

Fall 2018

**PHIL 454: Ancient Moral Theory**  
**Topic: Reason, Desire and Action. Aristotle, Stoicism, Epicurus**

PHIL 454: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 13:05 to 14:25  
New building: Sherbrooke Street 680, Room 1916.  
Professor Gaëlle Fiasse  
<http://www.mcgill.ca/philosophy/people/faculty/fiasse>

Contacting me

Email: write to me at [gaelle.fiasse@mcgill.ca](mailto:gaelle.fiasse@mcgill.ca): please write "PHIL 454" in the subject.

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Office hours (Leacock 940): Thursday (after the lecture until 4:20PM) or by appointment at scheduled times of mutual convenience

**Topic:**

Can we separate reason from desire? Do we really have to suppress our passions in order to be moral? What is the role of experience in leading an ethical life?

While some philosophers want to separate reason from emotions, passions, feelings or desires, Aristotle defines ethical choice as an intellect which desires (*noûs orektikos*) or a desire which understands (*orexis dianoêtikè*). We will analyze the correlation between desire and reason, by focusing closely on the ethics of Aristotle. Aristotle will be our major point of reference, but we will also pay attention to the control of the passions in Stoicism, and the roles of pleasure and desire in Epicureanism. Through the theme of reason, desire and action, we will revisit the notion of happiness in ancient philosophy, the role of pleasure, the distinctions made between different desires, the correlation between the activity and its determination, the definition of a voluntary action, the relationship between reason and what is external to it, and ultimately the particular role of friendship.

**Evaluation:**

Class Participation	10%	
One in-class test	20%	Sept. 27
One seven-page research paper (double-spaced)	40%	Nov. 5
Take-home Exam (double-spaced)	30%	Dec. 6

**Late submissions**

Late papers will be penalized by 1/3 of a grade per day (e.g. from a B to a B-, etc.). The hardcopy is the official submission of the paper.

**Required textbooks** (available at McGill Bookstore, and on reserve at the library):

– Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd edition, transl. T. Irwin, Cambridge: Hackett, 1999.

ISBN : 978-0-87220-464-5

– Epictetus, *The Handbook (The Encheiridion)*, transl. N.P. White, Cambridge: Hackett, 1983.

ISBN : 978-0-915145-69-0

– Course Pack : glossary, some handouts, and other readings (on Epicurus and Stoicism)

I recommend Terrence Irwin's translation and edition of the *Nicomachean Ethics* for the quality of the translation. Irwin's edition also contains interesting endnotes, a glossary and a bibliography.

**Electronic equipments are not permitted in lectures**

All computers, mobile phones, web-accessible electronic devices (IPads, etc.) must be turned off during the class period and stored. Exceptions will only be made with an official note from the student disabilities office.

### **Academic Integrity**

Not mentioning your sources, published or unpublished, constitutes an act of plagiarism. For instance, if you use a website without due reference in the text and in the bibliography; if you use a paper written by another (ideas or words of someone else), without making any reference to the author; if you quote a book or a paper as a reference of your own, without having read it; if you use your own work submitted for another class.

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### **Students with Disabilities**

If you have a disability please contact me to arrange a time to discuss your situation. It would be helpful for you to contact the Office for Students with Disabilities at 398-6009 (online at <http://www.mcgill.ca/osd>) before you do this.