

Philosophy 306 – The Philosophy of Emotion
Fall 2009 – Syllabus

Professor: Dr. Larry A. Herzberg

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Time/Location: 3:00 - 4:30 MW, S. Halsey 212.

Office Hours: MW 4:30 - 5:30, F 1:15-2:15, Polk Library 69 (in the North Basement).

Texts: The readings for this class are available on our D2L site. See bibliography below.

Consider all of the emotions that you may have experienced today. Perhaps you felt irritated at having to get up so early, anxious about making your classes on time, angry at a reckless driver, proud as you told a friend about your good grades from last semester, determined to do even better this semester. You may also have felt inspired by a film you saw last night, ashamed of having skipped a class, attracted to a total stranger, overjoyed by the prospect of seeing your best friend after a long absence, curious about a headline on a newspaper you glanced at. In fact, very little occurs in our lives towards which we do not have some sort of emotional attitude.

But what, if anything, do all of these attitudes have in common that justifies our grouping them together under one label: “emotion”? And how do these many types of emotion relate to *other* sorts of mental state, such as belief, evaluation, desire, perception and “simple sensation” (like pain)? How do our thoughts affect our emotions, and our emotions affect our thoughts? What does it mean to assert that some emotions are *reasonable* while others are *unreasonable* under a given set of circumstances? What, if anything, is the *value* of emotion in our lives?

We will explore various answers that have been offered to these and similar questions by reading some of the most influential philosophical texts on the subject, written by both philosophers and psychologists, from both historical and contemporary sources.

Grading- There will be **two paper assignments**, each about 5 pages long. Papers will be **submitted through Turnitin** in Microsoft Word format. Each paper will be worth 25% of your course grade. The first will be due around the seventh week of class, the second on the last day of class. A **cumulative final exam**, also worth 25% of your course grade, will be given in class. The remaining 25% of your grade will be based on your **regular attendance, “pop quizzes”, and participation**. “Participation” here includes your making relevant comments and asking thoughtful questions.

Readings- The philosophy of emotion, like the psychology of emotion, has become quite vast in the last forty or so years. A debate that has figured prominently in the philosophical literature focuses on the roles played by feeling (sensation) and cognition (mainly evaluative thought) in emotion occurrence. Which is more central to emotion occurrence? Another related question concerns the categories by which emotions are properly sorted into different types. What, for instance, distinguishes jealousy from envy, or guilt from shame, or joy from inspiration? The feelings themselves? The behaviors they motivate? The thoughts causing, accompanying, or resulting from the feelings? The situations in which they typically occur? Physiological (or neurological) factors? Evolutionary factors? Our readings provide a somewhat representative sample of the philosophical views on these topics.

Handouts- To help you understand the readings and guide in-class discussions, I've placed handouts on our D2L web site. Please print them out *before* each class.

On asking questions- You are *strongly encouraged* to ask substantive and/or clarificatory questions during class. Many of our readings involve vocabulary you probably have never encountered before. Some of the terms are defined in different ways by different philosophers (or worse, left only implicitly defined by the context), and in such cases it is unlikely that a dictionary – or even a web search – will be of much help. It is important that this not discourage you from trying to understand the views being expressed. You are doing many other students a service by asking questions in class, but if you feel uncomfortable doing that, please come see me during office hours. I'm here to help!

Readings

Introductory material

William Lyons, "The Philosophy of Cognition and Emotion"

Jesse Prinz, "Piecing Passions Apart"

Jesse Prinz, "The Zajonc/Lazarus Debate"

Unit 1

William James, "The Emotions"

Antonio Damasio, "William James And The Modern Neurobiology of Emotion"

Sigmund Freud, "Anxiety"

Jesse Prinz, "Embodied Appraisals"

Your **first paper** will be on the introductory readings and Unit 1. Topics to be announced.

Unit 2

Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Book II (Excerpt)

Robert Gordon, "Formal insight"

Robert Gordon, "Pivotal distinctions"

Robert Solomon, "Emotions and Choice"

Ronald de Sousa, "Emotions and Their Objects"

Ronald de Sousa, "The Rational and the Objective" [if time permits]

Your **second paper** will be on Unit 2 readings. Topics to be announced.

The final exam will check your recall and comprehension of the general points covered in the readings above and lectures on them. I've posted a **study guide on D2L** that you can reference *before* you do the readings and attend lectures. This will help you to take notes on information you'll need to retain for the final exam.

Bibliography

Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Translated by Rhys Roberts, New York: Modern Library, 1954. [Pages 90-121]

Damasio, Antonio R., “William James and The Modern Neurobiology of Emotion”, in *Emotion, Evolution, and Rationality*, D. Evans and P. Cruse (eds.), Oxford University Press (USA), 2004.

De Sousa, Ronald, *The Rationality of Emotion*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1987. [Chapter 5 and part of Chapter 6 (pages 141-158)].

Freud, Sigmund, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, [1924] Washington Square Press, New York, 1963. [Lecture XXV, “Anxiety”]

Gordon, Robert M., *The structure of emotions : investigations in cognitive philosophy*, Cambridge: CUP, 1987. [Chapters 1, “Formal Insight”, and 2, “Pivotal Distinctions”]

James, William, (1918) *The Principles of Psychology, Vol. II*, HUP, Cambridge: 1981. [Excerpts from Chapter XXV, “The Emotions”]

Lyons, William, “The Philosophy of Cognition and Emotion”, in *Handbook of Cognition and Emotion*, (eds., Dalglish T. and Power, M.) West Sussex: Wiley, 1999. [Pages 21-44]

Prinz, Jesse J., *Gut Reactions – A Perceptual Theory of Emotion*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. [Chapters 1, 3, and an excerpt from Chapter 2 (pgs. 33-41)]

Solomon, Robert C., “Emotions and Choice”, reprinted in *What is an Emotion?* (eds. Calhoun, C., & Solomon, R. C.), Oxford: OUP, 1984