

ARISTOTELIAN NATURALISM

PHI 5360

PROFESSOR: Dr. Anne Jeffrey

MEETINGS: M 2:30 -5:15 pm

COURSE SITE: Canvas

COFFEE HOURS: F 12-2 at Pinewood or by appointment

This course is designed to introduce you to Neo-Aristotelian ethical naturalism, cultivate understanding of the major debates in the contemporary literature, and foster competency in your original writing on at least one topic within that literature.

A NOTE BEFORE BEGINNING

Graduate school can be trying for even the most psychologically healthy and socially supported person. I want you to succeed as students, but more importantly, I care about your thriving as human beings.

You are training for a profession with frequent submission deadlines and intense pressures to be productive; so it will behoove you to get in the habit of recognizing your own limitations, planning around them well, and being able to communicate early and effectively with others about them when they impact your professional duties. This class is a great place to practice. If you experience an issue that may impede your progress in the course, please communicate with me as soon as this comes to your attention and propose an idea for moving forward so we can work together to find an optimal solution. I commit to extending grace and understanding to you, and I hope you'll join me in extending grace to each other. We never know what difficulties others are facing outside the classroom that are affecting them in the classroom.

If you are in need of psychological support, please call the Counseling Center at 254-710-2467 or Chaplain Burt Burleson at 254-710-3517.

WHAT IS THIS COURSE ABOUT?



The Eyed Walnut Grove, 2019, acrylic and collage on canvas, 25" x 35" Mary Lou Zelazny

In the late 20th century, after a period in which anglophone ethics had been dominated by theories focusing on the meaning of moral terms and skepticism

about moral realism, some moral philosophers began a process of attempting to recover Aristotle's theory of ethics. A major hurdle, at this juncture, was Aristotle's teleological conception of natures. Ridiculing the theory as unscientific or objectionably theistic, many modern philosophers resisted including Aristotelian virtue ethics as a serious contender, rivaling Kantian and utilitarian theories, much less quasi- and anti-realism about ethics.

In this course we will first survey some of the work of key figures who successfully reintroduced Aristotelian ethics as a form of naturalism into philosophical discussions of ethics. Here we will be concerned with what makes a contemporary theory "Aristotelian"— common features and core claims of Aristotelian naturalism.

Then, we will turn to "challenges from without": arguments against contemporary Aristotelian naturalism raised by those who remain unconvinced that it offers a viable and genuinely distinctive ethics and metaethics. Finally, we will look at "challenges from within": criticisms and objections raised in intramural debates among proponents of Aristotelian naturalism.

This is a collaborative effort. We'll build a community with mutual respect, esteem, encouragement, and a shared desire for understanding this thread of contemporary ethical theory and the truth about the human good better.

WHAT WILL WE READ?



We will read various articles and excerpts from books, all of which will be available freely for you through Canvas. Some of the OUP books are available to you in their entirety electronically through the Baylor library. We will read portions of:

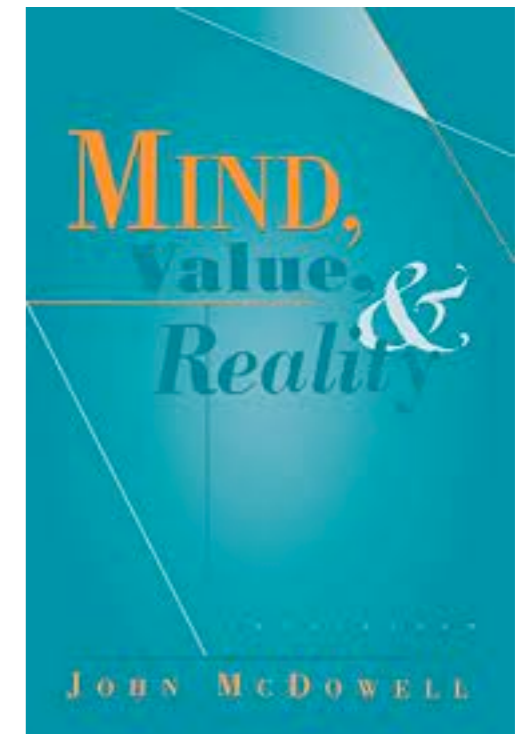
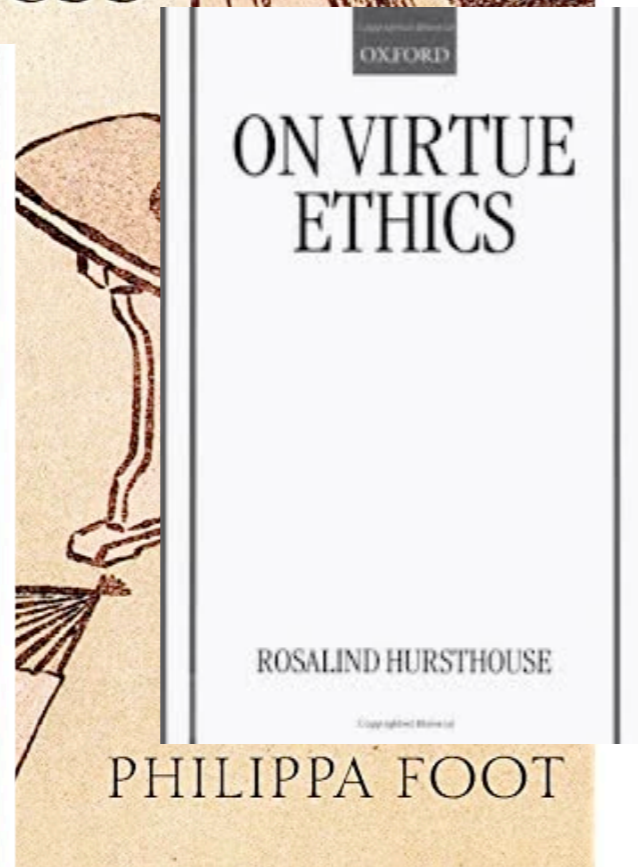
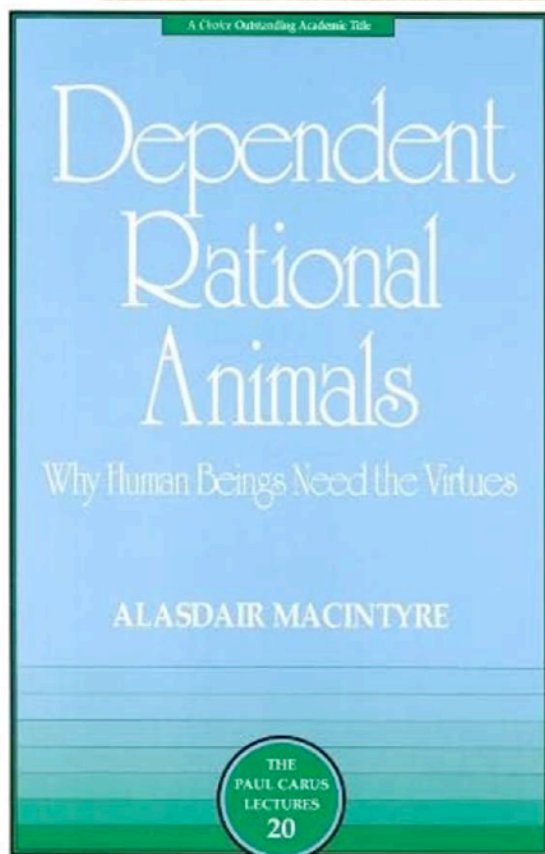
Foot, Philippa, *Natural Goodness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)

Hursthouse, Rosalind, *On Virtue Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)

MacIntyre, Alasdair, *Dependent Rational Animals*, Chicago: Open Court Press, 1999)

McDowell, John, *Mind, Value, and Reality*

Thompson, Michael, *Life and Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)



WHAT ARE THE COURSE GOALS?

The course goals are the intangible aims I hope you'll accomplish by the end of the semester. Your measurable progress towards these goals will be assessed by assignments designed for you to meet the tangible, specific **course objectives**.

There are 8 course objectives. Assignments are assessed using rubrics with the course objectives. An objective is either met or not (1 or 0) on individual assignments. You will have multiple opportunities to meet each objective. Your final grade is based on the number of times you meet the course objectives (you get one point each time you meet an objective). See below

ARTICULATE UNDERSTANDING OF NEO-ARISTOTELIAN VIEWS IN ETHICS

- 1 Identify and accurately articulate main theses neo-Aristotelians hold in ethics and metaethics
- 2 Communicate why a neo-Aristotelian ethical or metaethical thesis matters in the context of broader debates

MASTER ARGUMENTS ABOUT NEO-ARISTOTELIAN ETHICAL VIEWS

- 3 Accurately and charitably reconstruct an argument for a view in neo-Aristotelian ethics or metaethics from course texts
- 4 Identify and accurately summarize objections to or arguments against a view in neo-Aristotelian ethics or metaethics in the literature
- 5 Explain the context for the philosophical debate or inquiry in which particular arguments for or against neo-Aristotelian views in ethics or metaethics emerge

DEVELOP AND DEFEND AN ORIGINAL VIEW ON AN ISSUE RELEVANT TO NEO-ARISTOTELIAN ETHICS AND METAETHICS

- 6 Communicate an interesting and original claim pertaining to neo-Aristotelian naturalism
- 7 Advance a novel, valid argument for your claim

ENGAGE FRUITFULLY WITH PEERS IN PHILOSOPHICAL DISCUSSION

- 8 Communicate respectfully and thoughtfully in philosophical discussion with your fellow students

WHAT WILL WE DO?

PRÉCIS

Write a concise (1-2 page) summary of an assigned reading before class the day the reading is due. You can meet objectives 1-4. You should accurately restate the author's thesis (objective 1) contextualize it in the debate, explaining why the thesis under consideration matters (objective 2); recount the major argument(s) in your own words (objective 3). Space permitting, you may also want to outline extant objections from the literature (objective 4). This should be turned in the day the reading is due before class, and no later than [2/27](#).

PRESENTATION

Each student will give one 10-15 minute presentation in which you teach one of the readings. You should aim to explain the key thesis or theses the author is advancing (objective 1), contextualize that thesis in the broader literature (objective 2), accurately and charitably review a major argument in the text (objective 3), and engage your peers in a constructive discussion about the main view and arguments (objective 8). Time permitting, you may raise your own problems or objections, although this is optional. You must sign up the first week of class for a slot.



FINAL PAPER

You'll complete your final paper in two stages— a working draft by **4/3**, give comments on a peer's paper on **4/17**, and submit the final draft by **5/5**.

Working Draft. This draft should be conference length, around 3,000 words. It will at least give the skeletal version of the main argument for your original thesis. *You must make an appointment to meet with me to discuss and get approval on your topic in advance.* It should be in good enough shape to present, but perhaps not complete or polished enough to submit for publication. You'll turn this in to me and one peer, and circulate a long abstract (500 words) to the class on 4/3.

You should aim to make an original claim, support a claim with an original argument, provide a novel objection, or identify a new problem for some topic in neo-Aristotelian ethics or metaethics (objective 6, 7). Make sure to situate your claim and argument within the broader literature; this will provide you an opportunity to meet objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. You'll want your discussion to be sufficiently focussed, so I don't recommend trying to meet all of the objectives 1-7.

Peer Comments. Everyone will get comments and be responsible for giving comments on someone else's paper on 4/17 at our paper workshop. The comments should proceed as in APA comments, highlighting the author's main argumentative move(s) and then raising potential worries, or tracing interesting implications, or drawing attention to a suppressed assumption. You can meet objectives in your comments, for instance, by correcting a restatement of an argument from a course text (objective 3) or explaining why a certain thesis pertaining to AN matters (objective 2).

Final Paper. This draft should take into account feedback from the paper workshop and me. Expect this final paper to be 5-7,000 words, including footnotes and references. It should follow Chicago manual of style guidelines. You will earn points for whatever objectives you met in the final draft and the peer commentary. Submit this no later than 11:59 pm on 5/5.

HOW ARE WE ASSESSED?

Each point represents one time you met one of the 8 course objectives.

A (4.0)	12 pts
A- (3.67)	11 pts
B+ (3.5)	10 pts
B (3.0)	9 pts
B- (2.67)	8 pts
C+ (2.5)	7 pts
C (2.0)	6 pts
C- (1.67)	5 pts

You can expect transparent, formative assessment of all your work. This course implements **standards-based grading**— a method that proven highly effective in secondary and postsecondary education for improving student learning outcomes.

Standards-based grading is known for helping focus attention on learning portable skills, encouraging students to take responsibility for their learning, and offering feedback and assessment that more effectively generates improvement. Each grade corresponds to a number of points you've accumulated by meeting course objectives. Thus, the grade earned reflects your progress towards the learning goals measured by objectives.

READING SCHEDULE

UNIT 1: THE STRUCTURE OF ARISTOTELIAN NATURALISM		
1/23	Aristotelian natural goodness	Philippa Foot, <i>Natural Goodness</i> , chs. 1-2 Michael Thompson, <i>Apprehending Human Form</i> , selections
1/30	Is moral goodness natural goodness?	Philippa Foot, <i>Natural Goodness</i> , chs. 3, 5
2/6	What is the human good?	MacIntyre, <i>Dependent Rational Animals</i> , chs. 3-6
2/13	What makes a habit a moral virtue?	John Hacker-Wright, "Virtues as Perfections of Human Powers" Rosalind Hursthouse, <i>On Virtue Ethics</i> , selections Philippa Foot, <i>Virtues and Vices</i> , selections
2/20	What is the role of practical reason?	Jennifer Frey, "How to be an Ethical Naturalist" John McDowell, "Two Sorts of Naturalism" Philippa Foot, <i>Natural Goodness</i> , ch. 4
2/27	What is the human form of life? <i>*Précis due*</i>	Micah Lott, "Moral Virtue as Knowledge of the Human Form" Rosalind Hursthouse, "Human Nature and Aristotelian Virtue Ethics"
UNIT 2: CHALLENGES FROM WITHOUT		
3/6	SPRING BREAK	
3/13	How does Aristotelian naturalism differ from Kantianism?	Mark LeBar, "Aristotelian Constructivism" Tim Lewens, "Species Natures"
3/20	Is Aristotelian naturalism ableist, sexist, classist?	Sophia Connell, TBD Michael Slote, <i>The Virtues of Imperfection</i> , selections Alasdair MacIntyre, <i>Dependent Rational Animals</i> , ch. 1
3/25*	Is Aristotelian naturalism egoistic?	Eric Wiland, "What is Group Well-Being?" Erik Wielenberg, "Egoism and Eudaimonia"
3/27	Is Aristotelian naturalism empirically sensitive?	Parissa Moosavi, "Natural Goodness without Natural History" Parissa Moosavi, "Aristotelian Naturalism as Ethical Naturalism" Christopher Toner, "Sorts of Naturalism"

DUE TOPIC

READING ASSIGNMENTS

UNIT 3: CHALLENGES FROM WITHIN		
4/3	Are moral virtues universal or relative? *Paper draft due*	Dominic Scott, "One Virtue or Many?" Martha Nussbaum, "Non-Relative Virtue" Being and Becoming Good, ch. 3 draft
4/10	EASTER BREAK	
4/17	Peer review workshop *Peer comments due*	
4/24	What is the happiest of human lives?	Gavin Lawrence, "Aristotle and the Ideal Life" Gabriel Richardson Lear, Happy Lives and the Highest Good, selections
5/1	Is rationality the differentia of the human life form?	Matthew Shea, "The Quality of Life is Not Strained: Disability, Human Nature, Well-Being, and Relationships" David McPherson, Virtue and Meaning, selections
5/5	*Final paper due*	

WHAT RESOURCES DO WE HAVE?

COFFEE HOURS

I hope you'll take time to visit with me — over coffee or tea at Pinewood. This offers me a chance to get to know you better, to learn about your research and teaching interests and backgrounds, as well as to extend our discussion of virtue theory outside class. [Make an appointment!](#)

FOSTER SUCCESS CENTER

Everyone in our class has the ability to meet the goals and objectives outlined. It's tempting to think that student success centers and writing centers are for undergraduates, but we can all improve our writing and work habits. As a faculty member I've participated in seminars offered by the Faculty Hub on research and writing. Foster Success Center is here to help you, too, so I highly encourage you to let them partner with you in your academic journey.

UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER & LIBRARIANS

The [University Writing Center](#) can help you at any stage from brainstorming to editing. And our librarians (bill_hair@baylor.edu) can help you learn how to research using methods that will take your writing to the next level and prepare you for dissertation-level work. The library has even compiled a Philosophy [resource guide](#) for us.

OALA

If you need academic accommodations related to having different ability/disability, please let me know as soon as the semester starts and get signed up with the Office of Access and Learning Accommodation. They'll help walk you through documentation and information.

TITLE IX AND EQUITY

Baylor University does not tolerate unlawful harassment or discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, race, color, disability, national origin, ancestry, age over 40, citizenship, genetic information or the refusal to submit to genetic test, past, current, or prospective service in the uniformed services, or any other protected characteristic under federal, Texas, or local law.

If you or someone you know would like help related to an experience involving sexual or gender based harassment, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, stalking, intimate partner violence, or retaliation for reporting one of these types of prohibited conduct, please visit www.baylor.edu/titleix or call 254-710-8454 or email titleIX_Coordinator@baylor.edu .

If you or someone you know would like help related to an experience involving harassment excluding those listed above, or adverse action, based on protected characteristics, please visit www.baylor.edu/equity or call 254-710-7100 or email equity@baylor.edu .

The Office of Equity and Title IX understand the sensitive nature of these situations and can provide information about available on and off campus resources, such as counseling and psychological services, medical treatment, academic support, housing, advocacy, and other forms of assistance that may be available. Staff members at the office can also explain your rights and

procedural options. You will not be required to share your experience.

If you or someone you know feels unsafe or may be in imminent danger, please call the Baylor Police (254-710-2222) or Waco Police (911) immediately.

Except for Confidential Resources, all University Employees are designated Responsible Employees and thereby mandatory reporters of potential sexual and interpersonal misconduct violations. Confidential resources who do not have to report include those working in the Counseling Center, Health Center, and the University Chaplain.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

“We respectfully acknowledge that Baylor University in Waco and its original campus in Independence are on the land and territories originally occupied by Indigenous peoples including the Waco and Tawakoni of the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes, the Tonkawa, the N̄m̄n̄n̄ (Comanche), Karankawa, and Lipan Apache. These Indigenous peoples were dispossessed of and removed from their lands over centuries by European colonization and American expansionism. In recognition that these Native Nations are the original stewards of Baylor's campus locations, the University strives to build sustainable relationships with sovereign Native Nations and Indigenous communities through education offerings, partnerships, and community service.”

As a professor of Baylor, I enjoy and distribute benefits partly gained through these injustices and inequalities. This acknowledgement marks a commitment to the ongoing work of restoration, redemption, and God's justice for all people at Baylor University.

*Research done by Baylor Theater Department, 2020

