

Department of Philosophy &
College of the Humanities
Carleton University
PHIL 3000/CLCV 3011

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*
A Blended Online Course
Fall 2020

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Skype and FaceTime ID: same as email address
Virtual Office Hours: Fridays, 1pm to 2:30pm

Course Description:

In this blended online course, we will engage in a close reading of the whole of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Like so many other works of ancient moral theory, the *Nicomachean Ethics* is principally concerned with the nature of human happiness and the means to its attainment. Our primary aim will thus be to get clear on Aristotle's account of both. In the process, we shall endeavour to elucidate Aristotle's stance on such fundamental questions of moral philosophy as: its proper method; the purpose of the state and the relation between moral philosophy and political science; the nature and varieties of moral virtue; the nature of choice and moral agency; the cognitive and affective components of moral action; the nature and varieties of moral weakness and moral fortitude; the nature and moral significance of friendship; and the nature and value of philosophical wisdom (or contemplation). There is no overstating the influence the *Ethics* has had on the history of moral philosophy. Our progress in this course will thus be facilitated – but also complicated – by the very long history of the reception of, and commentary upon, this seminal work. We will look to this history often to guide us in our reading, to offer different interpretive vantage points, and to feed our critical reflections. Finally, since Aristotle began his philosophical career as a student in Plato's Academy, and he clearly learned a great deal from his master, we will read the *Nicomachean Ethics* with an eye to relevant Platonic texts and teachings.

It is a “blended” online course because course delivery will take place through a combination of live (i.e., synchronous) online instruction/interaction and recorded (i.e., asynchronous) content.

Lectures:

Lectures for the course will be pre-recorded and uploaded to the course's cuLearn page along with accompanying lecture transcripts.

- Once uploaded, the lectures will be accessible at any time, but the weekly online group discussions will track the Schedule of Group Meetings, Topics, and Readings that you will find toward the end of this document.

Please note: this pre-recorded content is being made available to you for the purpose of this course. **Please do not upload these recordings to a file-sharing platform or**

distribute them in some other way without my explicit permission. And if you use these materials in any other academic context, be sure to cite them appropriately.

Weekly Online Group Meetings: We will use the scheduled lecture times for online group discussion. I will split the class into two groups, and each group will meet with me once a week. **Group 1** will meet with me on Tuesdays from 8:35am to 9:55am, and **Group 2** will meet with me on Thursdays at the same time.

These weekly group meetings will serve various purposes:

- They will give you the opportunity to ask me questions about, or simply discuss in group, the readings and topics covered in the lectures tied to each week;
- They will allow us to continuously review materials covered in the lectures to ensure that they have been understood and well-assimilated; and
- They will allow us to cover any housekeeping matters that may arise over the course of the semester.

Please note: **the recording of online group meetings is strictly prohibited.** Your peers have a right to privacy, and they cannot be considered to have waived that right simply through their participation in an online videoconferencing session (and the same goes for your instructor).

Special Exemptions from the Weekly Group Meetings:

Part of your grade for this course will be based on your attendance and participation in these weekly group meetings. They are thus mandatory. However, I recognize that some students may be unable to participate in these synchronous sessions because they lack access to highspeed internet, and that others may find themselves in a time-zone that would make participation in them extremely inconvenient and unreasonably disruptive.

In such cases, I am prepared to be accommodating and to work out alternate arrangements for satisfactory participation in the course. Students who would like to be considered for such an exemption must submit their request to me by email. If I deem the request justified, I will issue the exemption and we can then work together to determine alternative means of participation in the class.

Virtual Office Hours: I will be holding virtual office hours exclusively for this course on Fridays, from 1pm to 2:30pm.

Here is how they will work:

- A sign-up system will be set up on cuLearn; it will be broken down into 15 - minute timeslots.
- If you wish to speak to me on a given Friday, you will need to sign up for a timeslot in advance.
- At your appointment time, you will contact me via either Skype or Facetime (I will have both programs open). Please be punctual, and *if there is someone ahead of you on the schedule, please do not contact me before your appointed time.* (If I am running ahead of schedule, I will contact you to let you know.)
- I am happy to meet with you outside of my designated, virtual office hours by appointment. You just need to email me to set an appointment.

Learning Outcomes:

Upon completing this course, students can expect to have achieved:

- A global understanding of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*;
- In-depth knowledge of a more circumscribed topic pertaining to the *Nicomachean Ethics*, as well as of the secondary literature related to this topic; and
- An awareness of Aristotle's principal philosophical sources and interlocutors.

They can also expect to have progressed in their ability to:

- Distil scholarly arguments and respond to them;
- Unpack and appraise complex philosophical arguments with an appreciation for how they fit into their historical context; and
- Develop original interpretations of (aspects of) a major philosophical work and defend them through rigorous exegesis, methodical scholarship, and sound argumentation.

Prerequisites:

- 0.5 credits in philosophy and second-year standing, or special permission from the Department of Philosophy or the College of the Humanities.

Required Text:

- Aristotle. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Ed. R. McKeon. New York: Random House, 1941.
 - I strongly recommend that you purchase a paper copy of this collection of works by Aristotle through your friendly neighbourhood bookseller.
 - However, Carleton students can access (but not download) a free electronic copy of this work here:
<https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001380841?>
 - Please note: my understanding is that this free access will only be available for as long as our library remains closed.
 - The translations included in the anthology I recommend are also available online for free at this address (you'll just need to select "Aristotle"):
<http://classics.mit.edu/Browse/index.html>

Grades:

- Grades will be based solely on individual, academic merit as judged against absolute standards. They will not be adjusted to achieve a supposedly normal distribution or manipulated in any other way.
- They will be based on the following:
 - (1) Attendance and participation in the online group discussions (unless a formal exemption has been granted and alternate arrangements have been made), for a total of 10% of the final mark;
 - (2) One take-home midterm examination, **due October 23rd**, and worth 30% of the final mark;
 - (3) One term paper, 7 to 10 double-spaced pages in length, **due December 11th**; and worth 30% of the final mark; and

(4) One take-home final examination, **due December 23rd**, and worth 30% of the final mark.

- I will produce separate handouts describing my expectations for (1) through (4). They will be available on cuLearn.
- At the end of the course, you will be assigned a letter grade corresponding to your final percentage, according to the standard Carleton University grading scale (which can be found in the Undergraduate Calendar online here: <https://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulationsoftheuniversity/acadregsuniv2/>).

Course Requirements at a Glance:

- To pass, you will have to regularly attend the group meetings (unless this requirement has been formally waived in your case), complete both examinations, and submit a satisfactory term paper. Failure to fulfil each and every one of these requirements will result in the grade 'F'.

Attendance:

- *Attendance and participation are critical components of all courses in the liberal arts. Thus, a significant pattern of non-attendance will in and of itself constitute sufficient grounds for my awarding a final course grade of 'F'.*
- This means that you must attend the online group meetings regularly or you will fail the course automatically (unless you have received a special exemption). If you find yourself having to miss more than two sessions, you will have to justify your absences, and the onus will be on you to do so (I will not chase after you). You will not be penalized if there are legitimate reasons for your repeated absences.
- Furthermore, it is your responsibility to stay on top of any materials covered and to enquire about any announcements made during the group meetings you must miss for whatever reason.

Submission Guidelines:

- All written assignments for this course are to be uploaded to a file folder prepared for that purpose in cuLearn.
- All uploaded documents must be in MS Word (i.e., .doc or .docx) format. Documents in any other file format will not be considered submitted, and late penalties will accrue, until the MS Word document is submitted.
- Do not upload your document a second time in order to fix a minor issue since the second submission date and time will replace the original one. If you need to re-submit, do so by emailing the document to me directly at erik.stephenson@carleton.ca

Late Assignments:

- Assignments will be docked 3% (or one third of a letter grade) for each calendar day after their due date. Late penalties on assignments accompanied by a medical certificate or other proof of a legitimate reason for lateness will be adjusted accordingly.

- Late assignments will very quickly sink to a grade of 'F'. Hand in your assignments on time.
- Even an assignment that is so late it will merit a grade of under 50% (F) must be completed or you will fail the course.

Plagiarism:

- Plagiarism is a serious academic offence. A professor who suspects a student has plagiarized an assignment is *required* to turn the matter over to the Dean. Students found guilty of plagiarism can receive a 0% for the assignment or a grade of 'F' for the whole course. In extreme cases, they can even be suspended or expelled from the university.
- If you use ideas or language from secondary sources in your assignments without citing those sources properly, you will have committed plagiarism, and I will have no choice but to hand over your work to the Dean for investigation.
- Submitting the same work as another student also constitutes plagiarism. Therefore, although I encourage you to help each other, if you hand in an assignment that is substantially the same as another student's, I will have to turn both of them in to the Dean to be investigated for plagiarism.
- Please read the full Departmental policy on plagiarism, which can be found on the final page of this course syllabus.

Getting Help:

I am always willing to give you whatever help I can. I am happy to help you understand and plan your assignments, give you constructive feedback, help you come up with a strategy to get your work done more efficiently, or refer you to the services Carleton University offers that can help with any serious problems that crop up.

But in order for me to help you, you must ask for my help.

- If your assignment is late, don't ignore it. You will end up failing the class. Talk to me. Let me know that you are having problems. I will let you know what your options are, no matter how serious your circumstances may be.
- Visit me in my virtual office hours, which I will hold every week, whether you need to discuss a problem, coursework (before or after it is submitted), or would simply like to chat about this course or another course. I can help you much more effectively one-on-one than I can in the group discussions, and that is what office hours are for.
- No one is good at everything right away. But most people make dramatic improvement with the help of others who already know the path to follow.

Schedule for Group Meetings, Topics, and Readings:

If a pre-recorded lecture is listed within a particular week, that means you should make sure you have listened to that lecture *before* your online group meeting for that week. The same goes for the suggested readings; you should ensure that you have done them *before* that week's meeting.

Week 1:

- September 10th: plenary Zoom session.
 - Introduction to the class; housekeeping matters

- Lecture: "Aristotle on Philosophy"

Week 2: Group 1: September 15th; Group 2: September 17th

- Readings: *Physics*, Book II; *On the Soul*, Book I, ch. 1; Book II, chs. 1-6; Book III, chs. 3-5
- Lectures:
 - (1) "Aristotle on Nature and the Natural";
 - (2) "Aristotle on the Four Causes";
 - (3) "Aristotle on Teleology in Nature";
 - (4) "Aristotle's *De Anima*"

Week 3: Group 1: Sep. 22nd; Group 2: Sep. 24th

- Readings: *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I
- Lectures:
 - (1) "Introduction to Aristotle's *Ethics*";
 - (2) "Aristotle on the Existence of a Highest Human Good and the Science that Studies It";
 - (3) "Aristotle's Introductory Account of Human Happiness";
 - (4) "Aristotle's Introductory Account of Human Happiness (Continued)"

Week 4: Group 1: Sep. 29th; Group 2: Oct. 1st

- Readings: *Categories*, 1-5; *Nicomachean Ethics*, I.6; *Metaphysics*, I.9
- Lectures:
 - (1) "Aristotle's *Categories*"
 - (2) "Aristotle's Critique of Plato's Theory of the Good"

Week 5: Group 1: Oct. 6th; Group 2: Oct. 8th

- Readings: *Nicomachean Ethics*, II; III.1-5
- Lectures:
 - (1) "Aristotle on the General Nature of Moral Virtue"
 - (2) "Aristotle on Moral Virtue: Illustrations and Supplemental Remarks"
 - (3) "Aristotle on the Voluntary and Choice"

Week 6: Group 1: Oct. 13th; Group 2: Oct. 15th

- Readings: *Nicomachean Ethics*, III. 6-12; IV.1-9
- Lectures:
 - (1) "Aristotle on the Moral Virtues (Part I)"
 - (2) "Aristotle on the Moral Virtues (Part II)"

Week 7: Group 1: Oct. 20th; Group 2: Oct. 22nd

- Readings: *Nicomachean Ethics*, V
- Lecture: "Aristotle on Justice"
- Take-Home Midterm Examination, due: October 23rd

Week 8: Fall Reading Week - No Group Meetings

Week 9: Group 1: Nov. 3rd; Group 2: Nov. 5th

- Readings for lectures (1) and (2): *Physics* VIII.1-11; *Metaphysics* XII.6-9

- Optional reading for lecture (3): *Metaphysics* I.1-2; IV.1-3; VII.1-4, 8, 15-17; VIII.2-3; IX.1-2, 6, 8; XII.1-3, 5
- Lectures:
 - (1) "Aristotle on the First Cause of Motion (Part I)"
 - (2) "Aristotle on the First Cause of Motion (Part II)"
 - (3) "The Argument of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*"

Week 10: Group 1: Nov. 10th; Group 2: Nov. 12th

- Readings: *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI
- Lectures:
 - (1) "Aristotle on the Intellectual Virtues (Part I)"
 - (2) "Aristotle on the Intellectual Virtues (Part II)"

Week 11: Group 1: Nov. 17th; Group 2: Nov. 19th

- Readings: *Nicomachean Ethics*, VII.1-10
- Lecture: "Aristotle on the Varieties of Moral Goodness and Moral Failure"

Week 12: Group 1: Nov. 24th; Group 2: Nov. 26th

- Readings: *Nicomachean Ethics*, VII.11-14
- Lecture: "Aristotle on Pleasure (Part I)"

Week 13: Group 1: Dec. 1st; Group 2: Dec. 3rd

- Readings: *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII and IX
- Lectures:
 - (1) "Aristotle on Friendship (Part I)"
 - (2) "Aristotle on Friendship (Part II)"

Week 14: Group 1: Dec. 8th; Group 2: Dec. 10th

- Readings: *Nicomachean Ethics*, X
- Lectures:
 - "Aristotle on Pleasure (Part II)"
 - "Aristotle on the Highest Form of Human Happiness"
- Term Paper, due: December 11th

Take-Home Final Examination, due: December 23rd

- I will continue to hold my regular Virtual Office Hours every Friday throughout the exam period



Humanities

University Regulations for All College of the Humanities Courses

Academic Dates and Deadlines

This schedule contains the dates prescribed by the University Senate for academic activities. Dates relating to fee payment, cancellation of course selections, late charges, and other fees or charges will be published in the Important Dates and Deadlines section of the Registration Website.

Copies of Written Work Submitted

Always retain for yourself a copy of all essays, term papers, written assignments or take-home tests submitted in your courses.

Academic Integrity at Carleton

The University Senate defines **plagiarism** as “*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs."

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course’s instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course

[Academic Integrity Policy](#)

[Academic Integrity Process](#)

Academic Accommodation Policy

Academic Accommodation

Carleton University is committed to providing access to the educational experience in order to promote academic accessibility for all individuals.

Parental Leave: The Student Parental Leave Policy is intended to recognize the need for leave at the time of a pregnancy, birth or adoption and to permit a pause in studies in order to provide full-time care in the first year of parenting a child or for health-related parental responsibilities.

Religious obligation: Carleton University accommodates students who, by reason of religious obligation, must miss an examination, test, assignment deadline, laboratory or other compulsory academic event.

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

Academic accommodation of students with disabilities is available through the [Paul Menton Centre](#) by evaluations that are carried out on an individual basis, in accordance with human rights legislation and University policy, and with the support of relevant, professional/medical documentation.

Survivors of Sexual Violence

Individuals who disclose that they have experienced sexual violence will be provided support services and will be treated with dignity and respect at all times by the University and its representatives. A person affected by sexual violence is not required to report an incident of or make a complaint about sexual violence under the formal complaint process of the Sexual Violence Policy in order to obtain support and services, or in order to receive appropriate accommodation for their needs.

[Supports and services available at the University to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support.](#)

Accommodation for Student Activities

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. [More information.](#)

Grading System at Carleton University

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor, subject to the approval of the faculty Dean. Standing in courses will be shown by alphabetical grades. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean."

The [system of grades](#) used, with corresponding grade points and the percentage conversion, is listed below. Grade points indicated are for courses with 1.0 credit value.

Course Sharing Websites and Copyright

Classroom teaching and learning activities, including lectures, discussions, presentations, etc., by both instructors and students, are copy protected and remain the intellectual property of their respective author(s). All course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, outlines, and other materials, are also protected by copyright and remain the intellectual property of their respective author(s).

Students registered in the course may take notes and make copies of course materials for their own educational use only. Students are not permitted to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly for commercial or non-commercial purposes without express written consent from the copyright holder(s).

[More information](#)

Student Rights and Responsibilities at Carleton

Carleton University strives to provide a safe environment conducive to personal and intellectual growth, free of injustice and characterized by understanding respect, peace, trust, and fairness.

The [Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy](#) governs the non-academic behaviour of students. Carleton University is committed to building a campus that promotes personal growth through the establishment and promotion of transparent and fair academic and non-academic responsibilities.

[7 Student Rights and Responsibilities](#)

Deferred Term Work

In some situations, students are unable to complete term work because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control, which forces them to delay submission of the work.

1. Students who claim illness, injury or other extraordinary circumstances beyond their control as a reason for missed term work are held responsible for immediately informing the instructor concerned and for making alternate arrangements with the instructor and in all cases this must occur no later than three (3.0) working days after the term work was due. The alternate arrangement must be made before the last day of classes in the term as published in the academic schedule. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of term. In all cases, formative evaluations providing feedback to the student should be replaced with formative evaluations. In the event the altered due date must extend beyond the last day of classes in the term, the instructor will assign a grade of zero for the work not submitted and submit the student's earned grade accordingly; the instructor may submit a change of grade at a later date. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.

2. In cases where a student is not able to complete term work due to illness or injury for a significant period of time/or long term, the instructor and/or student may elect to consult with the Registrar's Office (undergraduate courses) or Graduate Registrar (graduate courses) to determine appropriate action.

[More information of deferred Term Work](#)

Deferred Final Exams

Students who are unable to write a final examination because of a serious illness/emergency or other circumstances beyond their control may apply for accommodation. Normally, the accommodation for a missed final examination will be granting the student the opportunity to write a deferred examination. In specific cases when it is not possible to offer a deferred examination, and with the approval of the Dean, an alternate accommodation may be made.

The application for a deferral must:

1. be made in writing to the Registrar's Office no later than three working days after the original final examination or the due date of the take-home examination; and,
2. be fully supported by appropriate documentation and, in cases of illness, by a medical certificate dated no later than one working day after the examination, or by appropriate documents in other cases. Medical documents must specify the date of the onset of the illness, the (expected) date of recovery, and the extent to which the student was/is incapacitated during the time of the examination. The University's preferred medical form can be found at the Registrar's Office [here](#).

[More information on Final Exam Deferrals](#)

[Financial vs. Academic Withdrawal](#)

Withdrawn. No academic credit, no impact on the CGPA. WDN is a permanent notation that appears on the official transcript for students who withdraw after the full fee adjustment date in each term (noted in the Academic Year section of the Calendar each term). Students may withdraw on or before the last day of classes.

Important dates can be found [here](#). Make sure that you are aware of the separate deadlines for Financial and Academic withdrawal!

Making registration decisions in Carleton Central involves making a financial and academic commitment for the courses you choose, regardless of attendance. If you do not attend – you must withdraw in Carleton Central within the published deadlines to cancel your registration. You can do this via the [MyCarleton Portal](#). A fee adjustment is dependent on registration being canceled within the published [fee deadlines](#) and dependent on your course load.

Department Contact Information

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