

WOMN 317A / PHIL 340
Ethical Theory: Ethics and Feminist Theory
Fall 2007

Prof. Lisa Tessman

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Texts: All books listed as required are available at the University Book Store and are on reserve at the library. Each student must have a copy of the day's reading—either the book itself or a photocopy—available to refer to in class.

Required Texts (note: do not buy all of these books until after the first class meeting. As I will explain then, you may be able to choose which to buy and which to read on reserves, depending on which reading groups you will be in):

- Margaret Urban Walker, *Moral Contexts* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2003). ISBN#: 0-7425-1379-3.
Claudia Card, *The Unnatural Lottery: Character and Moral Luck* (Temple University Press, 1996). ISBN#: 1-56639-453-8.
Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness* (Oxford University Press, 2001). ISBN#: 0-19-926547-X.
Hilde Lindemann Nelson, *Damaged Identities, Narrative Repair* (Cornell University Press, 2001). ISBN#: 0801487404.
Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global* (Oxford University Press, 2006). ISBN#: 0195325907.
Eva Feder Kittay, *Love's Labor* (Routledge, 1999). ISBN#: 0-415-90413-7.

On Electronic Reserves:

- Bernard Williams, "Moral Luck," chapter 2 of *Moral Luck*: pages 20-39.
John McDowell, "Two Sorts of Naturalism," chapter 9 in *Mind, Value and Reality*: pages 167-197.
Alison Jaggar, "Ethics Naturalized: Feminism's Contribution to Moral Epistemology" *Metaphilosophy* Vol. 31, No. 5, Oct 2000: 452-468.
Charles Mills, "'Ideal Theory' as Ideology" chapter 10 in *Moral Psychology*, ed. Peggy DesAutels and Margaret Urban Walker: pages 163-181.
Alasdair MacIntyre, "The Virtues, the Unity of a Human Life and the Concept of a Tradition," chapter 15 in *After Virtue*: pages 204-225.
Diana Tietjens Meyers, "Narrative and Moral Life," chapter 16 in *Setting the Moral Compass*, ed. Cheshire Calhoun: pages 288-305.
Eva Feder Kittay, "Relationships of Dependency and Equality," chapter 1 of *Love's Labor*: pages 23-48.
Ofelia Schutte, "Dependency Work, Women, and the Global Economy," chapter 6 in *The Subject of Care*, ed. Eva Feder Kittay and Ellen Feder: pages 138-158.

Course Description:

This course focuses on the relationship between ethics and feminist theory. We will study both non-feminist and feminist ethical theory, and will consider the impact of feminist approaches to a variety of questions within ethical theory. We will focus on four topics within ethics: moral luck; ethical naturalism; narrative approaches to ethics; dependency and care. For each topic, we will read a variety of theorists. After covering the first two topics, students will form reading groups to read more work by an author whose work we will have read a bit of, and students will develop

their paper topics based on what they have read and discussed in the reading groups. We will do the same thing (reading groups and papers) after covering the last two topics.

Course Requirements:

1) Attendance is required. Each student may miss one class meeting without explanation. Each further absence will result in lowering the final grade (e.g. from an A to an A-, from a B+ to a B, etc), unless the student has a documented medical excuse; the excuse must state the dates on which the student was medically unable to attend class. Furthermore, missing more than four class meetings will result automatically in failure of the course. Do not come in late to class or leave early; doing so will count as an absence. Thus do not schedule other obligations (including travel, appointments, etc.) to conflict with class time. If you do miss a class, you are still completely responsible for knowing what was covered in class that day.

2) Preparation and participation (worth 25% of the final grade). Prepare for each class meeting by completing the assigned reading, taking careful notes, and jotting down any questions that you may have. Preparation for class should enable active participation in class. Especially if you are someone who finds it difficult to speak in classes, you might want to spend some time in advance jotting down what you would like to say in class. Since I do expect for every student to regularly contribute ideas to discussions, I also expect that everyone in the class will facilitate this for each other by making the classroom a place for disagreement, but not for disrespect. Excellent participation involves consistent, thoughtful contributions to discussions: expressing your understanding of the material, developing and thinking critically about your own positions, and listening carefully and respectfully to others. *No laptops in class, please.*

3) Two papers (each worth 25% of the final grade). Each student will write two papers, each 1,800-2,000 words in length (please include a word count at the top of the first page). Students will devise their own paper topics. The topic must engage with the book that the student's reading group has read, and must also make use of the work of at least one other author that has been assigned for that section of the course. The papers will be developed in stages: when the first draft is due there will be a revising workshop in class, and when the second (final) draft is due, students will present their papers in class. Each paper must be submitted via Blackboard to the "digital dropbox" *before class time* on the day that the paper is due. Any student caught plagiarizing will automatically fail the course. Further action may also be taken.

4) Final exam (worth 25% of the final grade). The final exam consists of short (125-150 word) answers to questions about specific readings.

Schedule:

Week 1

Tuesday, Aug. 28
Introductions

Section I: Moral Luck

Thursday, Aug. 30
Bernard Williams, "Moral Luck," chapter 2 of *Moral Luck*.

Week 2

Tuesday, Sept. 4
Margaret Urban Walker, "Moral Luck and the Virtues of Impure Agency," chapter 2 of *Moral Contexts*.

Thursday, Sept. 6
Claudia Card, "Responsibility and Moral Luck," chapter 2 of *The Unnatural Lottery*.

Section II: Naturalizing Ethics

Week 3

Tuesday, Sept. 11
Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness*, chapters 2 & 3.

Thursday, Sept. 13
No class: Rosh Hashanah

Week 4

Tuesday, Sept. 18
Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness*, chapters 4 & 5.

Thursday, Sept. 20
John McDowell, "Two Sorts of Naturalism," chapter 9 in *Mind, Value and Reality*.

Week 5

Tuesday, Sept. 25
Alison Jaggar, "Ethics Naturalized: Feminism's Contribution to Moral Epistemology" *Metaphilosophy* Vol. 31, No. 5, Oct 2000: 452-468.

Thursday, Sept. 27
Catch-up day

Week 6

Tuesday, Oct. 2
Charles Mills, "'Ideal Theory' as Ideology" in *Moral Psychology*, ed. Peggy DesAutels and Margaret Urban Walker.

Thursday, Oct. 4
Margaret Urban Walker, "Seeing Power in Morality: A Proposal for Feminist Naturalism in Ethics" and "Human Conditions," chapters 7 and 13 of *Moral Contexts*.

Reading Groups and Papers on Sections I and II

Week 7

Tuesday, Oct. 9

Reading groups: Claudia Card, *The Unnatural Lottery*; OR Margaret Urban Walker, *Moral Contexts*.

Thursday, Oct. 11
Reading groups, continued.

Week 8

Tuesday, Oct. 16
First draft of papers due; revising workshop.

Thursday, Oct. 18
Papers due; presentations.

Section III: Ethics and Narrative

Week 9

Tuesday, Oct. 23
Alasdair MacIntyre, "The Virtues, the Unity of a Human Life and the Concept of a Tradition," chapter 15 in *After Virtue*.

Thursday, Oct. 25
Hilde Lindemann Nelson, "Narrative Repair: Reclaiming Moral Agency," chapter 1 in *Damaged Identities, Narrative Repair*.

Week 10

Tuesday, Oct. 30
Hilde Lindemann Nelson, "Counterstories," chapter 5 in *Damaged Identities, Narrative Repair*.

Thursday, Nov. 1
Diana Tietjens Meyers, "Narrative and Moral Life," chapter 16 in *Setting the Moral Compass*, ed. Cheshire Calhoun.

Section IV: Care and Dependency

Week 11

Tuesday, Nov. 6
Virginia Held, "The Ethics of Care as Moral Theory," chapter 1 of *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global*.

Thursday, Nov. 8
Virginia Held, "Liberalism and the Ethics of Care," and "Caring Relations and Principles of Justice," chapters 5 & 6 of *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global*.

Week 12

Tuesday, Nov. 13
Eva Feder Kittay, "Relationships of Dependency and Equality," chapter 1 of *Love's Labor*.

Thursday, Nov. 15
Ofelia Schutte, "Dependency Work, Women, and the Global Economy," chapter 6 in *The Subject of Care*, ed. Eva Feder Kittay and Ellen Feder.

Week 13

Tuesday, Nov. 20
Catch-up day.

Thursday, Nov. 22
No class: Thanksgiving

Reading Groups and Papers on Sections III and IV

Week 14

Tuesday, Nov. 27
Reading groups: Hilde Lindemann Nelson, *Damaged Identities, Narrative Repair*, OR
Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global* OR Eva Feder Kittay,
Love's Labor.

Thursday, Nov. 29
Reading groups continued

Week 15

Tuesday, Dec. 4
First draft of papers due; revising workshop.

Thursday, Dec. 6
Papers due; presentations.

FINAL EXAM TO BE GIVEN DURING EXAM PERIOD.