

Temptation and Desiring the Bad

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Office Hours: T 10-11 am (and by appointment) in Gilman 267

Meeting Time: M/W/F 10 am –12 pm

Room: Gilman 17

Course Description

It is often assumed that we always desire the good. But, what about when we indulge in what we know is bad for us, e.g. a cigar or fourth doughnut? Are we viewing those things as good? Can we act against our better judgment? We will address these questions and more. Our task will be to focus on the phenomenon of lacking self-control by reading Plato, Aristotle, and contemporary responses to these two authors. No previous coursework in philosophy is required for this course.

Course Goals

By the end of this course, students will have had a brief introduction to ancient philosophy. They will also learn to construct and assess arguments for philosophical positions. Doing so will strengthen their critical thinking skills in all disciplines and even outside of academic life.

Course Requirements & Grading

No textbook is required for this course; all readings will be uploaded to blackboard. You must submit all assignments in order to pass the course. As we only have a few weeks to get through all the material, attendance and participation is crucial. Your grade will be determined based on the following three things:

- Attendance & Participation (30%)
- One 2-page paper (30%) due at the beginning of class January 14th
- One 3-page paper (40%) due at the beginning of class January 23rd

You will receive one of the following grades for each of the papers: high pass, pass, low pass, or fail. If you receive at least a low pass on both papers and come to class, then you will receive a passing grade for the course.

Course Policies

In this course you will be allowed to use your laptop or tablet to take notes or view the readings on blackboard. Using an electronic device for anything outside of this will result in being marked absent for the day.

A note about academic ethics from the university with which I agree:

Cheating is wrong. Cheating hurts our community by undermining academic integrity, creating mistrust, and fostering unfair competition. The university will punish cheaters with failure on an assignment, failure in a course, permanent transcript notation, suspension, and/or expulsion. Offenses may be reported to medical, law, or other professional or graduate schools when a cheater applies. Violations can include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments without permission, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. Ignorance of these rules is not an excuse. For more information, see the guide on “Academic Ethics for Undergraduates” and the Ethics Board web site (<http://ethics.jhu.edu>).

Reading Schedule

Week One: The Ancients on the Division of the Soul

Jan 7: Course Introduction & Argument Clinic

Jan 9: Plato, *Republic* (Book IV) & *Phaedrus* (246a-b, 253d-254e)

Jan 11: Aristotle, *De Anima* (Book II)

Week Two: The Ancients on *Akrasia*

Jan 14: Plato, *Meno* (86d-88d) & Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Book III)

Jan 16: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Book VII)

Jan 18: Book VII Continued & Paper # 2 Draft Workshop

Week Three: Responses to the Ancients on *Akrasia*

Jan 23: Ronald D. Milo, *Aristotle on Practical Knowledge and Weakness of Will* (81-102)

Jan 25: Martin Pickavé & Jennifer Whiting. “*Nicomachean Ethics* 7.3 on Akritic Ignorance” (339-359)