

FYSM 1210 A: Special Topics in Philosophy
What We Argue About:
Uprooting Contemporary Debates Using the History of Philosophy

Instructor: Melanie Coughlin, PhD (she/her/elle)

Class: Mondays and Wednesdays 4:05 – 5:25 p.m.
Tory Building 431

Office Hour: Mondays 5:35 – 6:25 p.m. (Tory 431)
Other one-on-one meeting times can be reserved at melanie-coughlin.youcanbook.me or by e-mail

Email: melanie.coughlin@carleton.ca

What This Course is About

These days, it seems we are always arguing about tyranny, suffering, and/or identity. Why is that? And what have great minds had to say on these topics? In this first-year seminar, we will dig deep into the history of philosophy and throw new light on issues we (still) fight about today.

The philosophers we will study include Plato, Avicenna, Wollstonecraft, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Lugones. In this study, we will not try to understand these figures' entire philosophies. Instead, we will focus on short excerpts that contain clear and influential arguments from their most famous works.

The debates we will uproot include topics like power, health, equality, the environment, history, and culture. By saying we will "uproot" these debates, I mean that we will use influential arguments from famous philosophers to identify frequently unstated premises shared by both sides of the contemporary debates.

What We Will Do in This Course

Our main task will be to uproot contemporary debates using the arguments of famous philosophers. We will approach each contemporary debate in four steps:

- 1) Outline opposing sides in the contemporary debate
- 2) Link terms in the debate with philosophical terminology
- 3) Excavate an influential argument by a famous philosopher
- 4) Discuss how the philosopher's argument raises problems for both sides of the contemporary debate

This approach teaches the basic skills of philosophical argumentation in a way that connects these skills with things we argue about outside the philosophy classroom.

By taking part in this process of uprooting, you can begin to make up your own mind about where you stand in contemporary debates in a careful and well-informed manner. Your efforts to work out your own position will be further supported by workshops and feedback meetings with the instructor, where you'll develop an argument for a contemporary debate of your own choosing. By the end of this course, you will have learned to present this position using well-honed skills for successful argumentation and communication.

Learning Outcomes

1. Identify common presuppositions
2. Explain influential arguments
3. Engage ongoing discussions
4. Support your opinions
5. Consider alternative opinions

Assigned Readings

You do not need to buy readings for this course; excerpts from the philosophical texts that we read will be provided in Ares Library Reserves. I advise you to download all readings at the beginning of term to avoid last-minute technical obstacles. Lectures, worksheets, presentations, and online resources are also required materials. Successful work will show evidence of familiarity with these. All sources used must be included in assignment and exam bibliographies in order for work to qualify for grading.

Course Module Topics, Materials, Activities and Deadlines

Module 1

Topic

Course Essentials

Materials

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 1. Lecture 1: | Introduction to Course Topics and Methods |
| 2. Resource: | Course Outline |
| 3. Lecture 2: | Steps in the Excavation of Arguments |
| 4. Excerpt: | Gold's <i>The Elements of Argument</i> |

Activities

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| 1. Worksheet 1: | Create Community Guidelines |
| 2. Online: | Self-Introduction and Study Buddy Board (optional) |
| 3. Worksheet 2: | Practice Spotting Fallacies |
| 4. Online: | Ask Your Instructor Board (as needed) |

Deadline

Sunday, January 15, 2023

Module 2

Topic

Power

Materials

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 1. Lecture 1: | Debating "Trump Envy" |
| |  |
| 2. Lecture 2: | Is the Tyrant Envious? |
| 3. Excerpt: | Plato's <i>Republic</i> (~375 B.C.E.) |

Activities

1. Worksheet 1: Link Debated Terms with Terms in Plato
2. Worksheet 2: Excavate Argument Step 1

Deadline


Sunday, January 22, 2023

Module 3

Topic

Health

Materials

1. Lecture 1: Debating "COVID-Life"

2. Lecture 2: Is suffering always evil?
3. Excerpt: Avicenna's *The Metaphysics of the Healing* (1027 C.E.)

Activities

1. Presentation: A Debate about COVID-Life
2. Worksheet 1: Link Debated Terms with Terms in Avicenna
3. Worksheet 2: Excavate Argument Step 2

Deadline


Sunday, January 29, 2023

Module 4

Topic

Equality

Materials

1. Lecture 1: Debating "Feminazis"

2. Lecture 2: Is feminism about power over men?
3. Excerpt: Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792)

Activities

1. Presentation: A Debate about Feminazis
2. Worksheet 1: Link Debated Terms with Terms in Wollstonecraft
3. Worksheet 2: Excavate Argument Step 3

Deadline

Sunday, February 5, 2023


Module 5

Topic

Environment

Materials

1. Lecture 1: Debating "Oil and Gas"

2. Lecture 2:  Is humanity master of nature?
 3. Excerpt: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807)

Activities

1. Presentation: A Debate about Oil and Gas
 2. Worksheet 1: Link Debated Terms with Terms in Hegel
 3. In-Class 2: Excavate Argument Step 4

Deadline

Sunday, February 12, 2023

Module 6

Topic

Workshop 1

Activities

1. Supported Task 1: Creating a Bibliography 
2. Supported Task 2: Defining a Topic
3. Online: Submit Workshop Exit Ticket 1
4. Online: Submit Anonymous Course Experience Survey

Deadline

Thursday, February 16, 2023


Winter Break

Module 7

Topic

History

Materials

1. Lecture 1: Debating "Monument Destruction" 
2. Lecture 2: Is all history worth preserving?
 3. Excerpt: Friedrich Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations* (1876)

Activities

1. Presentation: A Debate about Monument Destruction
 2. Worksheet 1: Link Debated Terms with Terms in Nietzsche
 3. Worksheet 2: Excavate Argument Step 5

Deadline


Sunday, March 5, 2023

Module 8

Topic

Positionality

Materials

1. Lecture 1: Debating "Identity Politics"

2. Lecture 2: Is there some knowledge not everyone can have?
3. Excerpt: Patricia Hill Collins's *Black Feminist Thought* (1990)

Activities

1. Presentation: A Debate about Identity Politics
2. Worksheet 1: Link Terms in Debate with Terms in Collins
3. Worksheet 2: Excavate Argument Step 6

Deadline


Sunday, March 12, 2023

Module 9

Topic

Culture

Materials

1. Lecture 1: Debating "Not Your Halloween Costume"

2. Lecture 2: Is it always wrong to appropriate other cultures?
3. Excerpt: Maria Lugones's *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes* (2003)

Activities

1. Presentation: A Debate about Halloween Costumes
2. Worksheet 1: Link Terms in Debate with Terms in Lugones
3. Worksheet 2: Excavate Argument Step 7

Deadline


Sunday, March 19, 2023

Module 10

Topic

Embodiment

Materials

1. Lecture 1: Debating "Helen Keller is Over" Parties

2. Lecture 2: Is being disabled harder than everything else?
3. Excerpt: Elizabeth Barnes's *The Minority Body* (2016)

Activities

1. Presentation: A Debate about Helen Keller is Over Parties
2. Worksheet 1: Link Terms in Debate with Terms in Barnes
3. Worksheet 2: Excavate Argument Step 8

Deadline

Sunday, March 26, 2023

Module 11**Topic**

Workshop 2

Activities

1. Supported Task 1: Developing Your Own Argument



2. Supported Task 2: Objecting and Responding
3. Online: Submit Workshop Exit Ticket 2

Deadline

Sunday, April 2, 2023

Module 12**Topic**

Take-Home Exam

Materials

1. Lecture: Expectations for the Take-Home Exam
2. Resource: Take-Home Exam Grading Rubric

Activities

1. One-on-One: Check-In Meetings with Instructor for Take-Home Exam Prep

Deadline

Wednesday, April 12, 2023

Evaluation**Worksheets 2.5% x 16 = 40%**

There are two types of worksheets: 1) "Linking Worksheets" practice the skills required for communicating across different times and places; 2) "Excavating Worksheets" practice the skills required for clarifying and responding to an argument. Ordinarily, these worksheets will be completed in-class as we uproot the eight topics of debate listed in the "Course Module Topics" section below. See also the "Instructor's Policies" section below for details about deadlines and alternative formats. The purpose of the worksheets is for you to engage the course materials with your peers and support one another as you practice communication and argumentation.

Presentation 20%

The presentations provide an opportunity for you to work with one or two of your peers. There will be one presentation per debate topic, and you can state your preferences for timing/topic at the beginning of class. In each presentation, the team will explain how example arguments on both sides of contemporary debates in social media rely on fallacies (i.e., invalidating errors in argumentation). See the "Instructor's Policies"

section below for details about presentation deadlines and alternatives. The goal of the presentations is to increase the class's exposure to the variety of positions out there, and for you to practice sorting good arguments from bad ones.

Workshop Exit Tickets 7.5% x 2 = 15%

The workshops ask you to reflect on your own individual position within a contemporary debate of your choice. There are two workshop modules in this course, and the workshops take place during the regular class time. These workshops are designed to support the progressive composition of your Take-Home Exam. At the end of each workshop module, you will submit a Workshop Exit Ticket answering questions about how your own position on a topic you care about has been developing. See Instructor's Policies below for details about deadlines and alternate formats. The goal of the Workshop Exit Tickets is to give early support for investigating your topic of choice, as well as individualized feedback on developing the technical skills required for successfully completing the Take-Home Exam.

Take-Home Exam 25%

The Take-Home Exam is your explanation of where you stand within a contemporary debate of your choice. Adequate explanations include an "uprooting" of that debate in the way we have practiced in class, as well as the application of one of the influential arguments we have studied from famous philosophers. The format for the Take-Home Exam is flexible (e.g., video, audio, text and image, website, eportfolio, etc.). The only part of the format that is inflexible is the requirement that paraphrases and/or quotations of a philosopher we read be integrated and referenced. The exam can use content from the worksheets and presentations, but these must be clearly relevant for your chosen exam topic. In addition to the one-on-one check-in meetings near the end of the semester, I am happy to discuss ideas or drafts of Take-Home Exams during office hours, but I can only review up to one page of a draft over e-mail. No exam can be graded without a complete bibliography of all the sources used in your research, so keep track of them. Since this is a Take-Home Exam, I must follow Carleton's regulations regarding exam deferrals. The goal of the Take-Home Exam is to support your accurate communication of what has mattered to you most in this course, and develop the cogency of how you argue your point of view.

Instructor's Policies

Lateness

Flexibility is a key value in this course and it requires timely and honest communication. Please check the specifications distinct to each form of assessment and contact me with any questions and/or accommodation requests:

- Worksheets
 - available online from the beginning of the module week
 - ordinarily completed in-class but can also be completed individually and submitted online
 - submission by their respective due dates is recommended since skills are cumulative and required on larger assignments
 - cannot be graded after the end of classes
- Presentation

- instructions available online from the beginning of the course
- time-sensitive due to interaction with peers
- late completion is only possible by way of a make-up assignment
- Workshop Exit Tickets
 - submission before the end of the assigned week will help to adequately prepare for the exam
 - can be submitted orally rather than in written form through a recording or meeting with instructor
- Take-Home Exam
 - due on the last day of the exam period and therefore subject to Take-Home Exam regulations outlined in Carleton's ["Deferred Final Exams" regulations \(link opens on Carleton webpage\)](#)

Appeals

If a course participant judges any mark on an assignment to be unfair, then appeals can be made within a month after the distribution of the mark. Unless the mistake is a calculation error, the grade appeal must include a paragraph written (or its oral equivalent) by the student to explain why a better mark is justified with reference to the relevant grading rubric (detailed rubrics for all graded tasks are provided on the course webpage in "Assignment Descriptions").

Originality

It is not necessary to use philosophical primary or secondary sources outside of the assigned readings to produce original work and get an excellent grade in this course. All sources used must be accurately documented with references to specific pages used within a source and a complete bibliography. I regularly have had to submit assignments and exams to the Associate Dean with allegations of Academic Integrity violations. It might help to be forewarned that many such cases occur because a student paid someone else to do the work and was lied to regarding the originality of the work for which they paid. Please keep in mind that I am more trustworthy than a random person doing something for money on the internet. I am also better able to help you than someone you know who would be willing to do your work for you. If you are stuck for ideas and/or time, please just reach out via email, let me know what you need, and I promise that we can figure out a way forward together. Once an assignment is submitted that appears to violate [Carleton's Academic Integrity policy](#), it is out of my hands. I must forward the assignment on to the Associate Dean and am unable to discuss the issue further at that point. Students in this position are encouraged to [contact their ombudsperson](#) for support on the allegation, and to keep in mind that I can still support them with regard to any other matter in the course.

Questions

I am committed to responding to questions posted to the Ask Your Instructor discussion topic on the course webpage's "Communications" module or submitted by e-mail within 48 hours, Monday to Friday. If you do not receive a response within that time frame, then there is the strong possibility of a technical error, so please check your post or re-send your e-mail. If you have a question that is not of a personal nature, then please consider posting your question under a descriptive title in the Ask Your Instructor discussion topic, so

that others can benefit from reading it. I am also available outside of the regular office hour at various times throughout the week for online meetings (see the next point below).

Supports

- The instructor holds weekly online office hours, as well as additional scheduled-as-needed hours. Use these hours to discuss your progress and/or obstacles in the course, assignments expectations, plans or drafts, and broader questions about academic philosophy. Both the weekly hour and the meetings outside of the regular office hours (booked at melanie-coughlin.youcanbook.me) are one-on-one consultations. If you can make none of these, or there are no schedule-as-needed hours left available in time, send an e-mail with your availability, and we can usually work out another time with a few days of notice.
- Carleton's Centre for Student Academic Support has in-person and online resources to help you succeed with workshops to improve your personal and academic skills. Go to the [Centre for Student Academic Support's Online Support page](#) to become a member of their online community, and check out [CSAS homepage](#) for all the services offered.
- The [Academic Advising Centre](#) advises students on a drop-in basis from 8:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. and it is possible to arrange for meetings in-person, by phone or online. These advisors can help you work through any difficulties you might be experiencing, including by connecting you with other support services at Carleton.
- Every Carleton student has access to free counselling services, including teleconferencing ones, via [EmpowerMe](#), which is a 24-hour, 365 days a year intake meeting and referral service which can be reached toll-free at 1-833-628-5589 (toll free).
- Students are encouraged to contact the instructor to discuss any obstacles the course setup poses, or to request any accommodation needed to better demonstrate their learning (e.g., changes to an assignment format or topic). The instructor is committed to adapting the course as needed so that every student can easily access the course materials and work in the ways that best demonstrate each individual's learning;
- Students who find themselves regularly facing obstacles in their courses related to a disability and/or long-term condition (physical, mental, or trauma induced) but who are not registered with the [Paul Menton Centre \(PMC\)](#), can receive generalized support by calling the PMC at 613-520-6608, or sending an e-mail to pmc@carleton.ca. If you already have documentation of your condition, you can request an Intake Meeting. If you do not yet have documentation, you can still request a Pre-Intake Meeting to discuss what kind of documentation would be required;
- Students requiring other forms of accommodation, such as for religious obligations, pregnancy obligations, surviving sexual violence, or participation in student activities, please visit Carleton's webpage on [Academic Accommodations](#)
- All course participants attending in person are required to wear a mask inside the classroom at all times

Campus Policies

Ongoing Measures for COVID-19 Prevention on Campus

All members of the Carleton community are required to follow COVID-19 prevention measures and all mandatory public health requirements (e.g. wearing a mask, physical distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory and cough etiquette) and [mandatory self-screening](#) prior to coming to campus daily.

If you feel ill or exhibit COVID-19 symptoms while on campus or in class, please leave campus immediately, self-isolate, and complete the mandatory [symptom reporting tool](#). For purposes of contact tracing, attendance will be taken in all classes and labs. Participants can check in using posted QR codes through the cuScreen platform where provided. Students who do not have a smartphone will be required to complete a paper process as indicated on the [COVID-19 website](#).

All members of the Carleton community are required to follow guidelines regarding safe movement and seating on campus (e.g. directional arrows, designated entrances and exits, designated seats that maintain physical distancing). In order to avoid congestion, allow all previous occupants to fully vacate a classroom before entering. No food or drinks are permitted in any classrooms or labs.

For the most recent information about Carleton's COVID-19 response and required measures, please see the [University's COVID-19 webpage](#) and review the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#). Should you have additional questions after reviewing, please contact covidinfo@carleton.ca

Please note that failure to comply with University policies and mandatory public health requirements, and endangering the safety of others are considered misconduct under the [Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy](#). Failure to comply with Carleton's COVID-19 procedures may lead to supplementary action involving Campus Safety and/or Student Affairs.

Addressing Human Rights Concerns

The University and all members of the University community share responsibility for ensuring that the University's educational, work and living environments are free from discrimination and harassment. Should you have concerns about harassment or discrimination relating to your age, ancestry, citizenship, colour, creed (religion), disability, ethnic origin, family status, gender expression, gender identity, marital status, place of origin, race, sex (including pregnancy), or sexual orientation, please contact the [Department of Equity and Inclusive Communities](#) at equity@carleton.ca.

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2022-23)

Assignments:

Please follow your professor's instructions on how assignments will be handled electronically. There will be NO hard copies placed in the essay box this coming year.

Evaluation:

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. 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.

Deferrals for Term Work:

If students are unable to complete term work because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control, they should contact their course instructor no later than *three working days* of the due date. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of the term. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.

Deferrals for Final Exams:

Students are expected to be available for the duration of a course including the examination period. Occasionally, students encounter circumstances beyond their control where they may not be able to write a final examination or submit a take-home examination. Examples of this would be a serious illness or the death of a family member. If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a take-home examination by the due date, you may apply for a deferral no later than *three working days* after the original due date (as per the University Regulations in [Section 4.3 of the Undergraduate Calendar](#)). Visit the [Registrar's Office](#) for further information.

Plagiarism:

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of 'plagiarism' as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. ([Section 10.1 of the Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations](#))

Academic Accommodation:

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term:

- *Pregnancy or religious obligation:* write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the [EDC](#) website.
- *Academic accommodations for students with disabilities:* The [Paul Menton Centre](#) for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC,

contact your PMC coordinator to send your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class test or exam requiring accommodation. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your professor to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.

- *Survivors of Sexual Violence*: As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per [Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy](#).
- *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. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

Important Dates:

- Sept. 7 Classes start.
- Sept. 20 Last day for registration and course changes for fall term and fall/winter (two-term) courses.
- Sept. 30 Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from fall term or two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
- Oct. 10 Statutory holiday. University closed.
- Oct. 24-28 Fall Break – no classes.
- Nov. 25 Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, before the official examination period.
- Dec. 9 Last day of fall term classes. **Classes follow a Monday schedule.** Last day for academic withdrawal from fall term courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for term work for a fall term course.
- Dec. 10-22 Final examinations for fall term courses and mid-term examinations in two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
- Dec. 22 All take-home examinations are due.
- Jan. 9 Classes begin.
- Jan. 20 Last day for registration and course changes in the winter term.
- Jan. 31 Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter term courses or from the winter portion of two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
- Feb. 20 Statutory holiday. University closed.
- Feb. 20-24 Winter Break – no classes.
- Mar. 29 Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in winter term or fall/winter courses before the official examination period.
- Apr. 7 Statutory holiday. University closed.
- Apr. 12 Last day of two-term and winter term classes. **Classes follow a Friday schedule.** Last day for academic withdrawal from fall/winter and winter

courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for two-term and for winter term courses.

Apr. 13-14 No classes or examinations take place.

Apr. 15-27 Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.

Apr. 27 All take-home examinations are due.

Addresses:

Department of Philosophy:
www.carleton.ca/philosophy
520-2110

Registrar's Office:
www.carleton.ca/registrar
520-3500

Academic Advising Centre:
www.carleton.ca/academicadvising
520-7850

Writing Services:
<http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/>
520-3822

MacOdrum Library
<http://www.library.carleton.ca/>
520-2735