

PL 610 01 : Pleasure, Happiness and Ethics

Spring 07

DAY / TIME : W 2:00 - 4:00 P.M.

INSTRUCTOR : PROF. J.-L. SOLÈRE

OFFICE : DEP. OF PHILOSOPHY, # 390
21 Campanella Way, 3rd Floor

TEL : 2 - 4670

OFFICE HOURS : T & TH 1:00 – 2:00 P.M.

EMAIL : solere@bc.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION :

This class will not be a course on ethics properly speaking, but an inquiry on the status and the function of pleasure in psychological life widely construed. Such questions will be tackled as the nature of pleasure in itself and its different varieties: is pleasure a determinable psychological event? Is there one relevant model for all sorts of pleasures? Is this model a homeostatic one or are there pleasures not reducible to the suppression of some pain? Are pleasures quantifiable or do they differ qualitatively? Nonetheless, we will naturally examine *also* the role of pleasure in moral life and its relation to happiness. We will begin with the foundations of philosophical reflection on pleasure in the classical tradition: Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, the Stoics. We will then consider the problem of beatitude in Middle Ages (intellect vs. will, use and enjoyment), the controversies about pleasure and moral intention in early modern ethics (from Descartes to Hume), the modern reflection on esthetic pleasure (Burke, Kant), and make some forays in modern philosophy and psychology (utilitarianism and its critics, Freud).

READINGS :

Plato, *Philebus*, trans. Dorothea Frede, Hackett 1993.

Epicurus, *The Essential Epicurus*, trans. Eugene O'Connor, Prometheus Books 1993.

Cicero, *On Moral Ends*, Oxbow Books (David Brown Book Co.)

Mandeville, *The Fable Of The Bees And Other Writings*, Hackett 1997.

Hume, *Moral Philosophy*, Hackett 2006.

The Classical Utilitarians: Bentham And Mill, Hackett 2003.

Other texts selection to be given in class.

CLASS POLICY:

Texts assigned in the syllabus must be studied in advance for making the best of each class.

Attendance is mandatory. Unexcused (i.e. undocumented) absences result in penalties: 10 points loss for the first, 20 points loss for each of the subsequent ones.

COURSE CREDIT

A mid-term exam and a research paper (40% each), class participation (20%).

Scale: D- 60-63 D 64-67 D+ 68-69 C- 70-73 C 74-76 C+ 77-79 B- 80-83
B 84-87 B+ 88-90 A- 91-95* A 96-100*

* "I urge you to ... use these top grades only for truly outstanding work" (A&S Dean Joseph Quinn to BC faculty).

SYLLABUS**WEEK 1****Introduction****WEEK 2****Plato** (*Philebus*)**WEEK 3****Aristotle** (*Nicomachean Ethics*, VII and X)**WEEK 4****Epicurism:** Epicurus, the neo-epicurism (Montaigne, Gassendi)**WEEK 5****Stoicism** (Cicero, *On Moral Ends*)

WEEK 6

S. Augustine and medieval theology: use and enjoyment (Ockham, *Commentary on the Sentences*)

WEEK 7

Modern rationalism: Descartes (*Letters to Princess Elizabeth and Queen Christine*) and Spinoza (*Ethics*)

SPRING BREAK

WEEK 8

The empiricist simple picture: Hobbes (*On Human Nature*), Locke (*Essays on Human Understanding*), Leibniz (*New Essays on Human Understanding*)

Leibniz and the problem of pure love (*Opuscles*)

WEEK 9

Modern Augustinianism and its paradoxes: Pascal (*Pensées*), Nicole (*On charity and self-love*), Mandeville (*The Fable of the Bees*).

The eighteenth century hedonism (D'Holbach, *The System of Nature*, Diderot)

WEEK 10

Pleasures of a different type, 1: moral sense and beauty, Hutcheson (*An inquiry into the original of our ideas of beauty and virtue*), Burke (*A philosophical enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful*)

WEEK 11

Pleasures of a different type, 2: on the pleasantness of being ethical, Hume (*Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals, On the Delicacy, On the Standard of Taste*)

WEEK 12

Pleasures of a different type, 3: Kant and the esthetic pleasure (*Critique of Judgment*)

WEEK 13

Utilitarianism: Bentham (*Principles of Morals and Legislation*), J. S. Mill (*Utilitarianism*)
G. E. Moore's criticism (*Principia ethica*)

WEEK 14

Beyond the pleasure principle: Freud (*Civilization and its Discontent; Beyond ...*)

WEEK 15

Contemporary criticisms of the empiricist simple picture: G. Ryle ("Pleasure") and E. Anscombe ("On the Grammar of 'enjoy'")