

Moeswers y Stori

The Moral of the Story

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Yr Haf/Summer 2015

M/T 19:00–21:00

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Disgrifiad y Cwrs/Course Description:

Beth mae Modrwy Gyges yn dweud wrthym am ein rhesymau i fod yn foesol? Allem ddysgu rhywbeth am ddoethineb o *The Little Prince*? Ydy dameg y Samariad Trugarog yn dangos y ddyletswydd gofal a gawsem ar ddieithriad? Beth all anturiau Bilbo Baggins ddygsu i ni am natur daioni a gwreiddiau drygioni?

P'un a gawson nhw eu creu fel cyfrwng i roi addysg foesol, i herio'r moesoldeb sefydledig neu dim ond fel straeon llawn cyffro, mae storïau yn ganolbwynt pwysig ar gyfer myfyrdodau moesegol a'r dychymyg moesol. Bydd y modiwl hwn yn defnyddio storïau fel man cychwyn i edrych ar gwestiynau allweddol mewn athroniaeth foesol.

What does Gyges' Ring tell us about our reasons for being moral? Can we learn something about wisdom from *The Little Prince*? Does the parable of the Good Samaritan illustrate the care we owe to strangers? What can the adventures of Bilbo Baggins teach us about the nature of goodness and the roots of evil?

Whether created as tools of moral education, challenges to established morality or simply ripping good yarns, stories are an important focus for ethical reflection and moral imagination. This module will use stories as starting points for explorations of key questions in moral philosophy. No previous knowledge of philosophy will be assumed.

The following list of sample topics indicates the kind of subject matter which may be discussed but the specific issues selected will vary:

- metaethical questions:
 - the status of moral claims
 - the relation between ethical judgement and moral motivation
 - the grounds of morality
- moral character and right action
- moral psychology
- major ethical theories:
 - consequentialism/utilitarianism
 - deontological/Kantian ethics
 - virtue ethics
- ethical relativism
- feminist ethics
- the nature of evil
- social justice

The course will draw on stories from fiction and non-fiction to illustrate the theoretical positions discussed and students are encouraged to draw further examples from their own experience.

Amcanion/Goals:

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- demonstrate an understanding of core elements of the course material;
- identify values, ethical perspectives and moral commitments in stories;
- appreciate the ways in which our narratives both reflect and shape moral understanding;
- evaluate claims in the context of historical and contemporary debates about morality;
- bring the insights of moral philosophy to bear on ethical questions raised by individual and collective experiences, and public policy;
- formulate useful questions in the context of ethical theory, human experience and public policy;
- critically read and analyse a philosophical text;
- use philosophical vocabulary appropriate to the subject matter of the specific course;
- formulate and defend a philosophical thesis;
- constructively discuss philosophical ideas with others;
- recognise, analyse and critically evaluate arguments through reading, writing and discussion;
- compare and contrast different positions on an issue by identifying theses and reconstructing the arguments advanced in their support;
- adjudicate disputes by giving reasons in support of a particular position;
- explain and defend a view clearly and concisely whether orally or in writing;
- respond constructively to disagreement;
- discuss ethical theories in a critical, reflective manner;
- explore and discuss some of the key questions and issues related to the study of moral philosophy.

Amgylchedd/Environment:

If something occurs which you feel negatively affected your ability to learn, please do not hesitate to discuss the matter with me. If you have any disability which may affect your ability to succeed in the class, please discuss any accommodations you may require with me as soon as possible.

Cymraeg/Welsh:

Croeso i chi anfon ebost ataf yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

Ymhellach, mae gennych hawl i gael eich asesu trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg neu'r Saesneg. Os hoffech gael eich asesu yn Gymraeg, rhowch wybod imi cyn gynted â phosib.

You are welcome to send email to me in Welsh or English.

Furthermore, you have a right to be assessed through the medium of Welsh or English. If you would like to be assessed in Welsh, please let me know as soon as possible.

Achrediad a Chyllid/Accreditation and Funding:

This is an accredited course. The guidelines anticipate that students will study for 80–100 hours for a 10 credit module such as this one, including class contact time and activities outside the classroom.

I strongly encourage all students to attempt assessment. Even if you are not concerned with credits, there are at least two reasons to participate. The first and most important is that assessment is designed as an integral part of the course and will form the basis for class discussion and collaboration. Participation should enhance your understanding of the reading and enable you to get the most out of the class. I hope that completing the assignments will prove both enjoyable and stimulating.

Unfortunately, the second reason is less pedagogically inspiring. *The viability of the Centre in general, and the humanities programme in particular, depends on students attempting assessment.* This is a consequence of national educational funding policy. The Centre relies on two primary sources of income to fund its programmes: student fees and HEFCW funding. We receive no HEFCW funds for students who do not attempt assessment.

Asesiad/Assessment:

Assessment for this module consists of (i) a contribution to a class glossary, and (ii) a final paper.

Glossary entry 300–400 words (20%)

- Each student will be responsible for writing one entry. There will be opportunities to draft, discuss and revise these entries in class, although students are welcome to work on them further outside class time if they wish to and will need to type and submit finalised entries electronically as described below.
- I will collate the entries into a glossary of key terms as a resource for all members of the class. Obviously, I will only include entries whose authors do not object to my doing so. If you would prefer that I not include your entry in the collection, just let me know.
- We will discuss the format and content of entries in class but the basic idea is that your entry should explain the relevant term to the ‘bright 14 year old’ with no knowledge of philosophy described in my handout on writing philosophy.

Paper 1,200–1,500 words (80%)

- A list of topics and other details will be provided.

General The following points apply to all work submitted for assessment.

- Deadlines are marked on the class schedule.
- **All work should include appropriate references, be double-spaced in a reasonable font and submitted electronically through Learning Central, which includes plagiarism detection.**
- **Do not include your name on your work itself. Use your student identification number instead.** This enables me to grade ‘blind’ (or at least attempt to).
- ‘Asesiad/Assessment’ and ‘Adnoddau/Resources’, included in this course packet, provide detailed instructions and guidance, and additional support will be provided in class.

Please keep copies of all work submitted.

Cyfeirnod/Referencing:

The Centre's Student Handbook explains the basics of formatting citations and references and is available online at <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/learn/choices/student-information/>.

The handbook also explains what plagiarism is and strategies for avoiding it. ***You should read this if you are in any doubt whatsoever about these matters.*** I would be happy to answer any further questions you might have.

Cyfrifon Llyfrgell a Chyfrifiadur/Library and Computer Accounts:

You will be provided with details of your computer account during the first class provided that you registered in advance and do not already have one. Your computer account will enable you to submit work for feedback and assessment, to make use of institutional subscriptions to electronic resources and to use the university's computing facilities.

All students are entitled to use the university libraries. Lifelong Learning students can obtain a card from the library in the Centre for Lifelong Learning on Senghennydd Road.

As the course proceeds, we will draw on a number of resources, including the paper and electronic resources available through the university, publicly accessible internet sources and photocopies.

Llyfrau/Books:

You will need your library/computer account in order to access certain readings.

Readings listed in the class schedule are key. In general, it will be difficult to follow the class without doing the assigned readings for that week. When possible, key readings will be included in the course packet.

Access to a copy of the following text (available from the library) is recommended:

Louis P. Pojman, ed. (2004). *The Moral Life: An Introductory Reader in Ethics and Literature*.
2nd ed. New York and London: Oxford University Press

Note that this specifies the *second* edition. If you use a different edition, please let me know as the contents will differ. *If you plan to buy the text, do **not** buy the current edition as it will be ridiculously expensive.* Used copies of the second edition are perfect for our purposes.

AMSERLEN Y CWRS/COURSE SCHEDULE

This schedule is tentative and will almost certainly require modification depending on the pace at which we cover the material. Full references for all readings are included in the list of references which follows the course schedule.

Further readings are included in the topic introductions later in the course packet. This reflects their secondary importance. Reading these will deepen your understanding, and you should pick one or two relevant readings when writing your paper. But do not make the mistake of turning to the further readings at the expense of reading and rereading the core material.

The key to success when beginning philosophy is to read the core material carefully, and to actively seek to understand and evaluate it. Some readings are short, but you will often need to read them two or three times in order to prepare well for class.

§1 Offer yr Athronydd/The Philosopher's Toolbox

Week 1: 14 Apr What is Moral Philosophy?
What is an Argument? What Makes an Argument Good?
Validity Workshop

§2 Y Fodrwy Gyges/The Ring of Gyges

Week 2: 21 Apr Why Be Moral?
Plato, *The Republic* (1998, selections from Books 2,9)

§3 Problem yr Euthyphro/The Euthyphro Problem

Week 3: 28 Apr Are Things Good Because God Commands Them or Does God Command Them Because They Are Good?
Plato, *Euthyphro* (2012, excerpt)
Continued...

§4 Iwtilitariaeth/Utilitarianism

Classical Hedonism

'Seaman Holmes and the Longboat of the William Brown, Reported by John William Wallace' (Pojman 2004, 229–230)
or United States *vs.* Holmes, Reported by John William Wallace (Wallace 1842)

Week 4: 5 May The Greatest Happiness Principle/Principle of Utility
Mill, 'What Utilitarianism Is' (2004, ch. 2)
—, 'Of the Ultimate Sanction of the Principle of Utility' (2004, ch. 3)

Week 5: 12 May Should You Walk Away?

Le Guin, 'The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas (Variations on a theme by William James)' (1991)

Glossary Workshop

§5 Dyletswyddeg/Deontology

Week 6: 19 May The Value of a Good Will

Kant, *Groundwork*¹ (2011, AK 4:389, 4:393–401)

The Formula of Universal Law (FUL)

Bierce, 'A Horseman in the Sky' (2004)

Kant, *Groundwork* (2011, AK 4:402–403, 4:408–409, 4:411–412, 4:419–424)

22 May Glossary entries due by noon.

Week 7: 26 May The Formula of Humanity as an End in Itself (FHEI)

Kant, *Groundwork* (2011, AK 4:428–429, 4:432–433)

§6 Cymeriad/Character

Week 8: 2 Jun Good Choices

Klein, 'Harry Potter and Humanity: Choices, Love, and Death' (2012)

Week 9: 9 Jun Virtue, Habit & the Mean

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*² (2002, I–II (1094a1–1109b27))

— Diwedd y dosbarthiadau/Classes end —

15 Jun Papers due by noon.

¹The abbreviation AK refers to the Berlin Academy Edition of Kant's complete works. Better quality translations include these references in the margins. If you have such a translation, you can use these references to locate the relevant passages even if the translation or pagination differs from the particular one cited here.

²Citations refer to book, perhaps chapter, and standard 'bekker' page/line numbering of the original Greek. These bekker references are approximate due to differences between Greek and English syntax. Better quality translations include these references in the margins. If you have such a translation, you can use them to locate the relevant passages even if the translation or pagination differs from the particular one cited here.

CYFEIRIADAU/REFERENCES

- Aristotle (2002). *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans., with a historical introd., by Christopher Rowe. Philosophical introd. and comment. by Sarah Broadie. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bierce, Ambrose (2004). 'A Horseman in the Sky'. In *A Son of the Gods, and A Horseman in the Sky*. Project Gutenberg, 1st May 2004. Project Gutenberg ebook: [5661](#).
- Kant, Immanuel (2011). *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals. A German-English Edition*. Ed. by Jens Timmermann. Trans. from the German by Mary J. Gregor and Jens Timmermann. Cambridge Books Online. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. DOI: [10.1017/CBO9780511973741](#).
- Klein, Shawn E. (2012). 'Harry Potter and Humanity: Choices, Love, and Death'. *Reason Papers* 34.1, 33–41.
- Le Guin, Ursula K. (1991). 'The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas (Variations on a theme by William James)'. *Utopian Studies* 2.1/2, 1–5. EBSCOhost accession number: [4113048](#). Repr. of 'The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas'. 'The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas (Variations on a theme by William James)'. In Ursula K. Le Guin. *The Wind's Twelve Quarters*. Originally published in 1975. New York: HarperCollins/Perennial, 2004, 275–284. Repr. of Ursula K. Le Guin. 'The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas (Variations on a theme by William James)'. *New Dimensions* 3.
- Mill, John Stuart (2004). *Utilitarianism*. Fairbanks, Arkansas and Salt Lake City, Utah: Project Gutenberg, 22nd Feb. 2004. Project Gutenberg ebook: [11224](#). Repr. of *Utilitarianism*. 7th ed. London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1879. Repr.
- Plato (1998). *The Republic*. Trans. by Benjamin Jowett. Project Gutenberg, 1st Oct. 1998. Project Gutenberg ebook: [1497](#).
- (2012). *Euthyphro*. In *The Dialogues of Plato*. Trans., with an introd., by Benjamin Jowett. 3rd ed. eBooks@Adelaide. Adelaide: The University of Adelaide Library, 20th Nov. 2012. URL: <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/p/plato/p71eup/index.html>. Repr.
- Pojman, Louis P., ed. (2004). *The Moral Life: An Introductory Reader in Ethics and Literature*. 2nd ed. New York and London: Oxford University Press.
- Wallace, John William (1842). *United States vs. Holmes*. Circuit Court, E. D. Pennsylvania. 26 F.Cas. 360. Case no. 15,383. 22nd Apr. 1842. URL: <http://www.law.stetson.edu/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=6927>.