

PHIL 711: Action, Virtue, and Human Goodness
Thursdays, 4:15-6:45
Philosophy Seminar Room
Professor Jennifer A. Frey
Email: frey.jenn@gmail.com
Office Hours: Thursdays, 2-3 (preferably by appointment)

Course Description

What is a human action? What makes a human action good or bad, *qua* human action? What is the relationship between sound practical reasoning and living well as a human being? What is a virtue, and how is it cultivated and maintained through actions? These questions and their inter-relations are the central topics of this seminar.

Texts

GEM Anscombe, *Intention* (Harvard University Press, 2000)

Julia Annas, *Intelligent Virtue* (Oxford University Press, 2011)

Other readings will be available on Blackboard. All books can be purchased online.

Course Requirements

Final Paper

A 6,000-8,000 word paper (roughly, 15-20 pages) will be due on the final day of class. The exact topic is up to you, but you have to get your topic approved by me at least one month in advance of the due date.

Weekly Summaries

A 350-400 word summary of the reading is due at the beginning of each class. Your précis can either be a summary of the main point of the reading (its leading idea, its basic moves, etc.), or a summary of one particular argument/objection that you take to be especially important. The assignments are meant to be an opportunity for you to think through the material more carefully, and (possibly)

to test out ideas, objections, etc. for your final paper. Please try to fit the précis on one page; use both sides of a single piece of paper if necessary. Also, do not go over the word limit; concision is part of the assignment. To keep track of this, please include a word count at the top of the first page. Précis turned in at the beginning of class will receive an A, A-, or B+. Précis not turned in on time will be marked down a full grade.

Class Participation

I expect you to come to class prepared to have a serious and probing conversation of the assigned materials. Your participation will count towards 10% of your final grade.

Grade Breakdown

Final paper=50%
Précis assignments=40%
Class participation=10%

Course Schedule (subject to change)

8/18 G.E.M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy"

8/25 G.E.M. Anscombe, *Intention*, §§ 1-19.

9/1 G.E.M. Anscombe, *Intention*, §§20-32.

Rachel Wiseman, "The Intended and Unintended Consequences of *Intention*,"

Candace Vogler, "Nothing Added" (optional background)

9/8 G.E.M. Anscombe, *Intention*, §§33-52.

Jennifer A. Frey, "Practical Knowledge and Double Effect"

9/15 GEM Anscombe, "Action, Intention, and Double Effect"

Grisez, Boyle, and Finnis, "Reply to our Critics"

9/22 Donald Davidson, "Action, Reasons, and Causes"

G.E.M. Anscombe, "Causality and Determinism"

9/26 Make up class, 4pm

Donald Davidson, "How Is Weakness of the Will Possible?"
G.E.M. Anscombe, "Practical Inference"
Donald Davidson, "Intending" (optional background)

9/29 NO CLASS

10/6 CLASS CANCELLED DUE TO HURRICANE MATTHEW

Harry Frankfurt, "The Problem of Action"
Harry Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person"
Richard Moran, "Frankfurt on Identification" (optional background)

10/10 Make up class, 4pm

J. David Velleman, "What Happens When Someone Acts?"
Jennifer Hornsby, "Agency and Alienation"

10/13 NO CLASS FALL BREAK

10/20 Michael Thompson, "The Representation of Life"
Michael Thompson, "Naïve Action Theory"

10/27 J. David Velleman, "The Possibility of Practical Reason"
Christine M. Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution*, chapters 1-2.

10/31 Make up class, 9AM

Christine M. Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution*, chapters 5-7

11/3 NO CLASS

11/10 Jennifer A. Frey, "Aquinas on Happiness and Constitutivism"
Thomas Aquinas, ST I-II, QQ 1-5

11/14 Make up class, 4pm

Philippa Foot, "Virtues and Vices"
Peter Geach, "Why Men Need the Virtues" (optional background)
Julia Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, chapter 1-2

11/17 NO CLASS

11/21 Julia Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, chapters 7-9.

11/24 NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK

14. 12/1 FINAL PAPERS DUE