

Philosophy 115: The Methods Seminar for Majors
Friends and Family: Philosophical Issues
Winter 2021, T/Th 9:30-10:50
Syllabus

Dana Kay Nelkin
Office Hours: Thursday 11-1 and by appointment
Phone: (858) 822-0472
E-mail: dnelkin@ucsd.edu
Web site: danakaynelkin.com

Course Description:

This course is designed for majors to hone their skills in understanding, constructing, evaluating, and discussing philosophical arguments and writing about them in a clear and careful way. The small seminar setting will provide a great opportunity to practice in all of the above in a constructive and supportive environment. Each class will center on discussion of the views and arguments expressed in the readings assigned for that day. Our theme will be philosophical issues concerning family, friends and other valuable human relationships. This will allow us to enter into rich and interesting debates in a variety of areas of philosophy. Guiding questions will include: What is friendship? Does the nature of friendship have important implications for the correct moral theory? Do we have epistemic duties to believe things of our friends that we do not have when it comes to others? What rights should parents and guardians have when it comes to raising their children? What role does friendship play in a good life?

Specific course topics and readings

All readings are available through the Canvas course web site. Good background resources (optional) include Bennett Helm's entry on [Friendship](#), and Diane Jeske's on [Special Obligations](#) in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Part 1: The Nature of Friendship, Special Obligations, and Moral Theory

January 5: Introduction: No Reading

January 7: David, Annis, "The Meaning, Value and Duties of Friendship"

January 12: Diane Jeske, "Families, Friends, and Special Obligations"

January 14: Samuel Scheffler, "Relationships and Responsibilities" and Michael Sandel, "Liberalism and the Limits of Justice" (excerpt)

January 19: Jennifer Whiting, "Impersonal Friends"

January 21: David Brink, "Impartiality and Associative Duties"

January 26: Elinor Mason, "Can an Indirect Consequentialist Be a Real Friend?"

Part 2: Epistemic Issues: Believing with the Benefit of the Doubt?

January 28: Sarah Stroud, "Epistemic Partiality in Friendship"

February 2: Jason Kawall, "Friendship and Epistemic Norms"

Part 3: Political Questions

February 4: Susan Moeller Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family* (excerpt)

February 9: Hugh La Follette, "Licensing Parents"

February 11: Harry Brighthouse and Adam Swift, *Family Values* Part 1 (excerpt)

February 16: Harry Brighthouse and Adam Swift, *Family Values* Part 2 (excerpt)

Part 4: Norms of Interaction: Blame, Forgiveness, and Advice

February 18: Maria Seim, "The Standing to Blame and Meddling"

February 23: Rosalind Chaplin, "Taking it Personally: Third Party Forgiveness, Close Relationships and the Standing to Forgive"

February 25: George Tsai, "Rational Persuasive as Paternalism"

Part 5: The Good Life

March 2: David Brink, "Eudaimonism, Love and Friendship, and Political Community"

March 4: TBA

Course Format: We will meet by zoom, with links available through the Canvas website. I know that there are sometimes good reasons to turn off video, but if you can, please keep it on, as we are a small group. Office hours will also be by zoom, with links available on Canvas, and by appointment.

Requirements:

- (1) Weekly short 2-3 page papers responding to the readings, from week 2-week 8 (uploaded to the Canvas website each Tuesday before class). Your grade will be based on the top five grades, so you can turn in all seven and use the top five, or just turn in five. You will be given prompts to choose from for the first three weeks and after that you can compose your own prompts (40%).
- (2) 1 term paper (about 10-12 pages), preceded by a prospectus (proposal) that includes the main ideas and a bibliography (1-2 pages total). I will provide feedback on the prospectus before you get started on the paper. (45%)

- a. Prospectus due: February 26 at 5 pm
- b. Term paper due: March 16 at 5 pm

- (3) Attendance and participation in in-class assignments* (15%)

Note: In-class assignments will not receive letter grades; instead, full points will be given for good faith participation.

*If you cannot attend class, please let me know ahead of time if at all possible. I can offer a substitute for this portion of class credit if necessary.

➤ All assignments must be completed in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

How to get the most out of the class, especially during these times:

1. Reading with care ahead of the class at which the readings will be discussed is also highly recommended. Asking yourself questions as you go and taking notes in the margins will help you to be engaged and increase your understanding. For example, you can ask yourself questions such as the following: "What is the author's main thesis?", "What reasons does the author provide to support their thesis?" "What position(s) is the author arguing against?" "What is at stake or important about the debate the author is engaged in?" "Are the author's reasons convincing?" "How would an opponent best respond?" "What conclusion do I think is most plausible?"
2. Being engaged during class discussion is very valuable. Being able to interact with others in seminar will help you engage with the material more deeply and learn more.
3. Check in during office hours or by appointment with any questions at all. And it's a more challenging time than usual, so it is even more important to let me know about any challenges you might be facing and that might create obstacles to your full engagement in the class. I'm very glad to help, and it will help me to do that if I know about your situation at an early stage.

Course Policies

Cheating and plagiarism, of any sort, are violations of the Academic Code of Conduct, and will be treated accordingly. Please refer to the resources at AIO:

<https://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu>.

The UC San Diego library has a useful set of tutorials on plagiarism prevention here:

Define <http://libraries.ucsd.edu/assets/elearning/plagiarism/mod1-define-web/story.html>

Prevent <http://libraries.ucsd.edu/assets/elearning/plagiarism/mod2-prevent-web/story.html>

Cite <http://libraries.ucsd.edu/assets/elearning/plagiarism/mod3-cite-web/story.html>

Resources

- **Basic Needs:** If you have difficulty accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or lack a safe and stable place to live, and believe this may affect your academic performance, you are encouraged to contact: foodpantry@ucsd.edu, basicneeds@ucsd.edu, or call 858-246-2632.
- **Triton Food Pantry** is an emergency food relief program to provide food for students and fight food insecurity. You can get canned food, pasta, beans, and rice as well as fruit and vegetables at the pantry. foodpantry@ucsd.edu
- **The Hub Basic Needs Center** coordinates basic needs resources vital to thrive as a student, which includes access to nutritious food, stable housing, and financial wellness resources. We provide basic needs services and resource referrals to registered UC San Diego students. Ask us about **CalFresh** food benefits! basicneeds@ucsd.edu 858-246-2632.
- If you find yourself in need of psychological counseling and you do not already have a counselor, please check in with Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): <https://wellness.ucsd.edu/CAPS/Pages/default.aspx>