

**BLAMING & FORGIVING – PHIL 343**  
**Spring 2019 – Dr. Grant J. Rozeboom**

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**St. Norbert College**  
**Classroom:** Cofrin 202  
**Class schedule:** TTh 12:00-1:30 pm  
**Class site:** classroom.google.com

**GOALS:** When someone hurts or insults you, it is natural to blame them. What are you assuming in blaming them? (Notice that you *don't* blame 4-year-olds when they say rude things to you.) After being hurt or insulted, you may come to forgive the wrongdoer. What are you assuming about them in forgiving them? (Notice that you *don't* tend to forgive someone before they've acknowledged or apologized for their wrongdoing.) The main goal of this course is for us to critically reflect on some of these common assumptions of our practices of blame and forgiveness and begin addressing deep puzzles that arise from those assumptions. Questions taken up in our course will include: what kinds of psychological incapacities exempt us from deserving blame (or praise) for what we do? Is blame a justified response to wrongdoing even when it has corrosive effects on our relationships and characters? Does it matter what kinds of motives we have when we act wrongly (or rightly)? How can we take seriously the fact that someone treated us wrongly and still come to forgive them?

**CORE CURRICULUM:** Our course fulfills the Western Tradition requirement of the Core Curriculum (C-WT). Our course's Core Curriculum program learning objectives are:

**Understanding the world and one's place in it, which includes:**

- The natural world, its relationship to human activity, and stewardship of the environment
- Human nature, human relationships, and society
- The commonality, diversity, and continuity of human experience and culture
- The influence of religious heritages
- Personal and social responsibility, social justice, service, pluralism, and the tradition of peace and reconciliation

**The development of personal character and virtue, which includes:**

- Examining one's core beliefs and values and comparing them to those of others
- Understanding Catholic traditions of morality and virtue, and reflecting upon one's own moral and ethical convictions
- Reflecting on the relationship between one's spiritual growth and personal integrity
- Constructing a meaningful and coherent philosophy of life and value system reinforced by lifelong critical examination

We will achieve these objectives through analytical writing and discussion focused on articulating and examining our assumptions about blame and forgiveness.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:** To achieve the goals of this course, you will need to provide weekly written work focused on both sharpening your understanding of your own assumptions about blame and forgiveness and resolving the puzzles that arise from them, actively contribute to our seminar-style class meetings, and complete a two-part paper project focused on explaining your view of how to make sense of some of the more puzzling elements of blame and forgiveness, given your own assumptions.

- (1) Weekly Essays: For most weeks, you will complete a short (400-500 words) essay, based on one or two of the readings from that week and focused on honing one of the skills of disciplined self-reflection important for this class. Depending on the week, these essays will (i) focus on reconstructing an author's line of thought, (ii) involve a meeting with Dr. Rozeboom, (iii) involve a meeting with one of your classmates, (iv) draw on your own experiences with blame or forgiveness, or (v) involve a meeting with someone *not* in the class.
- (2) Two-Stage Paper: By the end of the semester, you will compose an eight-page essay (around 2500 words) explaining and relating your views about some of the puzzling aspects of blame and forgiveness. You will compose this essay in two stages. The first four-page stage will be due during the ninth week of the course and will focus on blame. The second stage will involve revising the first stage (in light of Dr. Rozeboom's feedback), adding a four-page component focused on forgiveness, and explaining the important connections between the two stages.
- (3) Class Contributions: Given the goals and seminar format of the course, it is vital for everyone to actively contribute to each class meeting. We will share our own beliefs about blame and forgiveness, our understanding of the main claims and implications of the texts we study, and our reactions to these texts and to one another's comments. Sometimes this will involve short in-class written work. For one class, you will partner with a classmate to help lead discussion.

**GRADING INFORMATION:** Your grade will be determined by how well you fulfill the course requirements, with 30% of your grade coming from the Weekly Essays (3% each), 50% from the Two-Stage Paper (20% first stage, 30% second stage), and 20% from your Class Contributions. Some further grading details and policies:

- Grading Scale: A = 93%-100%, AB = 88%-92%, B = 83%-87%, BC = 79%-82%, C = 74%-78%, CD = 70%-73%, D = 65%-69%, F = 0%-64% (Note: I will round to the nearest whole percentage point.)
- Late/Rewrite Policy: You are expected to turn in all of your assignments on time. That being said, life is hard, and so for one (and only one) of your Weekly Essays, you can turn it in late *or* rewrite it with no penalty. You must turn it in within one week of the original deadline. All other late work will receive a grade reduction, and some assignments will receive no credit if they are turned in late.

If you encounter a personal emergency/illness or feel that your St. Norbert-sanctioned activity (concerts, sporting events, etc.) requires you to turn in an assignment late, you must let me know in person or by email at least 24 hours in advance (when participating in St. Norbert activities) or within 24 hours following the deadline (in the case of a personal emergency or illness) in order to avoid late penalties. I will let you know if your circumstances excuse your lateness.

- Attendance, Punctuality, & Technology: You are expected to actively contribute to each class meeting. That being said, life is hard, and so you can miss one (and only one) class without a grading penalty. *All other absences will lower your total Class Contributions grade by 20%*. Keep in mind that being on time matters, because it's a part of respecting one another. Showing up for class late will negatively impact your Class Contributions grade.

Staying engaged matters, because it's a part of respecting yourself and one another. So, *using your computer in class for things other than notes, in-class activities, and course readings will be counted as an absence*. Any use of cell phones or similar technology will be counted as an absence. Many portions of our class meetings will require you to close/put away your computers.

If you encounter a personal emergency/illness or feel that your St. Norbert-sanctioned activity (concerts, sporting events, etc.) requires you to miss or be late to a class, you must let me know in person or by email at least 24 hours in advance (in the case of St. Norbert activities) or within 24 hours following the missed class (in the case of a personal emergency or illness) in order to avoid lowering your Class Contributions grade. I will let you know if and to what extent your circumstances warrant avoiding a lowered grade.

**ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS:** In keeping with the St. Norbert College mission to help students develop their full potential, and in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the College provides supportive services to students with disabilities. For inquiries and further details, please visit the Academic Support Services office located in Todd Wehr Hall Room 211 or contact the Director of Academic Support Services (403-1326), or visit: <http://www.snc.edu/academicsupport/accommodation>

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:** You are expected to adhere to the College's academic policies regarding academic integrity. Please refer to the "St. Norbert College Academic Honor Code" in *The Citizen* or see the Honor Code website for the text of the Honor Code process, procedures and penalties. For more information, see the link for *The Citizen* on the judicial affairs website ([www.snc.edu/judicialaffairs](http://www.snc.edu/judicialaffairs)) or contact the Honor Code Facilitator (403-3047) or the Assoc. Academic Dean's Office (403-4044).

**REQUIRED MATERIALS:** You must obtain *Forgiveness and Mercy*, by Murphy and Hampton (ISBN: 0-521-39567-4), Aeschylus' *Oresteia* (ISBN: 0-226-30778-6), and *Anger and Forgiveness*, by Nussbaum (ISBN: 0-19-933587-9).

**SCHEDULE:** Readings are listed with the class *by/before* which they are to be studied.

### **Week 1**

Class 1.1 (1/22): Articulating our assumptions about blame and forgiveness

- Readings: none, but bring a computer to class
- Assignments: in-class reflection

Class 1.2 (1/24): The first puzzle about blame: backgrounds do and don't matter?

- Readings: Lewis, "Inequality, Incentives, Criminality, and Blame"
- Assignments: in-class small group work

### **Week 2**

Class 2.1 (1/29): The first puzzle about blame: backgrounds do and don't matter?

- Readings: Wolf, "Asymmetrical Freedom"
- Assignments: Wolf reading guide

Class 2.2 (1/31): The first puzzle about blame: backgrounds do and don't matter?

- Readings: P. F. Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment"
- Assignments: Weekly Essay #1

### **Week 3**

Class 3.1 (2/5): The first puzzle about blame: backgrounds do and don't matter?

- Readings: Gary Watson, "Responsibility and the Limits of Evil"
- Assignments: Watson reading guide

Class 3.2 (2/7): The first puzzle about blame: backgrounds do and don't matter?

- Readings: Cheshire Calhoun, "Responsibility and Reproach"
- Assignments: Weekly Essay #2

### **Week 4**

Class 4.2 (2/14): The second puzzle about blame: it is and isn't appropriate?

- Readings: Pickard, "Responsibility without Blame"
- Assignments: Pickard reading guide

### **Week 5**

Class 5.1 (2/19): The second puzzle about blame: it is and isn't appropriate?

- Readings: Watson, "Two Faces of Responsibility"
- Assignments: Weekly Essay #3

Class 5.2 (2/21) **GOOGLE MEET:** The second puzzle: the social impact of blame

- Readings: Radzick, "Gossip and Social Punishment"
- Assignments: none

### **Week 6**

Class 6.1 (2/26): **No class** – individual reflection about *Bill Cunningham New York*

- Assignments: documentary reflection worksheet

Class 6.2 (2/28): The flipside of blame: what does it take to deserve moral credit?

- Readings: selection from Kant, *Groundwork*; Arpaly, "Moral Worth"
- Assignments: Kant/Arpaly reading guide

## **Week 7**

Class 7.1 (3/5): The third puzzle about blame: what if we're lucky to avoid blame?

- Readings: Nagel, "Moral Luck" and [Creffield, "The Parenthood Gamble"](#)
- Assignments: none

Class 7.2 (3/7): The third puzzle about blame: what if we're lucky to avoid blame?

- Readings: Williams, "Moral Luck"
- Assignments: Williams reading guide; Weekly Essay #4 (due 3/8)

## **Week 8**

Class 8.1 (3/12): From anger to forgiveness

- Readings: Aeschylus, *Eumenides*; Nussbaum, *Anger and Forgiveness*, ch. 1
- Assignments: Aeschylus reading guide and [video](#)

Class 8.2 (3/14): From anger to forgiveness

- Readings: Nussbaum, *Anger and Forgiveness*, ch. 2
- Assignments: Weekly Essay #5; in-class paper workshop

## **Enjoy Spring Break! (3/18-22)**

## **Week 9**

Class 9.1 (3/26): From anger to forgiveness

- Readings: Nussbaum, *Anger and Forgiveness*, ch. 3-4 (through p. 127)
- Assignments: Weekly Essay #6

Class 9.2 (3/28): From anger to forgiveness

- Readings: none
- Assignments: Paper part I (due 3/29)

## **Week 10**

Class 10.1 (4/4): The puzzle about forgiveness: we can and can't forgive?

- Readings: Kolnai, "Forgiveness"
- Assignments: Weekly Essay #7

## **Week 11**

Class 11.1 (4/9): Hampton & Murphy: explaining the forgiveness puzzle

- Readings: H&M, *Forgiveness and Mercy*, pp. 14-24, 36-54
- Assignments: H&M reading guide #1

Class 11.2 (4/11): Hampton & Murphy: explaining the forgiveness puzzle

- Readings: H&M, *Forgiveness and Mercy*, pp. 54-96
- Assignments: Weekly Essay #8

## **Week 12**

Class 12.1 (4/16): Solving the forgiveness puzzle: Calhoun

- Readings: Calhoun, "Changing One's Heart"
- Assignments: Small group report (in-class)

Class 12.2 (4/18): Solving the forgiveness puzzle: Allais

- Readings: Allais, "Wiping the Slate Clean"
- Assignments: Weekly Essay #9

## **Week 13**

Class 13.1 (4/23): Restorative justice

- Readings: Urban-Walker, "Making Amends"
- Assignments: Small group report (in-class)

Class 13.2 (4/25): Restorative justice

- Readings: Nussbaum, *Anger and Forgiveness*, ch. 6
- Assignments: in-class paper workshop

## **Week 14**

Class 14.1 (4/30): Banal evil, responsibility, and character

- Readings: *Eichmann* summary; in-class movie: *Hannah Arendt*
- Assignments: none

Class 14.2 (5/2): Banal evil, responsibility, and character

- Readings: none
- Assignments: Weekly Essay #10; Final Paper due 5/6