

PHL374: Topics in Normative Ethics

Course Description

To be autonomous, in short, is to be self-governing. It is to make up your own mind about how to live your life, and to be able to act accordingly. In the first section of the course, we will read some accounts of what autonomous action is. We will then consider in more detail some of the characteristic threats to autonomy: coercion, deception and especially manipulation. From there, we will consider how autonomy casts light on several applied issues: gaslighting, advertising, sexual consent, nudges, and privacy.

Teaching Team

Instructor: Steve Coyne (steven.coyne@mail.utoronto.ca)

Zoom Office Hours: Wednesday 12-2PM (bookable), Wednesday 2-3PM (drop-in). See the Quercus website for the link.

E-mail: For written communication, please contact me via e-mail (and not Quercus, which I don't regularly check.) Make sure to identify the course (PHL374) in the title of your e-mail. I make every attempt to respond to administrative questions (e.g. about extensions, course registration, etc) within 24 hours. I'm also happy to answer quick, specific questions about course content by e-mail.

Course Flow

This is an in-person course. We meet from Tuesday 11AM to 1PM, and Thursdays from 11AM to 12PM. I will present new material on Tuesdays; on Thursdays we will do quizzes and groupwork.

Readings

All readings will be accessible through Quercus or online library access.

Evaluation

Course Component	Percentage of Grade	Date(s) due
Quizzes	35%	Weekly (in-class) from September 16 to November 18
Term Paper	40%	December 7, 11:59PM
Groupwork	10%	Weekly (in-class) from September 16 to November 18
Presentation	5%	November 25, November 30, December 2 or December 7
Participation	10%	Throughout the course

Note that all assignments should be submitted through Quercus through the corresponding links under 'Assignments'. Please submit all assignments in .doc, .docx, or .pdf.

Quizzes: You will be required to complete a quiz every week, in class, between September 16 and November 18 (except reading week). There are nine quizzes in total. I will count the best seven of the first eight quizzes that you submit. This gives everyone one free missed quiz (in case of ordinary illness

or urgent conflicts) and one “throw-away” quiz. The quizzes will be open-book and some mix of multiple choice or short answer questions.

Term Paper: You will be required to complete a term paper of approximately 1500-1800 words on a topic of your choice.

Groupwork: You will be required to discuss some questions and report your findings in small groups. There are nine groupwork sessions in total. I will count the best seven of the first eight groupwork exercises that you submit. This gives everyone one free missed groupwork (in case of ordinary illness, urgent conflicts or late enrollment) and one “throw-away” groupwork. They will be graded (by Steve) according to the following ‘low-stakes’ guidelines:

- 100% (Exceptional) – exceptionally well-argued, clearly-written and insightful
- 85% (Satisfactory)
- 50% (Unsatisfactory) – very repetitive or an otherwise clear absence of reasonable effort
- 0% (Non-submission) – assignment is not submitted or otherwise contains nothing about ethics

Participation: You are required to make some contributions to class discussion. Contributions will be translated into points in the following way:

Contributions	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	9	12
Percentage	0	20	35	50	60	70	75	80	85

A maximum of two contributions per lecture will count towards your grade. Quality also matters for the sake of awarding participation points: clearly low-effort or off-topic contributions may not receive any points, while very thoughtful contributions may receive additional points. Grades above 85 will be awarded in cases of exceptionally active, highly thoughtful participation. I will make interim participation point totals available in the middle of October and middle of November.

Presentation: You will be required to make a short, informal presentation (10-15 minutes) on your term paper, which should assist you in making its main point clear and anticipating objections to your thesis.

Note: The ‘total’ column in the grades section on Quercus does not reflect your current or total grade in the course.

Missed Tests and Late Assignments

If there are special considerations that cause you to miss an **assignment** or **quiz** (*after your “free” missed quiz*), you should get in touch with the **department undergraduate advisor** (Jane Medeiros) to arrange an accommodation. See here for more information:

<https://philosophy.utoronto.ca/utm/utm-philosophy-undergraduate/special-consideration-requests/>

Without official accommodation, make-up quizzes or reweighting will not be given; late assignments will receive 5% penalty a day, and no assignment submitted more than a week late will be accepted.

Accessibility

If you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodation, please get in touch with me and Accessibility Services (<https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/accessibility/welcome-accessibility-services>)

Plagiarism and Course Conduct

Assignments: Aside from the course materials, the assignments are designed so that there is no need to external resources like websites or articles to successfully complete them. (In fact, I would substantially prefer for you to *not* lean on external resources.) If you do use any external resources, you must provide both page number citations *and* a full bibliographical entry. Remember that any use of an external source (whether directly quoting it, paraphrasing it, or using an idea taken from it) must be credited, otherwise it is plagiarism. Please do not plagiarize. I am required by the code of conduct to report all instances of plagiarism to administration, who may impose a serious penalty on you.

“Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University’s plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool’s reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).”

Anonymous Feedback

I’ve set up a google poll for you to send me anonymous feedback during the course. Please make use of it if there’s anything I can do to better facilitate your learning in the course.

Course Schedule

Some of the readings may change, subject to course flow and class interest.

Thursday, September 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No Readings
Tuesday, September 14 <i>The Standard View of Autonomy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Harry Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person”• Gary Watson, “Free Agency”
Thursday, September 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quiz 1 and Groupwork Session 1
Tuesday, September 21 <i>Some Challenges to the Standard View</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Andrea Westlund, “Selflessness and Responsibility for Self: Is Deference Compatible with Autonomy?”• John Christman, "Autonomy and Personal History"
Thursday, September 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quiz 2 and Groupwork Session 2
Tuesday, September 28 <i>The Value of Autonomy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Joseph Raz, “Autonomy and Pluralism” in <i>The Morality of Freedom</i>• Sarah Conly, <i>Against Autonomy</i>, chapter 1
Thursday, September 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quiz 3 and Groupwork Session 3
Tuesday, October 5 <i>Kantian or Moral Autonomy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Robert Paul Wolff, “The Conflict Between Authority and Autonomy”

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gerald Dworkin, <i>The Theory and Practice of Autonomy</i>, chapter 3
Thursday, October 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz 4 and Groupwork Session 4
Tuesday, October 12	Reading Week! (No classes)
Tuesday, October 19 <i>Threats to Autonomy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allen Wood, “Coercion, Manipulation, Exploitation” Marsha Baron, “Manipulativeness”
Thursday, October 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz 5 and Groupwork Session 5
Tuesday, October 26 <i>Theories of Manipulation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moti Gorin, “Do Manipulators Always Threaten Rationality?” Robert Noggle, “Manipulative Actions: A Conceptual and Moral Analysis”
Thursday, October 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz 6 and Groupwork Session 6
Tuesday, November 2 <i>Gaslighting and Advertising</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kate Abramson, “Turning Up the Lights on Gaslighting” Roger Crisp, “Persuasive Advertising, Autonomy, and the Creation of Desire”
Thursday, November 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz 7 and Groupwork Session 7
Tuesday, November 9 <i>Consent</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tom Dougherty, “Sex, Lies and Consent” Second reading TBD
Thursday, November 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz 8 and Groupwork Session 8
Tuesday, November 16 <i>Nudges</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cass Sunstein, <i>The Ethics of Influence</i>, excerpts
Thursday, November 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz 9 and Groupwork Session 9
Tuesday, November 23 <i>Privacy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stanley Benn, “Privacy, freedom and respect for persons”
Thursday, November 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentations
Tuesday, November 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentations
Thursday, December 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentations
Tuesday, December 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentations Final Paper due (11:59PM)