

**Ancient Ethics**  
 PHI 280—Section A  
 W & F 2:00pm – 3:15pm  
 Wake Forest University  
 Fall 2020

Instructor: Dr. Jonathan Barker  
 Email: [barkerjr@wfu.edu](mailto:barkerjr@wfu.edu)  
 Phone: (919) 358-3414  
 Office: Tribble B307

## Course Description

For the ancient Greeks and Romans, ethical inquiry begins with a familiar question: How can I live a flourishing human life? or, How can I achieve *eudaimonia*? This course is a survey of the ancient ethical theories of Plato, Aristotle, the Hellenistic philosophers. Questions to be discussed include: Is there more to human happiness than pleasure? Can a morally vicious person truly flourish? Is moral virtue alone sufficient for happiness, or can externalities like poverty, the death of a loved one, and lack of good friends prevent even a morally excellent person from achieving *eudaimonia*? What is the proper place of the emotions, reason, and study in the good life? Is humility a virtue or a vice? Is ancient ethical theory objectionably egoistic?

## Course Format

### Instruction Method

Blended with Online Pathway

### Modality<sup>1</sup>

Synchronous online and/or in-person

### Recommended Technology

- Computer + highspeed internet access
- Webcam + mic

### Weekly Structure

	Wednesday	Friday
Modality	Online (synchronous)	In-person OR Online (synchronous)
Activity	Zoom Meeting OR Recorded Zoom session	In-person classroom meeting OR Zoom into classroom meeting
Time	2pm—3:15pm	2pm—3:15pm
Platform	Zoom or Canvas	Classroom, Zoom, or Canvas

<sup>1</sup> Note: if you are unable to attend synchronous class sessions due to time-zone differences, illness, or other COVID-19-related disruption, please get in touch. I will work with you to provide asynchronous versions of course materials.

## Assessment

### Participation (20%)

Active participation in class discussion—either synchronously via Zoom, in-person, and/or asynchronously on the class discussion boards—is essential for your success in the course. Satisfactory participation will neither help nor hurt your final course grade. Unsatisfactory participation (ex. engaging in class discussion infrequently or demonstrating inadequate preparation for class) may slightly hurt your final course grade. Excellent participation may slightly help your final course grade.

### Two Argument Outlines (15% each)

Two very short 2—3 pp argument outlines, one on a passage from Plato's *Republic IV* and the other on a passage from Aristotle's *NE VII*. You will be asked to read a selected passage of text and then carefully reconstruct the text's main argument in a bullet-point and/or numbered-premise format. I will post the prompts, detailed instructions, and an example of a good argument outline on Canvas.

### Plato & Aristotle Exam (20%)

There will be an in-class exam (Nov. 30<sup>th</sup>). The exam will consist of eight or so short excerpts drawn directly from our three Platonic dialogues (*Apology*, *Crito*, & *Republic*) and from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (Books I, II, VIII, IX, and sections of Books III and IV). You will select five or six of the provided excerpts and then answer the following questions for each of the passages you selected:

- (1) Who is the passage's author?
- (2) Which work does this passage appear in?
- (3) Clearly explain, in your own words, (a) the main argument of the passage and (b) what role that argument plays in its author's ethical system.

I will post more details on Canvas roughly two weeks before the exam.

### Final Paper (30% total)

See Canvas instructions.

## Course Policies

### Attendance Policy

Each student may have no more than **two** unexcused absences. Every unexcused absence thereafter will result in a one-third letter grade deduction from your final grade. So, for example, one additional unexcused absence over the two freebies will cause a final grade of A- to be lowered to a B+. A second additional unexcused absence will cause an A- to become a B. A third will cause an A- to become a B-. And so on.

### Disabilities

I am committed to providing accommodations to students with disabilities. If you are eligible for accommodations, please contact LAS & Disability Services at (336)758-5929 or [lacds@wfu.edu](mailto:lacds@wfu.edu).

### Academic Honesty

From the Wake Forest student conduct website:

[Signing the The Honor Code] means that students have agreed not to deceive (lie to) any member of the community, not to steal from one another, not to cheat on academic work, not to plagiarize academic work, and not to engage in any other form of academic misconduct. It means that we can trust each other, and that we willingly accept responsibility for our own conduct and activities. This is a tradition that goes back to the founding of Wake Forest, and with your participation, it continues to be a cornerstone of our community and our interactions with one another.

## Required Texts

Plato (ed. Cooper), *Five Dialogues*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Hackett.

Plato (ed. Reeve), *Republic* 1<sup>st</sup> Edition. Hackett.

Aristotle (ed. Irwin), *Nicomachean Ethics* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Hackett.

Excerpts from the Epicureans and the Stoics will be posted on Canvas.

## Schedule of Readings

### Week 1: Introduction

	Wednesday 8/26	Friday 8/28
Topic	<i>Course Overview</i>	<i>What is Eudaimonist Ethics?</i>
Method	Online	In-person
Reading	N/A	Aristotle, <i>NE</i> I.1—2 & I.7 (1097a15—1097b23)
Activity	<u>Class Zoom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm	<u>Classroom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm Tribble A305
Platform	Zoom	Classroom OR Zoom

Week 2: Socratic Eudaimonism

	Wednesday 9/2	Friday 9/4
Topic	<i>Socrates On Wisdom</i>	<i>Socrates On Wisdom</i>
Method	Online	In-person
Reading	Aristotle, NE cont. & Plato, <i>Apology</i>	Plato, <i>Apology</i>
Activity	<u>Class Zoom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm	<u>Classroom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm Tribble A305
Platform	Zoom	Classroom

Week 3: Socratic Eudaimonism

	Wednesday 9/9	Friday 9/11
Topic	<i>Socratic Definition</i>	<i>Socratic Eudaimonism</i>
Method	Online	In-person
Reading	Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i>	Plato, <i>Crito</i>
Activity	<u>Class Zoom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm	<u>Classroom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm Tribble A305
Platform	Zoom	Classroom

Week 4: Platonic Eudaimonism

	Wednesday 9/16	Friday 9/18
Topic	<i>Socratic Eudaimonism</i>	<i>Polemarchus on Justice</i>
Method	Online	In-person
Reading	Plato, <i>Crito</i>	Plato, <i>Republic I</i>
Activity	<u>Class Zoom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm	<u>Classroom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm Tribble A305
Platform	Zoom	Classroom

Week 5: Platonic Eudaimonism

	Wednesday 9/23	Friday 9/25*
Topic	<i>Does Might Make Right?</i>	<i>The Immoralist's Challenge</i>
Method	Online	In-person
Reading	Plato, <i>Republic I</i>	Plato, <i>Republic II</i>
Activity	<u>Class Zoom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm	<u>Classroom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm Tribble A305
Platform	Zoom	Classroom

\*First argument outline paper due

Week 6: Platonic Eudaimonism

	Wednesday 9/31	Friday 10/2
Topic	<i>The Immoralist's Challenge</i>	<i>Plato's Moral Psychology</i>
Method	Online	In-person
Reading	Plato, <i>Republic II</i>	Plato, <i>Republic III &amp; IV</i>
Activity	<u>Class Zoom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm	<u>Classroom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm Tribble A305
Platform	Zoom	Classroom

Week 7: Platonic Eudaimonism

	Wednesday 10/7	Friday 10/9
Topic	<i>Plato's Moral Metaphysics</i>	<i>Plato's Moral Epistemology</i>
Method	Online	In-person
Reading	Plato, <i>Republic V—VIII</i>	Plato, <i>Republic V—VIII</i>
Activity	<u>Class Zoom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm	<u>Classroom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm

		Tribble A305
Platform	Zoom	Classroom

Week 8: Platonic Eudaimonism

	Wednesday 10/14	Friday 10/16
Topic	<i>Plato's Moral Metaphysics</i>	<i>Plato's Moral Epistemology</i>
Method	Online	In-person
Reading	<i>Republic</i> Book V Lovers of Sights & Sounds (471c—480a10)  <i>Republic</i> Book VI The Form of the Good (504a—506a)	<i>Republic</i> Book VI The Analogy of the Sun (506a—509c) The Divided Line (509c—511e5)  <i>Republic</i> Book VII The Allegory of the Cave (514a—521b)
Activity	<u>Class Zoom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm	<u>Classroom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm Tribble A305
Platform	Zoom	Classroom

Week 9: Aristotelian Eudaimonism

	Wednesday 10/21	Friday 10/23
Topic	<i>Platonic Eudaimonism</i>	<i>The Function Argument &amp; External Goods</i>
Method	Online	In-person
Reading	<i>Republic</i> Book IX Happiness, Virtue, & Vice (577a—592a)  <i>Republic</i> Book X Immortality (608b—611e) An Answer to the Immoralist (612a—621c)	Aristotle, <i>NE</i> Book I.1—7 Aristotle, <i>NE</i> Book I.8—12
Activity	<u>Class Zoom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm	<u>Classroom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm Tribble A305
Platform	Zoom	Classroom

Week 10: Aristotelian Eudaimonism

	Wednesday 10/28*	Friday 10/30
Topic	<i>Structure of the Virtues</i>	<i>Doctrine of the Mean</i>
Method	Online	In-person
Reading	Aristotle, <i>NE</i> I.13 (Kinds of Virtue) Aristotle, <i>NE</i> II.4—6 (Character vs Action) Aristotle <i>NE</i> II. 1—2 (Habituation)	Aristotle, <i>NE</i> II.8—9
Activity	<u>Class Zoom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm	<u>Classroom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm Tribble A305
Platform	Zoom	Classroom

Week 11: Aristotelian Eudaimonism

	Wednesday 11/4	Friday 11/6
Topic	<i>Particular Moral Virtues</i>	<i>Prudence</i>
Method	Online	In-person
Reading	Aristotle, <i>NE</i> III.6—9 (Bravery) Aristotle, <i>NE</i> III.10—12 (Temperance) Aristotle, <i>NE</i> IV.3 (Magnanimity) Aristotle, <i>NE</i> IV.7 (Truthfulness)	Aristotle, <i>NE</i> VI. 1—13
Activity	<u>Class Zoom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm	<u>Classroom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm Tribble A305
Platform	Zoom	Classroom

\*Second outline due

Week 12: Aristotelian Eudaimonism

	Wednesday 11/11	Friday 11/13
Topic	<i>Friendship and Selfishness</i>	<i>Pleasure</i>
Method	Online	In-person
Reading	Aristotle, <i>NE</i> VIII. 1—9 Aristotle, <i>NE</i> IX. 4—12 (esp. 4 & 8)	Aristotle, <i>NE</i> VII. 111—14 Aristotle, <i>NE</i> X. 1—5
Activity	<u>Class Zoom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm	<u>Classroom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm Tribble A305
Platform	Zoom	Classroom

Week 13: Aristotelian Eudaimonism

	Wednesday 11/18	Friday 11/20
Topic	<i>Aristotelian Eudaimonism</i>	<i>Epicureanism</i>
Method	Online	In-person
Reading	Aristotle, <i>NE</i> X. 6—9	TBD
Activity	<u>Class Zoom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm	<u>Classroom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm Tribble A305
Platform	Zoom	Classroom

Week 14: Thanksgiving Break

	Wednesday 11/25	Friday 11/27
Topic	Break	Break
Reading	N/A	N/A



Activity	N/A	N/A
Modality	N/A	N/A
Platform	N/A	N/A

Week 15: Epicureanism

	Wednesday 12/2	Friday 12/4
Topic	<i>Epicureanism</i>	<i>Paper Workshop</i>
Reading	Epicurus, <i>Letter to Menoecus</i> (pp. 28—31) <i>The Principal Doctrines</i> (pp. 32—36)	N/A
Activity	<u>Class Zoom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm	<u>Class Zoom Meeting</u> 2:00pm—3:15pm
Modality	Online (Synchronous)	Online (Synchronous)
Platform	Zoom	Zoom

## Fall 2020 College COVID-19 Syllabus Statement

As more of us head back to campus to prepare for the fall, all of us, students included, will be agreeing to Wake Forest University COVID-19 community expectations.

We as College faculty will help reinforce expectations by making them part of our learning spaces norms. Given these extraordinary times, *the Office of the Dean of the College expects the following COVID-19 statement to be on Fall 2020 syllabi for any classes taught in person (face to face or blended):*

Each of us shares responsibility for the health and safety of all in a learning space. Maintaining a consistent six feet of distance; wearing a face covering; limiting our gathering sizes; and isolating or quarantining when ill or exposed to someone with the virus are Wake Forest University directives and policies we all must follow. Students are encouraged to visit the Our Way Forward website ([ourwayforward.wfu.edu](http://ourwayforward.wfu.edu)) to stay informed about the latest guidance and review the [Public Health Emergency Addendum to the Student Code of Conduct](#).

Specifically, in this room, we will mitigate the risks of virus transfer and take care of our community by abiding by the following safety directives:

- maintain six feet of distance at all times when feasible.
- wear a face covering for the entirety of class. This face covering should cover your mouth and your nose, and adhere to our [University face covering policy](#) (no face shields without masks; no neck gaiters; no bandanas; and no masks, including N95, with a one-way valve).
- stay out of class when sick or after being exposed to someone who is sick.

In this class, any student who does not follow these requirements will be asked once to follow the safety directives. I will offer you a mask or ask you to find one. If you do not comply, I will ask you to leave the class for that day. [I will also refer the matter to the COVID-19 compliance reporting system](#). Possible disciplinary actions may follow as described in the Wake Forest University Undergraduate Student Conduct Code Public Health Emergency Addendum.