

Rachel Fredericks

Phil 496: Senior Seminar (Winter 2013)  
Moral Partiality: Special Relationships and Special Responsibilities  
Syllabus

Professors: Rachel Fredericks & Dugald Owen

Email: rfredericks@fortlewis.edu

Class: Wednesdays, 3:45-6:45 p.m. in Reed Library 140

Office Hours: M 12:15-1:15 p.m., T& TH 3:30-4:30 p.m., & W 12:15-3:15 p.m. in Noble 212

### **Course Description and Goals**

In this course we explore challenging metaethical questions about the relation between morality and partiality. Historically, moral theories have described morality as a wholly impartial system (or at least have often been interpreted as doing so), but in recent decades, philosophers have posed a variety of challenges to such conceptions of morality for a variety of different reasons. In the first half of the course, we explore different ways of understanding what moral impartiality is, impartial morality's potential to be alienating, the demands and limits of morality, the aims of moral theory, and both practical and theoretical problems with wholly impartial forms of morality. In the second half of the course, we look at the ways partiality might figure in morality by investigating it in the context of various relationships, starting with "closer" relationships (with one's self, one's friends, one's family members) and considering relationships with more distant others as the term progresses (one's colleague's, one's companion animals, one's compatriots).

The aim of the course is to help you to understand contemporary arguments about moral partiality and, by examining them, to refine your own understanding of just what morality is. My objectives are to help you (1) increase your understanding of these philosophical issues and give you the necessary background to engage further with the contemporary literature on these topics; (2) enhance your ability to read and critically evaluate philosophical texts; (3) develop your skills in verbally communicating philosophical ideas; and (4) improve your philosophical writing skills.

### **Required Text**

*Partiality and Impartiality: Morality, Special Relationships, and the Wider World*. Edited by Brian Feltham and John Cottingham. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Additional readings not from the required text will be available online via the Moodle website for the class and are marked on the schedule with a \*. You should have all readings done before class on the day for which the readings are scheduled (and plan to read them again). Always bring a copy of the scheduled readings with you to class!

### **Schedule**

All groups of students are different in their interests, needs, and talents, so I reserve the right to make changes to this schedule (although I try to do that as little as possible and give as much warning as possible if/when I do).

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### PART I: CHALLENGES TO IMPARTIALIST MORALITY (AND MORAL THEORY)

Week 1 (1/9): Introduction to Partiality/Impartiality in Morality

Brian Feltham, "Introduction: Partiality and Impartiality in Ethics," pp. 1-25

Week 2 (1/16): Kinds of Impartiality and Their Appropriateness

Brad Hooker, "When is Impartiality Morally Appropriate?" pp. 26-41

Bernard Williams, "Persons, Character, and Morality," in A. O. Rorty, ed., *The Identities of Persons* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976): 197-216\* [Note: We will not discuss Williams' critique of Parfit, from the bottom of p. 201 to the top of p. 207.]

Week 3 (1/23): (Impartial) Morality and Alienation

**(1/22: Census Date)**

Stephen Darwall, "Responsibility within Relations," pp. 150-168

Peter Railton, "Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 13:2 (Spring 1984): 134-171\*

Week 4 (1/30): Morality's Demands and Their Limits

Susan Wolf, "Moral Saints," *Journal of Philosophy* 79:8 (August 1982): 419-439\*

Catherine Wilson, "On Some Alleged Limitations to Moral Endeavor," *Journal of Philosophy* 90:6 (June 1993): 275-289\*

Week 5 (2/6): Pragmatic Problems with Moral Impartiality

Margaret Urban Walker, "Partial Consideration," *Ethics* 101:4 (July 1991): 758-774\*

Marilyn Friedman, "The Impracticality of Impartiality," *The Journal of Philosophy* 86:11 Eighty-Sixth Annual Meeting American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division (November 1989): 645-656\*

Week 6 (2/13): Theoretical Problems with Moral Impartiality & Partiality

Amartya Sen, "Open and Closed Impartiality," *The Journal of Philosophy* 99:9 (September 2002): 445-469\*

John Cottingham, "Partiality, Favouritism and Morality," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 36:144 (July 1986): 357-373\*

Week 7 (2/20): Partiality and the Self

John Cottingham, "Impartiality and Ethical Formation," pp. 65-83

Maximilian de Gaynesford, "The Bishop, the Valet, the Wife, and the Ass: What Difference Does it Make if Something is Mine?" pp. 84-97

Sarah Stroud, "Permissible Partiality, Projects, and Plural Agency"

**Four Reading Responses must be done by today**

### PART II: MORAL PARTIALITY IN RELATIONSHIPS

Week 8 (2/27): Partiality in Relationships Generally

Samuel Scheffler, "Relationships and Responsibilities," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 26:3 (Summer 1997): 189-209\*

Samuel Scheffler, "Morality and Reasonable Partiality," pp. 98-130 (SEE NEXT PAGE)

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Niko Kolodny, "Which Relationships Justify Partiality? General Considerations and Problem Cases," pp. 169-193

ENJOY YOUR SPRING BREAK WEEK!

Week 9 (3/13): Friends

Jennifer Whiting, "Impersonal Friends," *Monist* 74:1 (January 1991): 3-30\*

Diane Jeske, "Friendship and Reasons of Intimacy," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 63:2 (September 2001): 329-346\*

Troy Jollimore, "Friendship Without Partiality," *Ratio* 13:1 (March 2000): 69-82\*

Week 10 (3/20): Friends & Epistemic Partiality

Marcia Baron, "Impartiality and Friendship," *Ethics* 101:4 (July 1991): 836-857\*

Sarah Stroud, "Epistemic Partiality in Friendship," *Ethics* 116:3 (April 2006): 498-524\*

Simon Keller, "Friendship and Belief," *Philosophical Papers* 33:3 (2004): 329-351\*

**Term Paper Thesis Statement and Outline DUE**

Week 11 (3/27): Family Members, Colleagues, and Animals

Diane Jeske, "Families, Friends, and Special Obligations," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 28:4 (December 1998): 527-555\*

Brenda Almond, "Reasonable Partiality in Professional Relationships," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 8:1/2 (April 2005): 155-168\*

Bernard Rollin, "Reasonable Partiality and Animal Ethics," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 8:1/2 (April 2005): 105-121\*

Week 12 (4/3): Compatriots

**(4/1: Withdraw date)**

Paul Gomberg, "Patriotism is Like Racism," *Ethics* 101:1 (October 1990): 144-150\*

David Miller, "Reasonable Partiality Towards Compatriots," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 8:1/2 (April 2005): 63-81\*

**Term Paper DUE**

**Fifth (or Final) Reading Response DUE**

Week 13 (4/10): Presentation of Term Papers

Week 14 (4/17): Continued Presentation of Term Papers

**Finals Week: Continued Presentation of Term Papers**

**Thursday, April 25, 4:30-6:30 p.m. in Library 140**

**Revised Term Papers DUE**

**Assessment**

Late work will not be accepted without penalty unless either (a) prior arrangements have been made with Rachel or (b) in case of documented illness or other emergency beyond the student's control. If the latter, the student must contact Rachel as soon as possible to make arrangements.

## Rachel Fredericks

Anyone who completes the paperwork to withdraw from the course before the W date (April 1) will receive a W for the course. Withdrawing after that date will result in one of the following. If one is passing the course at the time of withdrawal, the withdraw grade is a W. If one is failing the course at that time, the withdraw grade is an F.

Attendance and active participation in class discussions is crucial to success in mastering the course material for any class, as well as to the development of your philosophical skills, but this is especially true for seminars like this one. You are expected to come to class every time, not only with the understanding that comes from having carefully read all the assigned texts, but also with informed questions about the relevant readings, thoughts about how those readings are related to philosophical concepts/arguments/questions you have considered in other contexts, and your own views about the strengths/weaknesses of the arguments from the readings. The quality and quantity of your contributions to discussion will be the primary basis for this aspect of your grade, but participation in office hours and email exchanges with the professor will also be considered.

The reading response assignments for this course fall into two categories: those that are primarily descriptive/expository (which simply explain a key portion of the assigned reading), and those that are primarily critical/evaluative (which point to a relevant portion of the reading and explain what you think is potentially problematic/worrisome/unclear about it). The key to success on these is to keep focused very narrowly on ONE argument in the text and discuss it in detail. Each student must complete at least two expository reading responses and at least 2 critical reading responses, and at least one more of either sort, for a total of 5 reading responses. Students may choose which readings to respond to and therefore which weeks to turn in their reading responses, given two limitations: (1) four reading responses must be completed by February 20 and (2) students may not get complete reading responses the weeks during which they serve as expert presenters (see below). Students who wish to complete more than the required 5 assignments may do so, in which case I will count the highest scoring assignments of each of the two kinds. Students may not turn in more than one reading response per week. They should be 1-2 typed pages long and must be turned in at the end of class in hard copy. Students are welcome to take notes on them during class, but only the typed part will be graded.

Each student will be responsible for serving as an expert on two different articles, guiding class discussion about those articles during the relevant class period. Each student will be in charge of one article from weeks 2-7 of the class, and one from weeks 8-12. This involves creating an outline of the article, developing one possible objection to an argument in it, and writing three questions to guide discussion (all of which will be distributed in hard copy during class). Students **MUST** meet with Rachel during office hours (or by appointment) either the Monday or Tuesday before the class during which they will serve as expert to get feedback on their handouts.

Each student must also write a substantial term paper, on a topic of his/her choice, as long as that topic is relevant to the course. These will be about 12 pages long, but no more than 4,500 words. Students must get their topic approved by Rachel; to do so, students must submit, in writing (paper or email is fine), a thesis statement and brief outline of the paper (1-2 pages) by the beginning of class on March 20. These will not be graded, but failure to turn them in on time will result in a penalty to your paper grade of 10%. Term papers will be revised in light of comments from the professor, and presented to the class during finals week (when the revisions are due).

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Participation: 80 points (20% of final grade)  
Reading Responses: 20 points each x 5 = 100 points (25% of final grade)  
Course Material Presentations: 20 points each x 2 = 40 points (10% of final grade)  
Term Paper: 140 points (35% of final grade)  
Term Paper Revision: 20 points (5% of final grade)  
Term Paper Presentation: 20 points (5% of final grade)  
Total: 400 points

If you earn the points listed below, you are guaranteed *at least* the corresponding letter grade. Grades will not be curved, but I will, at my discretion, give a bonus to the final grade of students who show *significant* improvement over the course of the term.

A = 95% = 380 points	B- = 80% = 320 points	D+ = 67% = 268 points
A- = 90% = 360 points	C+ = 77% = 308 points	D = 63% = 252 points
B+ = 87% = 348 points	C = 73% = 292 points	D- = 60% = 240 points
B = 83% = 332 points	C- = 70% = 280 points	

### Assessment Criteria:

In general, written assignments will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Structure and Organization
  - a. Is the assignment well organized?
  - b. Does it have a clear introductory paragraph, thesis statement, and concluding paragraph?
  - c. Are there clear transitions between paragraphs and sections of the assignment?
2. Exposition and Interpretation
  - a. Do you give a clear and charitable interpretation of the view(s) under consideration?
  - b. Do you make clear the underlying assumptions of the view(s) as well as their implications?
  - c. Do you support your interpretations with relevant citations to the text?
3. Argument and Critical Evaluation
  - a. Do you provide good arguments for the claims you make? Is it obvious what they are?
  - b. When critiquing a view, do you consider possible responses to that critique?
  - c. Do you show that you have thought independently about the problem in question?
4. Writing Style
  - a. Is your prose style clear and easy to understand?
  - b. Are there any recurring grammatical or spelling errors?
  - c. Do you avoid awkward and confusing sentence structures?

### **Student Conduct**

A respectful, civil environment is crucial for learning any subject, but especially so for philosophy, which involves questioning, defending, and critiquing the beliefs and practices that mean the most to us as individuals. Conduct that interferes with other students' ability to learn or the professor's ability to teach is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. In particular, students should not interrupt other students or the professor, otherwise dominate class discussion, disparage or otherwise disrespect the ideas and beliefs of others (which does not mean that one cannot respectfully provide reasons to disagree), habitually arrive late or leave early, make or receive phone calls, text, surf the internet, or use other technology that is not directly related to course goals.

### **Academic Integrity**

Plagiarism is the use of creations, ideas, or words of others without formally acknowledging the author or source through appropriate use of quotation marks, references, and the like. Plagiarizing is presenting someone else's work as one's own original work or thought. This constitutes plagiarism whether it is intentional or unintentional. **If I discover that a student has plagiarized or cheated in any way, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment and, depending on the severity of the offense, may also fail the course.** More detailed resources explaining what counts as plagiarism and how to avoid plagiarizing will be posted on the Moodle site for the class. If, after investigating those resources, you still have questions about how to cite appropriately, please contact me *as soon as possible*.

### **Concerns or Problems**

If you have a concern or problem relating to any aspect of the course or your performance in it, get in touch with me, the professor, as soon as possible. If I do not know about the issue, I cannot help, and I want to help. If discussing your concern with me (and implementing any plan we agree on) does not resolve the issue, your next step would be to contact the acting chair of the department, Dr. Dugald Owen.

### **Disability Accommodations**

Fort Lewis College is committed to providing all students a liberal arts education through a personalized learning environment. If you think you have or you do have a documented disability which will need reasonable academic accommodations, please call Dian Jenkins, the Coordinator of Disability Service, 280 Noble Hall, 247-7459, for an appointment as soon as possible. If you qualify for services through the Disability office, bring your letter of accommodations to me as soon as possible.

### **Equal Opportunity**

Fort Lewis College does not discriminate on the basis of race, age, color, religion, national origin, gender, disability, sexual orientation, political beliefs, or veteran status. Accordingly, equal opportunity for employment, admission, and education shall be extended to all persons. The College shall promote equal opportunity, equal treatment, and affirmative action efforts to increase the diversity of students, faculty, and staff.