PHIL 4352-002/5352-002 SYLLABUS (3 CREDIT HOURS)
PROBLEMS IN PHILOSOPHY SEMINAR:
ANCIENT ETHICS & CONTEMPORARY ADVERSITY

LOGISTICS

Instructor: Glenn “boomer” Trujillo  
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Office location & phone: Worrell Hall 306, (915) 747-6617  
Office hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday: 1:30-2:30pm  
Also available online by appointment  
Course date & location: University of Texas at El Paso, Spring 2023  
Monday, 4:30-7:20pm  
Education 311

COURSE DESCRIPTION & OBJECTIVES

A course with issues of current interest to contemporary philosophers. Recent topics have included postmodernism, literature and philosophy, technological society, movies and the making of the American mind, the emergence of world philosophy, and medical ethics. Prerequisite: Junior standing.

Virtue ethics and eudaimonism thrived from the time of Aristotle until Modernism, when deontological and utilitarian systems took power. However, over the last century, virtue ethics and eudaimonism experienced a revival. This revival is full of many different approaches to character and happiness, and we will survey a few. We will especially focus on philosophers who account for adversity in life. To get our bearings, we will survey Aristotle, Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Cynicism. Then we will analyze contemporary scholars. Christian Miller examines empirical psychology to scrutinize the notion of character and its development. Lisa Tessman wonders what kind of character we should develop in oppressive or tragic circumstances. Nancy Sherman analyzes why Stoicism resonates with soldiers. And Nick Riggle uses broad concerns about a good life and character to analyze contemporary notions of awesomeness and suckiness. This course, therefore, will cover the fundamentals of eudaimonism and virtue ethics. Then it will show that ancient ethical themes still helps us to solve ethical problems today.

COURSE MATERIALS

Required


Recommended

You can get free copies of the ancient sources on Internet Archive (archive.org) or Project Gutenberg (gutenberg.org). You can get English/Greek interactive texts on Perseus Digital Library (perseus.tufts.edu). But if you want physical copies, I recommend:

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

YOU MUST COMPLETE ALL ASSIGNMENTS TO PASS THE COURSE!

The grade for the course is composed of:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pct.</th>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Grade Pts.</th>
<th>Denotation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90–100</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Excellent performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80–89.99</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Good performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>70–79.99</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Average performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>60–69.99</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Below average but passing performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>0–59.99</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Not passing</td>
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Discussion Starters. Each week, all students should bring to class, printed out, ready at the beginning:

1. A quote that contains the thesis / main theme from one assigned reading. (There might be multiple. Just choose one.)
2. A quote that makes a good, interesting, clear, or important point. (According to you.)
3. A quote that makes a questionable, unclear, or misguided point. (According to you.)
4. 3 questions about the material that can motivate class discussions or develop into paper topics.
   a. Consider themes within the readings. Compare thinkers across the semester. Pick on weaknesses. Fill in gaps. Find a historical or fictional case where philosophers would disagree about what to do. Whatever angle you take, there should be a clear basis in the readings, but you can be more creative in the application.

12 out of 14 is 100%. Then the grade will go down 10% for each week you don’t bring one to class past that.

Quotes and Questions: This is a brainstorm for a paper topic. You’ll have quotes, themes, and questions printed on a sheet of paper. Undergraduates: pick 5 quotes on one unified theme from the course’s readings. Graduates: pick 10 quotes on one unified theme from the course’s readings. Everyone: Write 3 questions that you’d like to research, trying to unify/compare/contrast/problematize/apply/supplement as many of your quotes as possible. Here, you’re trying to figure out why you are interested in your topic. It’s an exercise in self-awareness and meta-cognition. What draws you to this topic? Why does it seem important to address? What are the logical possibilities for the debate? What does your gut say to you about this?

You are required to go to the UTEP Writing Center at least once in your paper writing process. You may do it at the brainstorming stage, annotated bibliography stage (to check citations and work on clarifying your thesis), or before the final submission (to work on organization, clear expression, and polishing your prose). Submit your “proof slip” with the paper.

Annotated Bibliography: This is basically a paper proposal. You will need to find a debate with sides, usually somewhere in the literature that interprets a single issue differently. You can often find this by exploring footnotes and references in the course texts. (I am also happy to recommend sources in class or office hours.) Get specific about your paper’s thesis. Use academic articles and books foremost. But you may also use journalistic sources if they are high-quality (e.g., The Atlantic, The New Yorker, ProPublica).

For the annotated bibliography, you will need to use MLA or Chicago style. And it must include:

1. Undergraduates, you need 5 total sources. Graduates, you need 10 total sources.
   a. Cite at least one book from class. Give a 3-4 sentence summary of the relevant passages/definitions/arguments for your topic.
   b. Cite at least 3 academic sources not required for class. Each needs a 3-4-sentence summary of the source’s thesis/argument.
2. Write a 500-word reflection. In it, you will need to say: What is the main question all the authors are trying to address in this literature? What are the sides in the debate? Where do you fall in the debate? (Choose a side to agree with, disagree with, or qualify.) You may also reflect on what draws you to your topic. Or you can detail a specific case that captures your attention.

Final Paper: This is an academic paper. All killer, no filler. No fluffy intro. Lay out the sides in the debate. Make an explicit argument for your side. Your job is to become a quasi-expert and guide the reader through the debate. You are an intellectual tour guide. You give the lay of the land. And you end with your preferred destination. Things should be written clearly—such that any sophomore collegiate interested in your topic could understand. But you should try to say something novel, creative, provocative, clarificatory, or important—such that any scholar could appreciate your effort. All jargon needs explaining. Do not write obscure prose. This paper will not be perfect or exhaustive. No single paper is. But this paper is also not an informal reflection. Write 2500-
3000 words, the length of a conference paper you could submit somewhere. Undergraduates, your paper should be a sustained piece of research. Graduates, your paper should be too, but it should also be polished and informed by more research.

**SCHEDULE**

Everything is subject to change, so please keep up with the course Blackboard. If anything changes, I’ll try to give a week’s notice. Complete the readings and assignments by the time class begins.

**WEEK 1: Aristotle’s Ethics**

What is Aristotle’s definition of happiness? What is the function of humans? What is a virtue? What is weakness of will? What is pleasure, and how does it fit with a good life?

Monday, January 23:
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I: 3, 5, 7, 8 | II: 1, 6, 7, 9 | III: 5 – end | IV: skim | VII: 1 | VIII: 1, 3 | X: 3

Recommended:

**WEEK 2: Stoicism**

What is Epictetus’ Grand Division? What is the sufficiency thesis? What are preferred indifferents? What is tranquility?

Monday, January 30:
Epictetus, *The Handbook*
Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* (Skip I, read half, skim half)

Recommended:

**WEEK 3: Hellenistic Ethics**

What is self-sufficiency for Cynics? What is the tetrapharmakos for Epicureans? How do the different schools compare?

Monday, February 6:
Lucian, “The Cynic”

Recommended:

**WEEK 4: Character**

What is a moral character trait? How do contemporary philosophers and psychologists research them?

Monday, February 13:
Christian Miller, *The Character Gap*, chs. 1-6

Hellenistic Ethics Quiz (bonus for final paper)

**WEEK 5: Character**

What can we do to improve our characters? What does this imply for human behavior? What does this imply for us making positive and negative judgments about others?

Monday, February 20:
Miller, *Gap*, chs. 7-10

**WEEK 6: Adversity**

What is a moral dilemma/tragic dilemma/dirty-hands dilemma? What do they reveal about systems of moral value?

Monday, February 27:

**WEEK 7: Adversity**

Which values might guide us in tragic/unwinnable situations? What does this imply for the nature of morality? Can good people flourish in bad situations?

Monday, March 6:
Tessman, *Impossible*, chs. 6-9

Spring Break

Monday, March 13: NO CLASS
WEEK 8: Anger
What is anger? What sphere of life is it in for Aristotle? How does it interact with the will for Seneca? Why is it important for Cherry? Is she in dis/agreement with any of the ancient schools? How/why?

Monday, March 20:
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IV.5
Seneca, *On Anger* (De Ira)

WEEK 9: Stoicism & the Military
Which ideas seem most central to new forms of Stoicism? Why does Stoicism resonate today in the armed services? Should Stoicism guide the military? Civilians?

Monday, March 27:
Nancy Sherman, *Stoic Warriors*, chs. 1-3

WEEK 10: Stoicism & the Military
How do Stoics view anger and fear? How might other schools? Why would this be important to the military?

Monday, April 3:
Sherman, *Warriors*, chs. 4-5

WEEK 11: Stoicism & the Military
How do stoics view grief and the self? How might other schools? Why would this be important to the military?

Monday, April 10:
Sherman, *Warriors*, chs. 6-7

WEEK 12: Awesomeness
What are awesomeness and suckiness? Which ancient school would most agree that it is a virtue? What assumptions is Riggle making about happiness, justice, or character to define this trait?

Monday, April 17:
Nick Riggle, *On Being Awesome*, chs. 1-4
Research workshop (SEP, NDPR, NBiP, PhilPapers)

Quotes and Questions

WEEK 13: Awesomeness
How do awesomeness and suckiness interact with ethical and social values? Do you buy that awesomeness and suckiness are traits we should care about? How would Hellenistic schools judge Riggle’s theory?

Monday, April 24:
Riggle, *Awesome*, chs. 5-7

WEEK 14: Paper Workshop
What questions do you have about your topic? Are you running into any problems researching/writing? Do you have any questions about writing a philosophy paper?

Monday, May 1:
Proposal/Annotated Bibliography & Presentations

Finals Week
Final Paper Due: Tuesday, May 9th, emailed.

Syllabus prepared by G. M. Trujillo, Jr. on 17 January 2023
Philosophy’s hard. For everyone. The best students approach the subject with humility, curiosity, and a willingness to mess up. Insight has notoriously bad manners, coming when it pleases and resisting eloquent expression. I’ll make mistakes discussing arguments, and you will too. The classroom is a lab for testing ideas, not a museum for pristine dogma. That’s why we must be open-minded, civil, and cooperative in class. Respect each other’s names, pronouns, and stances. And please do not advocate for the Devil, as he has adequate representation. I will not tolerate rudeness. We’re here to become better thinkers. Sure, we’ll construct and critique, explore and squabble. But never without realizing we’re in this together. Be human in discussion. When you’re unsure of whether you should say something, ask: Does it need to be said? By me? Right now? If no to any of those questions, maybe hold off and talk with me after class.

If the classroom environment is counter-productive in any way, you may always talk with me before or after class, send me an e-mail, or slip an anonymous note under my office door. I will do my best to foster a constructive environment. We’re in this discussion together, and I learn a lot from my students. So, if you feel I’ve crossed the line, ignored an important perspective, or plain gotten something wrong, you may always confront me.

To take something from philosophy, you need to engage the ideas. That means reading the assignments with care and attention, as well as showing up to class with questions or comments about specific problems in the texts. Attentive readers often ask:

1. What’s the author’s thesis / main idea in the reading?
2. What is one argument that the author makes? Is it elegant or intricate, generalizable or reductive?
3. Is the conclusion of the argument true or false? Does the support offered connect strongly or weakly?
4. Which idea in the paper is the clearest / best / strongest? Why?
5. Which idea in the paper is the least clear / worst / weakest? How could the author improve it?
6. What’s the author’s main point on page X, paragraph Y? Why is it compelling/repulsive?
7. How does this work compare with others? Is the debate missing a perspective or idea?
8. Is there a word or phrase that seems important to the author that isn’t clear?

Come up with a system to annotate your books. Put stars next to passages that you love. Put Xs next to passages that you hate. Put ?s next to passages or words you don’t understand. Underline or highlight important ideas. Put a couple words out to the side to say what a page or paragraph addresses. The more you can do to be active while reading, the better.

For participation, you don’t have to be an extrovert. If you don’t like talking, chat with me in office hours, or share a passage from the text that struck you and ask the class what they think. Also note, just because you speak in class doesn’t mean it’s participation. Quality matters.

“Isn’t it all just subjective/relative?” and “Doesn’t this come down to semantics?” are questions that are usually unhelpful. Dig deeper. Try to figure out what evidence makes something subjective/relative, or which disagreement or equivocation makes something seem a mere semantic dispute. We can start with these questions, but we almost always need to go beyond them. As a general trick: get specific. Questions almost always start broad, but as you gain knowledge, they focus. Ask whatever. But when you think through issues on your own time, spend a few moments really feeling what bothers or intrigues you.
**ACCOMMODATIONS**

UTEP is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. Students requesting an accommodation based on a disability must register with the UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at (915) 747-5148, or email them at cass@utep.edu, or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal.

**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another as one’s own. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All suspected violations of academic integrity at The University of Texas at El Paso must be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR) for possible disciplinary action. Please visit HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline.

**CLASS RECORDING**

Recording of class meetings in video or audio is prohibited. Doing so may result in disciplinary action.

**COPYRIGHT STATEMENT**

All materials used in this course are protected by copyright law. The course materials are only for the use of students currently enrolled in this course and only for the purpose of this course. They may not be further disseminated.

**MAKE-UP WORK**

Make-up work will be given only in the case of a documented emergency. Note that make-up work may be in a different format than the original work, may require more intensive preparation, and may be graded with penalty points. If you miss an assignment and the reason is not considered excusable, you will receive a zero. It is therefore important to reach out to the instructor (in advance if at all possible) to explain with proper documentation why you missed a given course requirement. Once a deadline has been established for make-up work, no further extensions or exceptions will be granted.

**DROP POLICY**

According to UTEP Curriculum and Classroom Policies: “When, in the judgment of the instructor, a student has been absent to such a degree as to impair his or her status relative to credit for the course, the instructor may drop the student from the class with a grade of “W” before the course drop deadline and with a grade of “F” after the course drop deadline.” See academic regulations in the UTEP Undergraduate Catalog for a list of excused absences. If you feel you are unable to complete the course successfully, notify the instructor and contact the Registrar’s Office to initiate the drop process. If you do not, you are at risk of receiving an “F” for the course.

**INCOMPLETE GRADES**

Incomplete grades may be requested only in exceptional circumstances after you have completed at least half of the course requirements. Talk to me immediately if you believe an incomplete is warranted. If granted, we will establish a contract of work to be completed with deadlines.
Sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment, sexual assault, and any other nonconsensual behavior of a sexual nature) and sex discrimination violate University policies. Students experiencing such behavior may obtain support from the Counseling and Psychological Services [(915) 747-5302] and Student Health and Wellness Center [(915) 747-5624]. Title IX violations should be reported. For more information, contact the Dean of Students Office [(915) 747-5648], the Title IX Office [(915) 747-8358], or UTEP Police Department [(915) 747-5611].

Disclosure to University faculty or instructors of sexual misconduct, domestic violence, dating violence, or sex discrimination occurring on campus, in a University-sponsored program, or involving a campus visitor or University student or employee (whether current or former) is not confidential under Title IX. Faculty and instructors must forward such reports, including names and circumstances, to the University’s Title IX officer.

COVID-19 ACCOMODATIONS

Students are not permitted on campus when they have a positive COVID-19 test, exposure or symptoms. If you are not permitted on campus, you should contact me as soon as possible so we can arrange necessary and appropriate accommodations. Students who are considered high risk according to CDC guidelines and/or those who live with individuals who are considered high risk may contact Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) to discuss temporary accommodations.

COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS

You must STAY AT HOME and REPORT if you (1) have been diagnosed with COVID-19, (2) are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, or (3) have had recent contact with a person who has received a positive coronavirus test. Reports should be made at screening.utep.edu. If you know of anyone who should report any of these three criteria, you should encourage them to report. If the individual cannot report, you can report on their behalf by sending an email to COVIDaction@utep.edu. Under no circumstances should anyone come to class when feeling ill or exhibiting any of the known COVID-19 symptoms. Students are advised to minimize the number of encounters with others to avoid infection.

You must wear a face covering over your nose and mouth at all times in this class. If you choose not to wear a face covering, you may not enter the classroom. If you remove your face covering, you will be asked to put it on or leave the classroom. Students who refuse to wear a face covering and follow preventive COVID-19 guidelines will be dismissed from the class and will be subject to disciplinary action according to Section 1.2.3 Health and Safety and Section 1.2.2.5 Disruptions in the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. Please note that if COVID-19 conditions deteriorate in the City of El Paso, all course and lab activities may be transitioned to remote delivery.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

But by the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- Ask questions about a philosophical piece’s word choice, argumentative structure, or overall purpose.
- Identify theses of philosophical arguments and evaluate the argument’s evidence.
- Use the principle of charity to address enthymemes.
- Define key philosophical words and phrases.
- Express positions on issues lucidly and succinctly, considering relevant complexities and counterarguments.

Every day, students will read, evaluate, and synthesize texts from primary and secondary materials in preparation for class, and participation activities will allow students to practice these skills while the instructor offers feedback. The very nature of these issues requires that students learn to analyze the relationship between (a) sociocultural factors in their historical contexts, (b) the intellectual work that inquiry takes, and (c) the creativity expression that certain problems necessitate. The readings and units are designed to get students to see issues from multiple points of view—historical, social, cultural, and philosophical. And through participation activities,
writing reflections, and exams, students will learn to communicate effectively in both speech and writing, especially by making arguments that interpret the texts and offer evidence for the view expressed.

**UTEP RESOURCES**

### Technology and Academic Resources

**HELP DESK** (Library, Rm. 300, helpdesk@utep.edu, (915) 747-4357 (HELP), utep.edu/technologysupport/):
Students experiencing technological challenges (email, Blackboard, software) can submit a work ticket to the UTEP Helpdesk for help. Contact the Helpdesk via phone, email, chat, website, or in person if on campus.

**UTEP LIBRARY** (ask@utep.libanswers.com, (915) 747-5643, utep.edu/library/):
Access a wide range of resources, including online, full-text access to thousands of journals and eBooks plus reference service and librarian assistance for enrolled students.

**UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER (UWC)** (Library, Main Floor, uwctutors@utep.edu, (915) 747-5112, utep.edu/uwc/):
Submit papers here for assistance with writing style and formatting, ask a tutor for help and explore other writing resources.

**HISTORY TUTORING CENTER (HTC)** (Liberal Arts Building, Rm. 320, history@utep.edu, (915) 747-5508):
Receive assistance with writing history papers, get help from a tutor and explore other history resources.

### Individual Resources

**MILITARY STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER** (Mike Loya Academic Services Bldg., Rm. 130, mssc@utep.edu, (915) 747-5342, utep.edu/student-affairs/mssc/): Assists personnel in any branch of service to reach their educational goals.

**CENTER FOR ACCOMMODATIONS AND SUPPORT SERVICES** (Union East, Rm. 106, cass@utep.edu, (915) 747-5148, utep.edu/student-affairs/cass/): Assists students with ADA-related accommodations for coursework, housing, and internships.

**COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES** (Union West, Rm. 202, caps@utep.edu, (915) 747-5302, utep.edu/student-affairs/counsel/): Provides a variety of counseling services including individual, couples, and group sessions as well as career and disability assessments.

**STUDENT HEALTH AND WELLNESS CENTER** (Union East, Ste. 100, studenthealth@utep.edu, (915) 747-5624, utep.edu/chs/shc/): Addresses health care needs of all UTEP students.

**DEAN OF STUDENTS OFFICE** (Union West, Rm. 102, DOS@utep.edu, (915) 747-5648, utep.edu/student-affairs/dean-of-students-office/): Creates a culture of care for students by providing exemplary programs and services designed to enhance success.

**DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS** (Union East, Rm. 301, studentaffairs@utep.edu, (915) 747-5076, utep.edu/student-affairs/): Supports student success inside and outside the classroom.

**OFFICE OF STUDENT FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS** (utep.edu/student-affairs/student-fellowships-awards/index.html)

**TITLE IX OFFICE** (Kelly Hall, Rm. 312, TitleIX@utep.edu, (915) 747-8358, utep.edu/titleix/):
Protects students, employees, applicants for admission and employment, and other persons from all forms of sex discrimination including sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, and acts of sexual violence.

**UTEP POLICE DEPARTMENT** (4118 Sun Bowl Drive, next to Facility Services, police@utep.edu, (915) 747-5611)

**SUBMIT A REPORT** (utep.edu/student-affairs/osccr/report/): Online forms for reportable offenses at UTEP.