

Topics in Ethics: *Valuing, Narrative, and What Matters in Life*

PhD Proseminar - PHL1111F

The University of Toronto

Fall 2014

Syllabus

The main theme in this course is the unity—or disunity—of a person and a life. We start out looking at three kinds of problems: (1) What makes us the same person over time? (2) What makes us a unified person (rather than a disordered jumble of conflicting motivations) at a time? (3) And how do the contents (e.g., our projects, our ideals, our concerns) of our lives fit together?

We then ask questions like: How do the answers to these questions fit together or come apart? How do the answers define our identity and what matters in our life? In exploring these questions, we will pay special attention to arguments for and against the notion that narratives have special roles to play in figuring out what we actually care about, what is good and right for us, and who we are as persons.

Meeting: Wed. 12:10-3:00 JHB 418

Instructor: Andrew Franklin-Hall

Contact: andrew.franklin.hall@utoronto.ca

Office Hours: Tuesday and Wednesday 10:00-12:00 and by appointment JHB 428

Evaluation

Evaluation will be on the basis of three short papers.

<i>October 14:</i>	About 2000 words (about 6 pages)	25%
<i>November 11:</i>	About 2000 words (about 6 pages)	35%
<i>December 11:</i>	About 2500 words (about 8 pages)	40%

Please email the papers to me at andrew.franklin.hall@utoronto.ca

The length recommendations are just that—not absolute minimal or maximal limits.

You may write each paper on a topic of your choosing, although the topics should have some bearing on the themes of the course and (unless otherwise cleared with me) bearing on our particular readings. You are always encouraged to speak to me about the topic you plan to write about.

A common (not the only) approach to papers of this sort is to spend (say) the first half stating and perhaps clarifying another author's argument, and then spending the second half responding to it (perhaps showing why it does not work, or how a different solution is superior). You may do some extra research for the papers, but you are not required to do so. I certainly do not expect you to have mastered the literature on the issues you are discussing.

Although there is not a strict attendance or participation policy, I expect you to both attend and participate in class. Frequent absences could lower your mark.

Provisional Reading Schedule (all readings will be posted on Blackboard)

1. **Sept. 16** - John Locke, "Of Identity and Diversity"; Derek Parfit, "Personal Identity" & "Later Selves and Moral Principles."
2. **Sept. 23** - Harry Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person"; Gary Watson, "Free Agency"; Harry Frankfurt, "On Caring."
3. **Sept. 30** - Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, chs. 14-15.
4. **Oct. 7** - Christine Korsgaard, "Personal Identity and the Unity of Agency" & "Self-Constitution in the Ethics of Plato and Kant"
5. **Oct. 14** – Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, chs. 1-2; Amy Mullin, "Selves, Diverse and Divided"
6. **Oct. 21** - Michael Bratman, "Reflection, Planning, and Extended Agency"; Agnieszka Jaworska, "Caring and Internality"
7. **Oct. 28** - Marya Schechtman, *The Constitution of Selves*, chs. 4-6; Dan Zahavi, "Self and Other: The Limits of Narrative Understanding"
8. **Nov. 4** - Cheshire Calhoun, "What Good is Commitment?"; Galen Strawson, "Against Narrativity" & "Episodic Ethics"
9. **Nov. 11** - Noël Carroll, "Interpretation, History, and Narrative" & "The Narrative Connection"; J. David Velleman, "Narrative Explanation"
10. **Nov. 18** - Peter Goldie, *The Mess Inside*, chs. 1-2; Cheryl Misak, "Experience, Narrative, and Ethical Deliberation"
11. **Nov. 25** - J. David Velleman, "Well-Being and Time"; Dale Dorsey, "The Significance of a Life's Shape,"; Tom Hurka, "The Well-Rounded Life."
12. **Dec. 2** - Ronald Dworkin, *Life's Dominion*, chs. 5-6; Jennifer Hawkins, "Well-Being, Time, and Dementia"