

Spring 2013: GPHIL 6670A, GLIB 6319A  
**The Turn Toward Virtue (CRN 6905/6786)**  
New School for Social Research  
T 6-7:50pm  
6 E. 16<sup>th</sup> St., Room 902

Professor: Alice Crary (ext. 3074)  
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Office hours: T 3:30-5:30  
& by appointment

## **The Turn Toward Virtue – Syllabus**

### **Course description**

The second half of the twentieth century and first decade of the twenty-first witnessed a striking increase of interest in neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics and, more generally, in the question of the significance of *virtue*. What is at stake in this turn toward virtue? Is it at bottom nothing more than the articulation of a new approach in ethics to be set alongside utilitarian and Kantian approaches? Or does it call for a radical re-evaluation of deeply entrenched assumptions about moral thought and action? In this course, we consider writings of moral philosophers who present their stress on virtue as a call for a revolution in ethics. Our emphasis will be on works by Iris Murdoch, Elizabeth Anscombe and Philippa Foot, three of the twentieth century's great moral philosophers (also: three of its great women moral philosophers). We will also read work by Julia Annas, Annette Baier, Cora Diamond, Julia Driver, Rosalind, Hursthouse, Sabina Lovibond, John McDowell, Michael Thompson and others.

### **Learning outcomes**

At the end of this seminar, you should be able to (1) give an overview of major trends in mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century moral philosophy, (2) discuss the significance of the upsurge of interest in virtue ethics during this period and (3) describe in detail the guiding themes and preoccupations of the three main moral philosophers we will discuss (e.g., Murdoch, Anscombe and Foot). Moreover, you should be able to (4) do all of these things in less formal, conversational settings as well as (5) write about them in a more structured or formal manner.

### **Required texts and other resources**

You are required to have copies of the following texts:

Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*  
Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness*

Both books are available for purchase at Barnes & Noble (105 Fifth Avenue) and can also be purchased more cheaply from various outlets online. All additional required and recommended course readings will be made available either in class or on our class Blackboard site. (If you're not familiar with this, you get to it through the main New School website. Click "mynewschool" and log in with your usual username and password. On the next page, you'll find a set of icons toward the upper right. Click on "My Courses" and choose this seminar from the list of your courses that appears. There will be a list of headings on the left side of the next page, and you can find course material by clicking "Resources.") This syllabus and any updates to it will be posted under "Syllabus" on the site. *Note:* If you are an *official* auditor in this class, you will have access to our course Blackboard site. If you are an *unofficial* auditor, you will not have access to it. It should, however, be possible to give unofficial auditors electronic access to course materials through googledocs. If necessary, arrangements for this will be made during our first course meeting.

### **Course requirements/graded activities**

There are two requirements for students enrolled for credit. (1) You must give one – oral – seminar presentation and submit a 5pp. (double-spaced) presentation text. Your presentation and text will not be graded. However, you will receive feedback on these assignments, and the point of the feedback is to put you in a good position to write your seminar paper. (2) You must write one 12-15pp. (double-spaced) paper, which will be due in or before class on Tuesday, May 14<sup>th</sup>. Your grade for the course is based entirely – 100% – on the paper you submit, but you are welcome to use your paper to rework and expand on themes from your seminar presentation.

### **Reaching me**

My contact information is at the top of the first page of this document. My regular office hours are in my office, room 1115 at 6 East 16<sup>th</sup> St. (11<sup>th</sup> floor), on Tuesday afternoons 3:30-5:30. If this time slot is impossible for you, we can make an arrangement to meet at a time that works for both of us. You should feel free to contact me about any course-related issue, no matter how small. The best way to reach me is via email. I will try to respond to emails as quickly as possible. However, if you write to me about a substantive philosophical issue, I will most likely write back and suggest that we either meet to talk or chat on the phone.

### **Grading disputes**

If you believe that there is something amiss with my evaluation of your work, you should let me know. I am open to discussion and am happy to re-read papers. I am also happy to read and comment on abstracts or drafts of papers, if you have them ready at least a week before the end of term. This arrangement can serve to alleviate concerns about grading standards.

### **Course policies**

This course will adhere to New School university academic policies. This includes the university policy on Academic Honesty and Integrity. Compromising your academic integrity may lead to serious consequences, including (but not limited to) one or more of the following: failure of the assignment, failure of the course, academic warning, disciplinary probation, suspension from the university, or dismissal from the university. The New School views “academic honesty and integrity” as the duty of every member of an academic community to claim authorship for his or her own work and only for that work, and to recognize the contributions of others accurately and completely. This obligation is fundamental to the integrity of intellectual debate, and creative and academic pursuits. Academic honesty and integrity includes accurate use of quotations, as well as appropriate and explicit citation of sources in instances of paraphrasing and describing ideas, or reporting on research findings or any aspect of the work of others (including that of faculty members and other students). Academic dishonesty results from infractions of this “accurate use”. The standards of academic honesty and integrity, and citation of sources, apply to all forms of academic work, including submissions of drafts of final papers or projects. All members of the University community are expected to conduct themselves in accord with the standards of academic honesty and integrity.

Students are responsible for understanding the University’s policy on academic honesty and integrity and must make use of proper citations of sources for writing papers, creating, presenting, and performing their work, taking examinations, and doing research. It is the responsibility of students to learn the procedures specific to their discipline for correctly and appropriately differentiating their own work from that of others. Individual divisions/programs may require their students to sign an Academic Integrity Statement declaring that they understand and agree to comply with this policy.

The New School recognizes that the different nature of work across the schools of the University may require different procedures for citing sources and referring to the work of others. Particular academic procedures, however, are based in universal principles valid in all schools of The New School and institutions of higher education in general. This policy is not intended to interfere with the exercise of academic freedom and artistic expression. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- cheating on examinations, either by copying another student's work or by utilizing unauthorized materials
- using work of others as one's own original work and submitting such work to the university or to scholarly journals, magazines, or similar publications
- submission of another students' work obtained by theft or purchase as one's own original work
- submission of work downloaded from paid or unpaid sources on the internet as one's own original work, or including the information in a submitted work without proper citation
- submitting the same work for more than one course without the knowledge and explicit approval of all of the faculty members involved
- destruction or defacement of the work of others
- aiding or abetting any act of academic dishonesty
- any attempt to gain academic advantage by presenting misleading information, making deceptive statements or falsifying documents, including documents related to internships
- engaging in other forms of academic misconduct that violate principles of integrity

(This is an abridged version of the policy. For the full policy text, which includes adjudication procedures, visit the following site:  
[www.newschool.edu/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=81698](http://www.newschool.edu/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=81698) )

### **Academic resources for students**

The university provides many resources to help students achieve academic and artistic excellence. These resources include:

The University (and associated) Libraries: <http://library.newschool.edu>

The University Writing Center: <http://www.newschool.edu/admin/writingcenter>

University Disabilities Services: <http://www.newschool.edu/student-services/disability-services/>.

In keeping with the university's policy of providing equal access for students with disabilities, any student with a disability who needs academic accommodations is welcome to meet with me privately. All conversations will be kept confidential. Students requesting any accommodations will also need to contact Student Disability Service (SDS). SDS will conduct an intake and, if appropriate, the Director will provide an academic accommodation notification letter for you to bring to me. At that point, I will review the letter with you and discuss these accommodations in relation to this course.

## Schedule of classes and readings

### I. Course introduction

Week 1. Tuesday, January 29<sup>th</sup>. Introduction. Recommended: Annette Baier, “What Do Women Want in a Moral Theory?”\* from *Moral Prejudices*. **Enrolled students will be asked to select dates for their seminar presentations.**

### II. Iris Murdoch

Week 2. Tuesday, February 5<sup>th</sup>. Murdoch, “Vision and Choice in Morality”\* from *Existentialists and Mystics*. Recommended: “Metaphysics and Ethics”\* from *Existentialists and Mystics*.

Week 3. Time and place TBA. Murdoch, “The Idea of Perfection,” Chapter 1 of *Sovereignty of Good*. Recommended: Cora Diamond, “‘We Are Perpetually Moralists’: Iris Murdoch, Fact and Value” from Maria Antonaccio et al. *Iris Murdoch and the Search for Human Goodness* [**This class will be held at an irregular time and place because I will be away during our usual meeting time on Tuesday, February 12<sup>th</sup>.**]

Week 4. Tuesday, February 19<sup>th</sup>. Murdoch, “On ‘God’ and ‘Good’” and “The Sovereignty of Good Over Other Concepts,” Chapters 2 and 3 of *Sovereignty of Good*.

Week 5. Tuesday, February 26<sup>th</sup>. Sabina Lovibond, “A Woman Philosopher, Why Not?”\* in *Iris Murdoch, Gender and Philosophy*.

### III. Elizabeth Anscombe

Week 6. Tuesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>. Anscombe, “Practical Inference”\* from Hursthouse et al. *Virtues and Reasons: Philippa Foot and Moral Theory*. Recommended: Anscombe, “Brute Facts.”

Week 7. Tuesday, March 12<sup>th</sup>. Anscombe, “Modern Moral Philosophy.” Recommended. “Authority in Morals.”

Week 8. Tuesday, March 19<sup>th</sup>. Anscombe, “On Promising and Its Justice” and “Rules, Rights and Promises.” Recommended: Anscombe, “On the Authority of the State.”

*NO CLASS TUESDAY, MARCH 26<sup>TH</sup> – SPRING BREAK*

### IV. Philippa Foot

Week 9. Tuesday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>. Foot, “Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives”\* from *Virtues and Vices* and “A Fresh Start?” Chapter 1 of *Natural Goodness*.

Week 10. Tuesday, April 9<sup>th</sup>. Michael Thompson, “The Representation of Life”\* in Hursthouse et al., *Virtues and Vices*.

Week 11. Tuesday, April 16<sup>th</sup>. Foot, Chapters 2-4 of *Natural Goodness*

Week 12. Tuesday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>. Foot, Chapters 5-7 and Postscript of *Natural Goodness*.

V. Continuing the Conversation

Week 13. Tuesday, April 30<sup>th</sup>. Rosalind Hursthouse, “Naturalism”<sup>\*</sup> and “Naturalism for Rational Animals,”<sup>\*</sup> Chapters 9 and 10 of *On Virtue Ethics*.

Week 14. Tuesday, May 7<sup>th</sup>. Julia Annas, “Virtue, Character and Disposition”<sup>\*</sup> in *Intelligent Virtue* and John McDowell, “Virtue and Reason,”<sup>\*</sup> in *Mind, Value and Reality*.

Week 15. Tuesday, May 14<sup>th</sup>. Julia Driver, “The Aristotelian Conception of Virtue,”<sup>\*</sup> Chapter 1 of *Uneasy Virtue*. ***Seminar papers due in or before class.***

\* Items marked with an asterisk will be available on Blackboard.