

PHI 4900, Fall 2022

Social Progress and Moral Revolutions

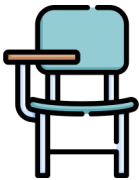
F 2:30-5:25

Instructor: Maggie Fife (she/her)

Email: margaretannfife@gmail.com (preferred)
mfife@gradcenter.cuny.edu

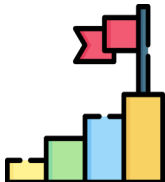
Room: Vertical Campus 9-160

Office Hours: Mondays 2:15-3:15 room 5-272, or by appointment.



Course Description:

Many pressing issues today, from criminal justice reform to the ongoing climate crisis, are overwhelming in their scope; they require coordinated structural change as well as a shift in moral perspectives. Given the complex nature of structural injustice, how do we understand and work towards social progress? This course will explore a number of topics related to moral progress, individual and collective responsibility, and social activism. Course texts will come from social/political philosophy, metaethics, and social epistemology, and will largely come from the Western philosophical tradition. Pre-requirements: 6 credit hours in philosophy at the 300 level.



Learning Goals:

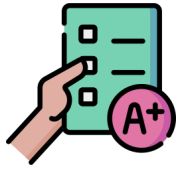
This course should help students:

- Cultivate critical thinking and argumentation skills.
- Enhance reading comprehension skills and gain confidence in their own ability to understand difficult texts.
- Strengthen college-level writing and research skills through informal and formal writing assignments.
- Synthesize and communicate dense texts to the class.
- Facilitate class discussion by asking thought-provoking questions.



Required texts:

All readings and supplemental videos will be posted on Blackboard.



Requirements/Grading:

5 informal reading responses – 20%
1 reading presentation – 20%
Attendance/participation – 10%
Paper draft and peer review – 20%
Final paper – 30%



Our Classroom Community:

A respectful environment is necessary for learning. As members of this classroom community, we must all do our part to build a respectful and inclusive space. I do not tolerate discrimination of any kind. We will discuss some sensitive and divisive topics, and I encourage you to approach differing views with openness and charitability. Furthermore, I have the following expectations:

- Arrive on time.
- Complete each reading before class, and bring the reading to class.
- Participate in class discussions. Challenge yourself: If you are someone who has trouble speaking up, come with one question or comment prepared. If you are someone who speaks a lot in class, challenge yourself by stepping back and listening to others' comments.
- We commit to integrity in this course by properly crediting the ideas of others. Familiarize yourself with Baruch's [Academic Honesty](#) policy and [plagiarism tutorial](#). I reserve the right to report any suspected instance of cheating or plagiarism to Baruch's disciplinary committee for action.



Accessibility:

I try to make my class accessible, but it's possible I've missed something. Please let me know what I can do to help you succeed. In addition to working with me, you may also find useful services at In addition to working with me, you may also seek out various campus services like the [Writing Center](#), [Disability Services](#), [Student Academic Consulting Center](#), [Baruch Technology Loan Program](#), etc.).



Need help?

If you find any aspect of this course challenging, please come talk to me. There are many reasons someone might have a hard time: some people find organizing their thoughts in writing challenging, others might find philosophical readings unusual and hard to follow—they often are! I can help with these and other challenges.



Course Schedule:

Schedule is subject to change with reasonable notice.

Topic	Date	Reading	Due
Introductions	Fri 8/26	None	
No class	Fri 9/2	None (no class)	
Structural Injustice and Political Responsibility	Fri 9/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young, "Responsibility for Justice" (ch. 2 and 4 excerpts), *two presenters* 	
Structuralism and the Climate Crisis	Fri 9/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brownstein, Madva, and Kelly, "Individualism, Structuralism, and Climate Change" Eckersley, "Responsibility for Climate Change as a Structural Injustice" 	
Moral Progress	Fri 9/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jamieson, "Slavery, Carbon, and Moral Progress" Moody-Adams, "Moral Progress and Human Agency" 	
Moral Revolutions	Fri 9/30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appiah, "Suppressing Atlantic Slavery" Eriksen, "The Dynamics of Moral Revolutions" 	
Moral Epistemology and History	Fri 10/7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anderson "Social Epistemology of Morality: Learning from the Forgotten History of the Abolition of Slavery" Lowie "Study of Moral Revolutions" 	
Hope	Fri 10/14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stockdale, "Hope, Solidarity, and Justice" Blöser, "Hope in Political Philosophy" 	
Against Hope	Fri 10/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sullivan, "Setting Aside Hope: A Pragmatist Approach to Racial Justice" Warren, "Black Nihilism and the Politics of Hope" excerpts 	
Solidarity	Fri 10/28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cherry, "Solidarity Care" Scholz, "Feminist Political Solidarity" 	Paper topic (email me)
Prison Abolition and Restorative Justice	Fri 11/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Davis, "Are Prisons Obsolete?" excerpts Zehr, "Justice Paradigm Shift? Values and Visions in the Reform Process" 	

<i>Peer Review</i>	Fri 11/11	None	Draft and in-class peer review
Utopia and Imagination	Fri 11/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curtis, "Rehabilitating Utopia: Feminist Science Fiction and Finding the Ideal" • Lear, "Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation" excerpts 	
No class	Fri 11/25	None (no class)	
Reparations and Repair	Fri 12/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD • TBD 	
Activism and Protest	Fri 12/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD 	
Wrap up	Fri 12/16	None	Final paper

Icons made by Freepik at www.flaticon.com