

**PHIL 98: Philosophy of the Emotions**  
**Syllabus: Fall 2017**

**Instructor:** Rachel Achs

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**Time/Location:** Mondays 1-3, Emerson 310

**Office Hours:** Emerson 306, Thursdays 1-3

**Topic:** We spend a lot of time in philosophy talking about reason and rationality, and less time talking about what the faculty of reason is often contrasted with: our human capacities to be sensitive, and to feel emotions. Nevertheless, emotions are just as central to human life as reason is. Without love, humor, or the capacity to empathize with others' pain, our lives –particularly our moral lives – would be radically different from the way they are now. In this class we will use our reasoning skills, and perhaps a bit of sensitivity too, to study that with which reason is usually contrasted: emotion. Particular questions with which we will be concerned are: What are emotions (and how are they different from, and similar to, judgments and mere sensations)? What does it mean for an emotion to be appropriate or inappropriate? Are people responsible for their emotions? And are emotions really irrational? We will work particularly on the skills of charitable reading and precision in writing, as well as beginning to develop some more advanced philosophical tools, such as identifying the most interesting objections to arguments, and even a bit of positive theory construction.

**Reading:** All readings will be made available on the course website. I request that you print them and bring them with you to class.

**Assignments:** The assignments for this course are designed with both content-related and skill-related objectives in mind. The content-related goal of the course is for you to come away with an understanding of some of the most pressing questions in contemporary philosophy of and about the emotions, as well as some of the various attempts to answer such questions. The skill-related goals are twofold. First, I want you to practice some of the more basic skills that you have learned in your introductory philosophy classes, such as charitable reading, argument reconstruction, and clear and precise writing. Second, I want you to begin to practice and develop some more advanced philosophical skills, such as identifying parts of a reading that may be subject to interesting objections, writing in a manner that is aware of potential interlocutors, casting authors in dialogue with one another, and some positive theory construction. In addition to (1) **a weekly pass/fail requirement to submit questions** about the readings, your assignments will be, (2) **a reading presentation to be delivered in class, which, after receiving comments for one of your peers will be submitted as a 4-5 page written presentation** (3) **a 4-6 page “account of an emotion” paper**, in which you will give your own account of a particular emotion of your choosing and (4) a longer, **10-12 page term paper, for which a draft submission will be required**. It goes without saying that doing the reading and attending class is mandatory.

**Grading:** The grading breakdown is as follows: (1) weekly question submission 5% (that will come out to approximately .45% per question, which you will earn simply for submission; you will not be expected to submit a question in the week you are presenting) (2) presentation assignment as presenter 20% (3) presentation assignment as respondent 5% (4) account of an emotion paper 20% (5) term paper 35% (10% for the draft and 25% for the final paper) (6) participation 15%.

The late policy is as follows: I am usually happy to grant extensions for reasonable amounts of time, and for legitimate reason, so long as granting the extension will not disrupt the progress of the class. (E.g. I will **not** grant extensions for your oral presentation, or your presentation role as respondent, since doing so would mess up progression of the course for other students.) However, **all extensions must be requested at least 24 hours in advance**. If you miss a weekly question (or submit it late), you simply will not get credit for that week's question. All other late assignments (assignments that have not been granted extensions) will be penalized by **1/3 of a letter grade per day**, unless there are extenuating circumstances, for which I will require a doctor or dean's note.

## **Collaboration and Academic Integrity:**

Collaboration is integral to philosophy, and I hope you do discuss your ideas and your papers with one another. That said, the work in your papers should be your own, and you should cite all your sources. Plagiarism is unacceptable. Please ask if you have questions about these matters.

**What you can expect from me:** I will be available at least 2 hours per week for office hours, and I will return all assignments promptly, and I will respond to emails within 24 hours. I will not be able to read whole drafts in advance of your turning them in, but I'm very happy to read outlines and discuss ideas with you – so long as you request to do so at least 48-hours prior to when an assignment is due. (If you request to meet within 48-hours of when an assignment is due, I will do my best to accommodate you, but can't guarantee that I will be available on short notice). I will **require** that you meet with me at least one during the semester, in the week you are to give your oral presentation.

## **Schedule**

### **Unit 1: What is Emotion?**

**8/30/17: First Meeting** (This is a Wednesday, but a “Harvard college Monday”)

**9/4/17: Labor Day – No Class**

**9/11/17: Emotions as Physical Sensations**

W. James, “What Is an Emotion,” *Mind* 9.34 (1884): 188-205

J. Prinz, “Embodied Appraisals” in *Thinking about Feeling: Contemporary Philosophers on the Emotions*. Ed. R. Solomon (OUP: 2004).

**9/18/17: Cognitivism**

R. Solomon, “Emotions and choice,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 27 (1973): 20-41 **Only read section I (p. 20-32)**

M. Nussbaum, “Emotions as Judgments of Value and Importance” in *Thinking about Feeling: Contemporary Philosophers on the Emotions*. Ed. R. Solomon (OUP: 2004).

**9/25/17: Problems for Cognitivists and Non-Cognitivists**

J. D’Arms and D. Jacobson, “The Significance of Recalcitrant Emotions (or, anti-quasijudgmentalism)” *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 52 (2003) 127-145

J. Deigh, “Primitive Emotions” in *Thinking about Feeling: Contemporary Philosophers on the Emotions*. Ed. R. Solomon (OUP: 2004).

**10/2/17: Perceptual Accounts**

C. Tappolet, Chapter 1, “Emotion and Perception” in *Emotions, Value, Agency* (OUP: 2016)

**10/9/17: Columbus Day – No Class**

### **Unit 2: On Emotional “Appropriateness”**

**10/16/17: The “Wrong Kind of Reason” Problem**

D’arms and Jacobson, “The Moralistic Fallacy: On the ‘Appropriateness’ of Emotions,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 61, (2000: 65-90)

**10/16/17: “Account of an Emotion” paper due by 11:59 pm**

**10/23/17: Attempts to Solve the WKRP**

Stratton-Lake, P. Rabinowicz, (2005). How to Deal with Evil Demons. *Ethics*, 115, 788–798.

Kelly, Thomas, (2002) "The Rationality of Belief and Some Other Propositional Attitudes." *Philosophical Studies*, 110(2)

**10/30/17: Is Fittingness Basic?**

McHugh, C., & Way, J. (2016). Fittingness First. *Ethics*, 126(3).

**Unit 3: Emotions and Rationality**

**11/6/17: Emotions and Irrationality**

J. Shaffer, "An assessment of emotion," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 20 (1983) 161-173.

**11/13/17: Emotions and Rationality**

Greenspan, "Emotional Strategies and Rationality" *Ethics* 110 (2000) 469-487

Jones, K. "Emotional Rationality as Practical Rationality," *Setting the Moral Compass*, (OUP: 2004)

**Unit 4: Class's Choice**

**11/20/17: Emotions and Fiction**

K. Walton, "Fearing Fictions," *The Journal of Philosophy* 75 (1978) 5-27.

R. Moran, "The Expression of Feeling in Imagination," *The Philosophical Review* 163 (1994) 75-106.

***11/26/17: Draft of Term-Paper due by 11:59pm***

**11/27/17: Responsibility for Emotions**

L. Blum, "Will, Emotion, and the Self," in *Friendship, Altruism, and Morality*

***12/8/17: Term-Paper Due by 11:59pm***