

Philosophy 306 – The Philosophy of Emotion
Fall 2013 – Syllabus

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Class Time/Location: 1:20 – 2:50 Tuesdays & Thursdays, Clow 111.

Office Hours/Location: Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays 3:00-4:00, Clow Faculty 416.

Texts: J. Deonna & F. Teroni, *The Emotions – A Philosophical Introduction*, Routledge, London, 2012. Other assigned readings are available on our D2L site.

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, inspired to do even better this semester. You may also have felt ashamed of having skipped a class, attracted to a total stranger, overjoyed by the prospect of seeing your best friend, 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, evaluative judgment, 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 *justified* or *reasonable* while others are *unjustified* or *unreasonable* under a given set of circumstances? How do our emotions relate to our most deeply held *values*, and what, if anything, is the value of emotion?

We will explore several 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 writing assignments**, each about 5 pages long. Both papers must be submitted through our D2L Dropbox in Microsoft Word format. They will be automatically checked for plagiarism by Turnitin, and I will write comments on your papers using Turnitin’s GradeMark program. Each paper will be worth 25% of your course grade. The first will be due around the eighth week of class, the second on the last day of class. I will provide you with a list of possible topics on which to write, but if you wish to write on a different topic, you may; you just need to clear it with me first. 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 and participation**. As part of your participation grade, **at least one question or comment on each week’s reading(s)** must be uploaded to the appropriate folder in our D2L Dropbox *by midnight of the night preceding our discussion of the reading*.

Readings- The philosophy of emotion, like the psychology of emotion, has become quite vast and deep in the last fifty 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 judgment*) in emotion occurrence. How are thoughts and emotions related to each other? Which

are more essential to emotion? A related question concerns the categories by which emotions are properly sorted into various 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 values they respond to or manifest? The situations in which they typically occur? Physiological (or neurological) factors? Evolutionary factors? Our readings provide a representative sample of different views on the relative importance of such factors. Our main text, Deonna and Teroni's "The Emotions", provides a broad overview of the philosophical territory, as well insightful commentary on many of our primary readings. Like most philosophical commentaries, the authors also have their own theoretical perspective to promote; their positive argument for that perspective occurs primarily in the last three chapters of the book. Our other readings were written for other philosophers and psychologists rather than directly for students, and these present arguments for their particular theoretical viewpoints.

Handouts- Since "The Emotions" was written mainly for use in a class such as this, I am hoping that you will find it quite readable as-is (especially if you ask questions in class about vocabulary or ideas that you do not initially understand). Similarly, because I've screened them for accessibility, the other readings should be fairly easy to read, even though they were written for other professionals in the field. However, to help focus our class discussions of them, I've placed handouts summarizing their main points on D2L. Please print out each handout *before* we discuss the reading it summarizes, and bring it to class with you. This will help you to organize your notes and prepare for the final exam. Note, however, that **the handouts are not substitutes for the readings themselves**. If you have not done the readings, the handouts will not be nearly as useful to you, and you will probably struggle to understand the viewpoints they summarize.

On asking questions- You are *strongly encouraged* to ask clarificatory questions during class. All 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 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!

A note on technology: If you bring a computer or cell phone to class, don't surf the web, don't text, and don't repeatedly check your email; it distracts, you, me, and other students in class. For the cognitive problems associated with multitasking, see www.nea.org/home/30584.htm.

Readings & Tentative Schedule

First class 9/5 - Introduction to the philosophy of emotion and the philosophy of mind
Handouts on Identity Theory and Functionalism

9/10 & 9/12

Deonna & Teroni [D&T], Chapter 1 – “Homing in on the emotions”
Jesse Prinz, “Piecing Passions Apart”

9/17 & 9/19

D&T Chapter 2 – “The diversity and unity of emotions”
Paul Ekman, “Basic Emotions”

9/24 & 9/26

Robert Gordon, “Pivotal distinctions” and “Formal insight”

10/1 & 10/3

D&T Chapter 3 – Emotions, beliefs, and desires

10/8 & 10/10

D&T Chapter 4 – “Introducing values”

10/15 & 10/17

D&T Chapter 5 – “Emotions as value judgments”

10/22 & 10/24

Robert Solomon, “Emotions and Choice”

10/29 & 10/31

Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Book II (Excerpt)

11/5 & 11/7

D&T Chapter 6 – “Perceptual theories of the emotions”

11/12 & 11/14

William James, “The Emotions”
Antonio Damasio, “William James And The Modern Neurobiology of Emotion”

11/19 & 11/21 & 11/26

Jesse Prinz, “Embodied Appraisals”

12/3 & 12/5

D&T Chapter 7 – “The attitudinal theory of emotions”

12/10 & 12/12

Review for Final Exam 12/10, take exam 12/12

If time permits, we will also read articles by Sigmund Freud (“Anxiety”) and Ronald de Sousa (“The Rationality of Emotion”).

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)].

Deonna, J. & Teroni, F., *The Emotions – A Philosophical Introduction*, Routledge, London, 2012.

Ekman, Paul, “Basic Emotions”, T. Dalgleish and M. Power (Eds.). *Handbook of Cognition and Emotion*. Sussex, U.K.: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 1999.

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”]

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