

## **PHIL 111: ETHICS OF PRIVACY**

Summer 2017, July 10-August 11

Instructor: Daniel Threet

Meeting Location/Time: Maguire 103, MTWR 3:15-5:15pm

Office Hours: TBD

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Note on email: I'll aim to respond to emails within 48 hours, but when class deadlines are approaching, response times may slow—plan ahead and email sooner than later.

### **Course Description**

Concerns about the loss of privacy play an increasingly important role in discussions of modern life, but frequently the concept of privacy itself is unexamined and vaguely understood. How can/should we think about what privacy is? What explains its value? What kind of rights to privacy ought we to have? This course serves as an introduction to contemporary philosophical discussions about privacy and connects that literature to ongoing debates about interpersonal ethics and public policy. Course reading will include seminal court cases as well as twentieth-century philosophical analyses that have shaped our current understanding of privacy. The course will cover radical critiques of the value of privacy, patients' rights, sexual ethics, anonymity in politics, and online interaction. Throughout the semester, we will examine how different traditions in normative ethics (e.g., Kantian or consequentialist) approach these issues. Students will be evaluated on the basis of three formal papers (5-7pp in length) and regular participation.

### **Course Goals**

- Read seminal work in the philosophy of privacy and apply it to contemporary issues.
- Learn to analyze and formulate philosophical arguments, in class discussion and through formal and informal writing.
- Refine skills for critical and cogent argumentative writing.

### **Required Texts**

All reading supplied as PDF.

### **Components of Class Grade**

- Class participation: 20% (see below for details)
- Paper #1: 10%
- Paper #2: 30%
- Paper #3: 40%

### **Honor Code:**

You are expected and required to uphold standards of academic honesty in this course. You should be familiar with the Standards of Conduct outlined in the Georgetown Honor System and on the Honor Council website (<http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/>). I am committed to academic integrity and obliged to uphold the Honor System. I will report all suspected cases of academic dishonesty.

### **Late Policy:**

Assignments submitted after the deadline will be subject to a half-grade late penalty for each day they are late. (An 'A' paper turned in 24 hours late will be docked to an A-, within 48 hours will be docked to a B+, etc.). Contact me at least 24 hours in advance of the deadline if there are extenuating circumstances, so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

### **Grade Appeals:**

If you believe you deserved a grade different from what you received on an assignment, you may request reconsideration of the grade if you submit a written request within one (1) week of receiving the grade. The request should include a full explanation of why you think the work deserves reconsideration. Most appeals will not result in a change to the grade. Be aware that reconsideration could result in a higher or lower grade.

### **Basic Grading Standards:**

(This is most pertinent for formal papers. The language here is borrowed from Professor Kate Withy. Feel free to ask me for more information about the elements of good papers.)

**An ‘A’ paper** displays a sophisticated understanding of the arguments under discussion and their immediate and distant implications; it makes an original or interesting contribution (not obvious from the reading or lectures) and provides compelling reasons for agreeing with it; it is elegantly written, and it is clearly and logically structured. ‘A’ papers are extraordinary.

**A ‘B’ paper** displays a solid grasp of, and thoughtful engagement with, the arguments and positions under discussion, and it begins to explore their implications; it includes the student’s own interpretive contribution, along with good reasons for agreeing with it; it is clearly organized, coherently argued, on-topic and well-written. ‘B’ papers are good papers.

**A ‘C’ paper** is relevant; shows familiarity and engagement with the material; it may misunderstand or misrepresent key ideas in the texts; it may have few of the student’s own ideas or interpretations, or insufficiently explained reasons in support of these; it may have some reasoning problems or gaps; it may have some stylistic or structural problems; or it may be a little dogmatic (i.e., offering unargued claims). A ‘C’ paper indicates that the student should work on reasoning skills, writing clearly, and/or thinking through the material more deeply.

**A ‘D’ paper** may exhibit any of the following: it is off-topic; it displays a weak or spotty grasp of the material; it has little original content; it provides few (if any) reasons for agreeing with the positions argued for, or consists mainly in summary; it is unclearly written or organized; it may be dogmatic; and it may be too short or too long. A ‘D’ paper indicates that the student should seek assistance with academic writing (see the Resources section of the syllabus).

**An ‘F’ paper** is plagiarized (either in whole or in part), or it does not engage with the material, or it is well short of (or well over) the suggested page length, or it cannot be understood.

### **PARTICIPATION**

Active participation in class discussions is absolutely essential to doing well in the course. In our class discussions, we will not simply be studying philosophy, we will be “doing philosophy”—the conversations themselves are where a lot of the substantive work of the course is done. Class participation will account for 20% of your overall grade. What kind of class participation is expected in a philosophy classroom? The following are ways of making yourself an active and helpful contributor:

(1) Read the assigned material at least once before class. Outline the argument, and paraphrase for yourself what you think the author’s conclusion is and how she argues for that conclusion. Write down three or four questions about the article. Those questions can be about the definition of terms or ambiguities in the writing. More substantively, they can be questions about confusions you had when you tried to understand the argument, or places you felt unconvinced by what you read. Imagine what kinds of questions other philosophers we’ve read would ask of this author, and write down those questions as well. Have those questions ready when you come to class.

(2) In class itself, in addition to asking your prepared questions, be ready and willing to raise new questions about things that come up as others speak. It can be helpful to everyone involved if you express confusion when you don’t understand what’s been said. I may ask the class as a whole to consider questions that didn’t occur to you when you were reading, and it’s important that you’re willing to talk even when you aren’t fully confident about what you have to say. Good participation is not simply about demonstrating preparedness and your own knowledge; just as often it is about being willing to experiment and think aloud with others.

(3) Be a respectful collaborator in the classroom. A respectful collaborator gives others a chance to speak, remembers what others has said and credits their contributions, and helps others by asking follow-up questions of other students' comments. Respectful disagreement is also possible. Just as you would tell a good friend when you think they are wrong, because you want to help, think of your classmates as partners. In fact, if we treat the authors we read in the same manner, we are likely to develop more charitable, sophisticated understandings of the material.

(4) Speaking up is essential, but it's not the only way to participate. Some of us are shy or less comfortable talking in front of large groups. To some degree, that's something that has to be overcome in the philosophy classroom, as you have to be willing to talk to do well as a participator. You can make additional contributions, however, by emailing me questions in advance of class or by asking your class partners and friends to raise questions. Coming to talk with me in office hours is also a good way to try out ideas in a smaller environment before introducing them in class discussion. Finally, the required informal responses (see deadlines above) will go into your participation grade.

How will you know how you're doing? There will be one formal opportunity to see your participation grade, at the mid-way point of the semester, as I will send everyone a short note with their current participation grade and a description of how they could improve, if needed. The participation grade is a holistic and qualitative assessment, though, so the halves of the semester are not weighted in any formulaic manner. You can also get a better sense of this at any time by coming to speak with me in office hours.

#### **ATTENDANCE**

Attendance is mandatory. Part of the ambition of the course is to "do philosophy" together—where that means constructing, testing, and evaluating arguments together as a group. As such, attendance plays a role in determining your participation grade; students who are not present cannot participate. Students who have three or more unexcused absences run the risk of automatic failure. Students involved in Georgetown-recognized organizational travel should provide me with the appropriate sponsor forms at the beginning of the semester.

#### **LAPTOP/TABLET/PHONE POLICY**

There are good reasons to ban devices like laptops and tablets in the classroom: we are generally less good at multitasking than we think (see, e.g., [http://www.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/2013-01/uou-fma011813.php](http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2013-01/uou-fma011813.php)), the rare student who spends the class streaming Final Four games distracts everyone around him or her, and conversation can be impeded by a wall of screens. For those reasons and others, laptops, tablets, and phones are not permitted in class unless you have a documented need for such an accommodation on file with the ARC. PDF readings should be printed and brought to class. If you need to send messages or take calls during class, step outside before doing so.

#### **COURSE READING SCHEDULE**

*Course schedule subject to change; this list is provisional. All readings will be posted to Blackboard as PDFs.*

##### **THE RIGHT TO PRIVACY AND THE VALUE OF PRIVACY**

7/10 Monday – Introduction, Greenwald and Baker

7/11 Tuesday – Privacy in the Law – Warren and Brandeis – "The Right to Privacy," *Griswold v. Connecticut* selections

7/12 Wednesday – Respect Approaches – Benn – "Privacy, Freedom, and Respect for Persons"

7/13 Thursday – Intimacy Approaches – Rachels – "Why Privacy is Important," Reiman – "Privacy, Intimacy, and Personhood"

##### **SKEPTICISM OF A RIGHT TO PRIVACY**

7/17 Monday – Posner – "The Right of Privacy"

7/18 Tuesday – MacKinnon – "Roe v. Wade: A Study in Male Ideology", *Roe v. Wade* selections

7/19 Wednesday – Allen – Selection from *Uneasy Access: Privacy for Women in a Free Society*  
7/20 Thursday – Thomson – “The Right to Privacy”

#### PERSONAL ETHICS AND PRIVACY

7/24 Monday – *We Live in Public* (Or Gerstein reading/response)  
7/25 Tuesday – Nagel – “Concealment and Exposure”  
7/26 Wednesday – Carter – “Respect and the Basis of Equality”  
7/27 Thursday – Allen – “An Ethical Duty to Protect One’s Own Information Privacy?”

#### POLITICS AND PRIVACY

7/31 Monday – Bentham and Foucault selections  
8/1 Tuesday – Etzioni – “The Privacy Merchants”  
8/2 Wednesday – Brennan and Pettit – “Unveiling the Vote”  
8/3 Thursday – *The Lives of Others*

#### PRIVACY IN OTHER CONTEXTS

8/7 Monday – Patient Rights – Beauchamp – “The Right to Privacy and the Right to Die”  
8/8 Tuesday – Workplace Privacy – Persson and Hansson – “Privacy at Work: Ethical Criteria”  
8/9 Wednesday – Privacy in Public – Selection from Rossler – “Decisional Privacy”  
8/10 Thursday – Public Shaming, Fresh Starts – Selection from Ronson’s *So You’ve Been Publicly Shamed*

#### RESOURCES

- Academic Resource Center  
<http://academicsupport.georgetown.edu/academic/about-us>  
*The ARC facilitates a number of accommodations for students with disabilities.*
- Writing Center  
<http://www.library.georgetown.edu/writing-center>  
Lauinger 217A  
*The Writing Center provides general advice and feedback on academic writing.*
- Academic Integrity Guidelines  
<http://honorcouncil.georgetown.edu/system/useful-information>
- Counseling and Psychiatric Services  
<http://studenthealth.georgetown.edu/mental-health/>  
Rear of Darnall Hall, 202-687-6985
- Health Education Services  
<http://studenthealth.georgetown.edu/health-promotion>  
Poulton Hall, Suite 101
- Student Health Center  
<http://studenthealth.georgetown.edu/medical-care>  
Ground Floor, Darnall Hall, 202-687-2200

Georgetown University and its faculty are committed to supporting survivors of sexual misconduct, including relationship violence, sexual harassment and sexual assault. University policy requires faculty members to report any disclosures about sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator, whose role is to coordinate the University’s response to sexual misconduct. Contact: Jen Schweer, MA, LPC, Associate Director of Health Education Services for Sexual Assault Response and Prevention (202) 687-0323 [jls242@georgetown.edu](mailto:jls242@georgetown.edu); Erica Shirley, Trauma Specialist, Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS) (202) 687-6985 [els54@georgetown.edu](mailto:els54@georgetown.edu)

For more information on available self-care resources on campus, see this helpful guide:  
<https://georgetown.app.box.com/s/34pf53jxccr3il831og4rrb2r350pyj9>

Alternate link: <http://bit.ly/2c0p9af>