Weil: The Way of Justice As Compassion*, Rowman & Littlefield, 1998.
- Williams, Rowan, "Critical Notice: Simone Weil 'The Just Balance' by Peter Winch," *Philosophical Investigations*, 14:2, 1991.
- Peter Winch, *Simone Weil: "The just balance,"* Cambridge University Press, 1989. [Esp. chapter 14]
- Andic, Martin, "Supernatural Justice and the Madness of Love," *Cahiers Simone Weil*, XVII.4, 1994.
- Schmidt, L. and Maratto, S., "The Measure of Justice: The Language of Limit as Key to Simone Weil's Political Philosophy," *ARC: The Journal of the Faculty of Religious Studies*, McGill University, 28, 2000, 53-66.
- Heifetz, A. and Enrico Minelli, "Overlapping Consensus Thin and Thick: John Rawls and Simone Weil," *Philosophical Investigations*, 2015.
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Cockburn, David, "Self, World and God in Spinoza and Weil," *Studies in World Christianity*, 4:2, 1998, 173–186.

Week 10: Human Personality redux

See week 2 above.

Week 11: Weil's Philosophy and Murdoch's "On 'God' and 'Good'"

These writings give a sense of the relation Weil saw between her ideas and the prevailing ideas of the natural or material world in our scientific age.

Calder, James Gordon, "Against Algebra: Simone Weil's Critique of Modern Science and its Mathematics," *Explorations-in-Knowledge*, 1987, 47-73.

Cosgrove, Joseph K., "Simone Weil's Spiritual Critique of Modern Science: An Historical-Critical Assessment," *Zygon*, 43:2, 2008, 353-370.

Rozelle-Stone, A. Rebecca and Lucian Stone, eds. *The Relevance of the Radical: Simone Weil 100 Years Later*. United Kingdom: T.& T.Clark, 2009. [Esp. chapters 6, 7, 8]

Rhees, Rush and Mario Von Der Ruhr. *Discussions of Simone Weil*. State University of New York Press, 2000. [Esp. part two]

Morgan, Vance G., *Weaving the World: Simone Weil on Science, Mathematics, and Love*, University of Notre Dame Press, 2005.

Finch, Henry Leroy. *Simone Weil and the Intellect of Grace: A Window on the World of Simone Weil*. Edited by Martin Andic. New York: Continuum, 2001. [Esp. chapter 8]

Doering, E. Jane and E. O. Springsted (eds.), *The Christian Platonism of Simone Weil*, University of Notre Dame Press, 2004.

These writings are direct discussions of Weil's influence on Murdoch.

Cordner, Chris, "Lessons of Murdochian Attention," *Sophia*, 55, 197-213, 2016.

Bok, Sissela, "'No One to Receive It': Simone Weil's Unforeseen Legacy," *Common Knowledge*, 12:2, 2006): 252-60.

Bok, Sissela, "Simone Weil and Iris Murdoch: The Possibility of Dialogue," *Gender Issues*, 2005, 71-78.

Maria Antonaccio, "Imagining the Good: Iris Murdoch's Godless Theology," *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics*, Vol. 16, 1996, pp. 223-242.

Bowden, Peta, "Ethical Attention: Accumulating Understandings," *European Journal of Philosophy*, 6:1, 1998, 59–77.

Lipson, Michael, and Abigail Lipson, "Psychotherapy and the Ethics of Attention." *The Hastings Center Report*, 26:1, 1996, 17-22.

Lovibond, Sabina, "The Simone Weil Factor," in *Iris Murdoch, Gender and Philosophy*, Routledge, 28-46, 2011.

Janet Martin Soskice, "Love and Attention," in *The Kindness of God: Metaphor, Gender, and Religious Language*, Oxford UP, 2008, chapter 1.

Morgan, Vance, "Humility and the Transcendent," *Faith and Philosophy*, 18:3, 2001, 306-22.

Purcell, Donald, "Iris Murdoch's the Green Knight and Simone Weil," *Cahiers Simone Weil*, 19:2, 1996, 225-38.

Questions for essays and exams

These are questions you can use as starting points for your formative essays, course-work dissertations, and class essays. They are also examples of the kinds of questions that will appear on section B of the exam.

1. What is the personal/impersonal distinction for Weil?
2. Why, for Weil, are rights inadequate as a basis for our deference to people?
3. Can we respect someone's personality?
4. Can a collective think according to Weil? Is she right?
5. Is Weil's notion of reading a distinctive concept? If not, to what is it similar?
6. In what ways is Weil's notion of reading like perception?
7. Does reading imply value?
8. Why, for Weil, can values not be placed in a hierarchy?
9. Why does Weil think all philosophy concerns solely contradictions?
10. What is the point of philosophy for Weil?
11. How does Weil refine the Marxist account of oppression?
12. What is the role of power in Weil's account of oppression?
13. What is the power words have? How does this relate to "empty words"?
14. How does *la force*/might produce mindlessness?
15. What does Weil think the relationship between *la force*/might and necessity is?
16. For Weil, is *la force*/might violence for the threat of violence?
17. What is affliction for Weil?
18. Does affliction have a point or purpose?
19. What is the first condition for non-servile labor according to Weil? Is she right?
20. What is a need of the soul? What makes it a need?
21. Should government concern itself with the needs of the soul?
22. What does Weil mean by "soul"? Is its existence open to empirical proof or disproof?
23. For Weil, is there a distinction between the social and political?
24. What is the legitimate role of government for Weil?
25. Is Justice a political or moral notion?
26. What relationship, if any, is there between justice, good and evil?
27. What is "the just balance"?
28. What is 'God' for Weil and Murdoch? Does it play the same role in their philosophies?
29. Don't obligations follow from rights?
30. Do we have an obligation to care and respect human beings?

These are examples of topics that could appear in section A of the exam.

Affliction	Force	Power	Justice
Impersonal	Personal	Oppression	Rights
Needs of the Soul	Value	Reading	God/Good

Format of the Exam

The exam consists of two sections, A and B. Section A will have two topics. Section B will have eight essay questions. The exam is two hours. In the exam, you must write an essay on one topic from section A **or** two essays that answer two questions in section B. To be clear, you either write one essay for two hours on a topic selected from section A or two essays in answer to two questions in section B.

You **cannot** write about a topic in section A **and** section B.

Specimen Exam

Section A

1. Personal
2. Justice

Section B

1. Can a collective think according to Weil? Is she right?
2. In what ways is Weil's notion of reading like perception?
3. Why does Weil think all philosophy concerns solely contradictions?
4. What is the role of power in Weil's account of oppression?
5. For Weil, is *la force*/might violence for the threat of violence?
6. Does affliction have a point or purpose?
7. Should government concern itself with the needs of the soul?
8. What is 'God' for Weil and Murdoch? Does it play the same role in their philosophies?