

# Syllabus: Philosophy of Emotions

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Class: MW 11am-12:30pm, LA #248 • Office hours: W 2:30-4pm, or by appointment in JHB #433

## Overview

We'll consider questions on three main topics:

1. *Philosophical psychology*. What are emotions? Are they beliefs? desires? a mixture of the two? perceptions? something else?
2. *Rationality*. When is it rational to feel an emotion? Is it irrational to continue feeling an emotion that you think you should not feel? What epistemic status do our emotions have? Should we trust them? How can we know when to trust them?
3. *Morality*. What role should emotions play in our moral judgments? When is it morally right or wrong to feel an emotion?

## Pedagogical goals

Completing the work for this course will...

- Acquaint you with central issues in the philosophy of emotions.
- Acquaint you better with the components of your own mental life.
- Improve your ability to read difficult texts with comprehension.
- Improve your ability to analyze and evaluate arguments.
- Improve your ability to communicate complicated ideas in concise prose.

The last three outcomes will be useful to you no matter what you go on to do.

## Texts

All texts will be made available on Blackboard.

## Class

Class will mostly be used to increase your understanding of the problems and solutions proposed in the readings. Additionally, parts of some classes may be used to teach you how to write good philosophical prose and structure a philosophical paper. I will often begin class with a review of previous material or a pop quiz (see below), and you can expect a number of in-class activities.

In order to participate in class meaningfully, you should arrive having read and thought about the day's text. You should also bring the text to class. **Note:** Reading philosophy is difficult, and you should be prepared to read the assignments more than once. *You will often be confused*—that is okay! Try to figure out why you are confused, and come to class prepared with questions to help you understand.

*Class discussion.* Learning how to discuss philosophy is an important part of your education. Discussion helps to clarify ideas quickly and deepen understanding. I will be modeling how to 'talk philosophy' during class, and you are encouraged to join in: if you have a question or comment, please share it. As in any discussion, some behaviors are counterproductive. Two of the most common problems in philosophy classrooms are talking too often and rambling. *If you find yourself talking too often, hold back and give others a chance to talk.* If, after a pause, no one volunteers, then you can fill the gap. *To avoid rambling, clarify your question or comment in your mind before speaking. Make it concise.* Finally, note that there will be disagreement in class. This is good—it is often the source of progress and clarification—so long as it is civil.

*Devices.* I do not mind if you take notes on your laptop during class. *However,* be aware that doing so can be distracting for your fellow students. Out of consideration for others, if you are going to use a laptop during class, please sit on the right-hand side of the classroom (right-hand side while facing the front).

## Evaluation

You will be evaluated based on two criteria: comprehension of course content, and exercise of the skills of argument analysis and philosophical writing. In-class pop quizzes (see below, 20% of final grade) will test for comprehension of course content. Two writing assignments are designed to improve your ability to analyze arguments and write philosophy. The first will be short and on an assigned topic (see below, 20% of final grade). The second (see below, 30/60% of final grade, optional rewrite) will require

you to compose a paper on a topic of your choosing. **Note:** Late papers will be deducted 1/3 of a letter grade per day, unless advance arrangements have been made.

*Pop quizzes.* Sometimes I will begin class with a pop quiz to test for comprehension of the reading for that class. There will be 11 quizzes throughout the term. Each is worth 2 points of your final grade. The lowest grade you can make on a quiz is 40%, so it is worth taking the quiz even if you have not done the reading. The quizzes will consist of two questions: if you answer only one correctly, that's a 70%; if you answer both correctly, that's a 100%. At the end of the term, I will drop your lowest quiz grade. The quizzes will concern the core ideas of the readings. They will not be designed to trick you. If you do the reading carefully, you should have no problems. For students prevented from attending a significant number of classes by illness or emergency, a makeup opportunity for missed quizzes will be offered at the end of term.

*Short paper* (500-750 words). Your first essay will require you to summarize an argument from a text and evaluate it. I will be using some class time to explain what I expect from this paper.

*Long paper* (2000-2500 words). Your second essay will be on a topic of your choosing. Any topic relevant to the philosophy of emotions is fair game, though you are advised to take up topics we cover in class. No outside reading is necessary, though you are welcome to do so if you wish (note, however, that it will not necessarily help you). I will provide guidance on paper topics if needed. **Note:** Writing your long paper will consist of the following stages.

*Stage 1: Peer review.* One class (Nov. 20) will be used for peer review. To participate, you must send a *finished, polished draft* of your paper to me via e-mail by Nov. 17. You will also need to read the papers of two of your peers *prior to class*, make comments, and show up to the peer review session with four hard copies of your comments. I will provide more information about this later in the term. **Note:** If you fail to participate fully in the peer review, I will subtract 10 points from your paper grade.

*Stage 2: Final draft.* You will submit a final draft of your paper, revised in light of the peer review. This is due Nov. 24.

*Stage 3: Rewrite.* If you are satisfied with the grade of your final draft, you can choose to double it by not submitting a rewrite. In that case, your original grade will count for 60% instead of 30% of your final grade. But you may also submit a rewrite (revision) of your paper. If you choose this option, you

must submit (i) a summary of how you have responded in your revised paper to each of my comments (format: copy-and-paste each of my comments into a new document, number them, and below each one explain how you have responded to it), and (ii) the rewritten paper. If you do not make substantive improvements or do not respond to my comments, I will not change your grade (i.e., your original grade will be doubled, per above). If you do a successful rewrite, the grade of your original paper will count for 30% of your final grade, and the grade of your rewritten paper will also count for 30%.

*Due dates.* Short paper: **Oct. 13.** Full, polished draft of long paper for peer review, e-mailed to me: **Nov. 17.** Final draft of long paper: **Nov. 24.** Rewrite (optional): **Dec. 11**

*Plagiarism.* Don't do it (it's *really* easy to catch). If you do, the university's disciplinary measures will be taken. If you have questions about what counts as plagiarism, visit [www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/students](http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/students), or ask me.

*Accessibility.* Students with diverse learning styles are welcome in this course. Please feel free to approach me or Accessibility Services so we can assist you in achieving academic success.

## Contact

If you e-mail me, put the course code (PHL344) in the subject line; otherwise your e-mail may get lost. I will respond to e-mail within two business days. However, e-mail is not the best format for philosophical questions; please come to my office hours or arrange an appointment to discuss philosophical material.

## Optional, useful resources

1. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (online). Useful as a starting point for research or to teach yourself the basics of some topic (a philosopher's Wikipedia, but more reliable).
2. Philpapers (online). The largest collection of philosophy papers online.