

Variety of Values
PHIL 457
Spring 2021
Tues/Thur 6:00-7:25 PM

Prof. Lisa Tessman

Pronouns: she/her or they/them.

ltessman@binghamton.edu

Office hours on Zoom: Mon 1:00-2:00 PM and Wed 10:00-11:00 AM or by appointment.

Zoom link for office hours: <https://binghamton.zoom.us/j/99619382395>

Zoom link for class: <https://binghamton.zoom.us/j/97186025099>

Course Description:

We sometimes ask people, “What are your values?” or discuss whether or not someone has “good values.” But what do we mean by ‘values’? Do values come in a variety of kinds, such as moral values and personal values? Even amongst those values that we would call ‘moral,’ are there fundamentally different kinds, such as the value of treating others fairly and the value of producing as much good as possible in the world? When different kinds of values conflict, how do we compare them to resolve the conflict? Does morality always override all other kinds of values? Are any values objective? This course will focus on contemporary philosophers who consider these sorts of questions. All readings will be available electronically, free of cost, either as an ebook through the BU Library (which you must access online yourself) or as a PDF that can be found under “course materials” on MyCourses. Classes will be synchronous and highly participatory, and in addition to discussions will include regular writing workshops.

Course Objectives:

- To study philosophical work on the topic of values.
- To have students develop their own original, critical thinking about each of the works studied, and identify and articulate their own positions on questions related to value and valuing.
- To have students learn and practice philosophical skills, with an emphasis on writing.

This course satisfies the Humanities (“H”) General Education Requirement.

Learning Outcomes: Students in H courses will demonstrate an understanding of human experience through the study of literature or philosophy.

This course satisfies the Composition (“C”) General Education Requirement.

Learning Outcomes: Students in C courses will demonstrate

1. The ability to write effectively and coherently, in ways appropriate to the discipline and the level of the course.
2. The ability to revise and improve their writing in both form and content.

Course Requirements:

This course is a 4-credit course, which means that in addition to attending and participating in class meetings, students are expected to do at least 9.5 hours of course-related work *outside of class* each week during the semester. This includes time spent completing assigned readings, taking notes and reflecting on the readings, and completing all writing assignments.

Class participation:

Classes will take place synchronously via Zoom. You must use the name under which you registered for the course to enter the Zoom meeting, as only registered students will be let in (after that, feel free to change your name to what you wish to be called).

Students are expected to attend class synchronously. Please avoid scheduling other appointments, etc., to conflict with class time. Email me before class time to let me know if you must unavoidably miss class (in which case a recording of the class may be made available to you). Because participation is graded, it behooves you not to miss class. Do give serious attention to the *quality*—not just the quantity—of your participation in discussions. If you find it difficult to speak in class discussions, please talk to me about this *during the first week or two of the semester* and we will devise a plan for you to practice this kind of speaking and for me to grade your participation appropriately. Otherwise, expect both to be called on and to volunteer regularly to speak.

If I, or your classmates, are pronouncing your name wrong, using the wrong pronouns for you, etc., please correct us! Also please let me know if there is anything I can do to facilitate your learning or accommodate your particular learning style.

Writing workshops: Every Thursday we will spend class on writing exercises. These exercises will often be shared (out loud and/or through screen sharing) in class, either in pairs or small groups or as presentations to the whole class. I will be available for consultation during the workshops. Depending on the exercise, I may either grade the exercise without feedback, give feedback in writing, or discuss the exercise individually with students. In general, it will not be possible to complete the exercise unless you have done the reading carefully. Students who need extra help on writing are encouraged to visit the [Critical Thinking Lab](#) regularly throughout the semester.

Seminar paper: A 3,000 word (plus or minus 25 words) seminar paper is required. The paper will be due in stages, with revision required, as indicated on the syllabus. Students will receive verbal feedback (privately) on a preliminary draft before completing the final version; some students will also be required to visit the [Critical Thinking Lab](#) to improve the seminar paper. More information about the seminar paper will be distributed part way through the semester.

Grading of work completed during writing workshops:

- 0 = did not complete the assignment (on time), or showed little or no understanding of the reading, or very poorly written, etc.
- 1 = showed at least some understanding of the reading and at least moderate success at carrying out the writing task.
- 2 = showed excellent understanding of the reading and a high level of success at carrying out the writing task.

Total points

19 or 20	=	A
18	=	A-
16-17	=	B+
14-15	=	B
13	=	B-

11-12	=	C+
9-10	=	C
8	=	C-
6-7	=	D
5 or below	=	F

Grading:

50% Writing workshops

50% Final paper

The final grade may be raised or lowered by a plus or minus (e.g. from a B- to a B, from an A- to a B+, etc) depending on the quality of class participation.

Office hours offer an opportunity for students to meet individually with me via Zoom. Please make use of this time to ask questions or engage in further discussion of the course material.

Disability-related equal access accommodations: I am happy to make accommodations (e.g. extended time) for any student with a documented need for it. Students needing accommodations to ensure their equitable access and participation in this course should register with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office as soon as they're aware of their need for such arrangements. [Visit the SSD website](#) or call 607-777-2686 for more detailed information. Students who are registered with SSD are encouraged to discuss their accommodations with me.

Academic Honesty: I follow the Philosophy Department guidelines on academic honesty (below). Students are responsible for being familiar with, and abiding by, the [Student Academic Honesty Code](#).

Philosophy Department Guidelines on Academic Honesty

The Philosophy Department considers plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty to be serious breaches of the code of ethics governing academic life. They are also violations of Harpur College and Binghamton University policies.

In order to contribute to a culture of Academic Honesty within both the Department and the University, the Philosophy Department has agreed on the following guidelines:

- 1) Instructors will include a statement describing their policy regarding Academic Honesty on all course syllabi.
- 2) When a student commits an act of academic dishonesty, the instructor will formally bring the violation to the attention of the Harpur College Academic Honesty Committee by either:
 - a. submitting an Admission of Dishonesty Form that has been signed by the student,
 - or*
 - b. initiating a hearing before the Harpur College Academic Honesty Committee.
- 3) When a student commits an act of academic dishonesty, the instructor for the course will not give the student credit for the assignment, whether or not the student re-submits honest work.
- 4) Instructors will decide what further grade consequences are appropriate in response to the dishonesty at their own discretion; the typical consequence is a grade of 'F' for the course.

Schedule

Week 1:

Thur, Feb 11

Introductions

Week 2:

Tues, Feb 16

Harry Frankfurt. 1982. "The Importance of What We Care About." *Synthese* 53 (2): 257-272. [Available as a PDF].

Thomas Nagel, "The Fragmentation of Value," in *Mortal Questions* (1979): pgs. 128-141. [Available as a PDF].

Thur, Feb. 18

Writing workshop 1.

Week 3:

Tues, Feb 23

Bernard Williams, "Persons, Character and Morality" chapter 1 in *Moral Luck*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981: 1-19. [Available as a PDF].

Bernard Williams, "Conflicts of Values" chapter 5 in *Moral Luck*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981: 71-82. [Available as a PDF].

Thur, Feb 25

Writing workshop 2.

Week 4:

Tues, March 2

Susan Wolf, *The Variety of Values: Essays on Morality, Meaning, and Love*, Oxford University Press, 2015 [Available as an ebook through the BU library]:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Moral Saints

Chapter 3: Morality and Partiality

Chapter 4: Morality and the View from Here

Thur, March 4

Writing workshop 3.

Week 5:

Tues, March 9

Susan Wolf, *The Variety of Values: Essays on Morality, Meaning, and Love*:

Chapter 6: The Meaning of Lives

Chapter 7: Happiness and Meaning: Two Aspects of the Good Life

Chapter 8: Meaning and Morality

Thur, March 11

Writing workshop 4.

Week 6:

Tues, March 16

Susan Wolf, *The Variety of Values: Essays on Morality, Meaning, and Love*:
Chapter 9: “One Thought Too Many”: Love, Morality and the Ordering of
Commitment
Chapter 11: The Importance of Love
Chapter 12: Above and Below the Line of Duty

(Wed March 17: Rejuvenation Day)

Thur, March 18

[Chris Lebron, “Black Love and Rage in America: the Burden of Hope”](#)

(Watch the first 40 minutes of this video – skip the Q&A.)

Week 7:

Tues, March 23

Before doing the reading, go to <https://www.yourmorals.org/explore.php>, and complete the “Moral Foundations Questionnaire” (you must first register to do this).

Jesse Graham, Jonathan Haidt, *et al*, “Moral Foundations Theory: The Pragmatic Validity of Moral Pluralism,” in *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol 47 (2013). [Available as a PDF].

READ PAGES 55-71 ONLY.

Graham and Jonathan Haidt. 2012. “Sacred Values and Evil Adversaries: A Moral Foundations Approach,” in *The Social Psychology of Morality: Exploring the Causes of Good and Evil*, edited by Mario Mikulincer and Phillip R. Shaver (Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 2012): 11-31. [Available as a PDF].

Thur, March 25

Writing workshop 5.

Week 8:

Tues, March 30

Michael Gill and Shaun Nichols, “Sentimental Pluralism: Moral Psychology and Philosophical Ethics.” *Philosophical Issues* 18 (2008): 143-163. [Available as a PDF].

David Wong, “Pluralism and Ambivalence,” in Michael Krausz, Ed., *Relativism: A Contemporary Anthology*, Columbia University Press, 2010: 254-267. [Available as a PDF].

Thur, April 1

Writing workshop 6.

Week 9:

Tues, April 6

Eva Feder Kittay, *Learning from My Daughter: The Value and Care of Disabled Minds*, Oxford University Press, 2019. Part I. [Available as an ebook through the BU library].

Thur, April 8

Rejuvenation Day – No class.

Week 10:

Tues, April 13

Eva Feder Kittay, *Learning from My Daughter*, Part III.

Thur, April 15

Writing workshop 7.

Week 11:

Tues, April 20

Rejuvenation Day – No class.

Thur, April 22

150-200 word abstract for seminar paper due before class time.

Writing workshop 8.

Week 12:

Tues, April 27

Valerie Tiberius, *Well-Being as Value Fulfillment: How We Can Help Each Other to Live Well*, Oxford University Press, 2018. [Available as an ebook through the BU library].
Chapters 1-3.

Thur, April 29

1,000 word “practice” draft of seminar paper due before class time.

Writing workshop 9.

Friday, April 30:

Consultations on drafts begin.

Week 13:

Tues, May 4

Valerie Tiberius, *Well-Being as Value Fulfillment*.
Chapters 4-6.

Thur, May 6

Writing workshop 10.

Friday, May 7:

Last day of consultations on drafts.

Week 14:

Tues, May 11

L.A. Paul, *Transformative Experience*. Oxford University Press, 2014. [Available as an ebook through the BU library].
Chapters 1-2.

Thur, May 13 [conflict with commencement]

3,000 word seminar paper due before class time.
Paper presentations.

Week 15:

Tues, May 18

Paper presentations.