

Emotions and Emancipatory Struggle

Phil 97, Fall 2023
Harvard University

Instructor Information

Denish Jaswal, denishjaswal@g.harvard.edu

Lamont Library: in the (former) Cafe [to your left when you enter]

Office Hours: Wednesdays 3-4pm, or by appointment

Course Time & Location: Thursdays 1245-245pm, Harvard Hall rm. 103

Course Description

Philosophers - across analytic, feminist, and revolutionary canons - have long theorized the importance our emotions can hold for emancipatory progress. Emotions, they argue, are capable of generating motivational, moral, epistemic, empowering, and communal resources necessary to waging emancipatory struggle. Such theory, of course, does not arise from a vacuum. It is crystallized from the real-world experience of those who have actually leveraged emotions in our fight for a more just world. Often, however, we read philosophy and real-world struggles siloed and divorced from each other, which can hamper our ability to understand what we should do with our emotions. This course aims to combat such tendencies by marrying such philosophical theory and its emancipatory practice to critically examine what, if any, role emotion can and should play in our emancipatory struggles. Each week, we will focus on a specific role theory tells us emotion might play and then interrogate such theory with lived, messy examples of how such theory plays out in practice - what pitfalls or barriers stand in the way of leveraging emotions to build a just world? And what, if anything, might we do to overcome them?

What's the Point of Taking this Course?

Learning Goals:

- + You will learn & critically engage with many texts across philosophy of emotion
- + You will learn to employ a practice- driven method, evaluating such theory with applied practice
- + You will learn how philosophy may make a difference to actual ways we act, think, and live
- + You will develop some views! Or at the very least, have the information to do so

Skill-based goals:

- + You will learn to construct cogent arguments in discussion and writing
- + You will learn to write clear and persuasive philosophical arguments
- + You will learn how to lead and engage others in philosophical discourse
- + You will learn how to critically discuss questions with philosophical nuance

But ultimately & most importantly:

The point is for this course to be of use to you! To change the way you think, feel, and act in the world & to carry that education beyond yourself.

Assignments & Grading

1. **Weekly Reflections on Readings** (10%) – one page, single spaced, 11-12 pt. font to be uploaded to Canvas before the beginning of class for the week. Graded pass/fail on completion. Allowed one skip during the semester. Your reflection can take a variety of forms, including but not limited to: what you initially thought of the week's topic & how the readings did or did not change your views, agreement or disagreement with the readings from lived experience or knowledge of other emancipatory struggles as evidence, extension or application of arguments covered in the readings to your life or emancipatory struggles you know of. Content must be thematically related to the week's readings – no grocery lists!
2. **Classroom Discussion Leader** (15%) – all students are required to lead discussion once over the semester & meet with Denish prior to prepare. [Full instructions & the sign-up sheet can be found here](#), and also on Canvas under "Syllabus."
3. **Midterm Paper** (25%) – 1000 words, due midnight on October 19 via Canvas. Prompts will be provided in class on October 5. Rewrite possible, due midnight November 2 via Canvas.
4. **Final Paper** (25%) – 2000 words, due midnight December 13 via Canvas. Prompts will be provided in class on November 2.
5. **Participation** (25%) – the final participation grade is subject to the discretion of the instructor, and generally will be satisfied if you attend all classes and are actively contributing to discussion/in-class activities. Attendance is required at all class sessions, barring illness or good reason. This is a discussion based seminar, so everyone will be expected to contribute each class period.

Late Policy + Extensions

The assignments for this course are designed for you to actively participate in the course content – due dates exist for the instructor & students to coordinate on this goal in a timely fashion and for you to also learn how to manage your time well. But of course, life happens - if you need an extension on any assignment, please email Denish at least 24h prior to the due date with a new due date for the assignment. These extensions will be granted fairly leniently (e.g., 'having a lot going on this week' is a fine reason). Extension requests occurring less than 24h prior to the due date may or may not be granted.

Academic Integrity

All of the work completed for this course is expected to be original to you and should not use any content generated by other individuals or AI technology. Philosophy is, however, often best done in conversation. To that end, you are strongly encouraged to discuss this course and its content with your peers. If any of these conversations result in insights you'd like to discuss in class or in written assignments, please cite them accordingly.

Disability Accommodations

If you have a disability and require academic accommodations, send Denish an email or come talk to her about it. If it's documented and you have a letter from AEO, that's great; if you don't, that's also okay – come talk to Denish anyways and we'll try to figure out something that works. Discussions related to disability and accommodations will be treated confidentially.

Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment Policy

Pursuant to FAS's Title IX Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment and Other Sexual Misconduct Policy, in her role as an instructor, Denish is obligated to notify the relevant Title IX Coordinator(s) if she learns about possible sexual or gender-based harassment. If you want to learn more about the University's policy, you can click [here](#). If you would like to speak to someone confidentially, you can find a list of resources [here](#).

Reading Schedule

PDFs of all readings will be uploaded to Canvas.

September 7: Introduction, no reading

September 14: Crash Course on Philosophy of Emotion

- *The Emotions: A Philosophical Introduction*, ch. 1 & 2 – Julien Deonna + Fabrice Teroni (2012)
- "Emotion" in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy – Andrea Scarantino + Ronald de Sousa (2021)

September 21: Emotions & Motivational Energy

- "The Uses of Anger" – Audre Lorde (1981)
- Selections from *America on Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion Since the 1960s* – Elizabeth Hinton (2021)

September 28: Emotions & Moral Judgment

- "The Aptness of Anger" – Amia Srinivasan (2018)
- "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" – Martin Luther King Jr. (1963)

Optional:

- "Moral Emotions" – Jesse Prinz + Shaun Nichols (2010)
- "Moral Emotions" – Ronald de Sousa (2001)

October 5: Emotions & Epistemic Value

- *Emotional Insight: The Epistemic Role of Emotional Experience*, ch. 4 – Michael Brady (2013)
- "Black Protest/White Grievance: On the Problem of White Political Imaginations not Shaped by Loss" – Juliet Hooker (2017)

Optional:

- "Introduction: A New Role for Emotions in Epistemology?" – Georg Brun + Dominique Kuenzle

**** MIDTERM PROMPTS DISTRIBUTED ****

October 12: Emotions & Ideology Critique

- "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology" – Alison M. Jaggar (1989)
- "My Body is a Sickness"; "Rebel Girl"; and "So Now What?" from *Burn it Down: Women Writing About Anger* – Lilly Dancyger (2019)

Optional:

- "The Epistemic Role of Outlaw Emotion" – Laura Luz Silva (2021)

October 19: Emotions, Dignity, and Moral Standing

- "Anger and Insubordination" – Elizabeth V. Spelman (1989)
- *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, pp. 89-109 – Frederick Douglass (1845)

Optional:

- "Outrage and the Bounds of Empathy" – Sukaina Hirji (2022)

**** MIDTERM PAPERS DUE ****

October 26: Emotions & Community

- "Political Emotion" – John Protevi (2014)
- *Moving Politics: Emotions and ACT UP's Fight Against AIDS*, ch. 4 – Deborah Gould (2009)

November 2: Hope & Despair

- Letters from Prison, pp. 158-159 – Antonio Gramsci (1973)
- *Hope Under Oppression*, ch. 5 – Katie Stockdale (2021)
- "Spadework" – Alyssa Battistoni (2019)

**** FINAL PAPER PROMPTS DISTRIBUTED ****

November 9: Emotions & Movement Building

- "The Combahee River Collective Statement" – Combahee River Collective (1977)
- *On the Line: A Story of Class, Solidarity, and Two Women's Epic Fight to Build a Union*, ch. 5 – Daisy Pitkin (2022)
- *This Bridge Called My Back*, "La Güera", "Letter to Ma", – Cherríe Moraga + Gloria Anzaldúa (2015)

Optional:

- "On Mourning and Statehood: A Response to Joshua Leifer" – Gabriel Winant (2023)

**** MIDTERM REWRITE DUE ****

November 16: In-class Paper Swap, no reading

November 30: Conclusion

**** FINAL PAPERS DUE DECEMBER 13 ****