

PHIL 9020
Spring 2025
Thursdays 3:10–5:30pm
Classroom: Furman 106

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Office Hours: Thursdays 1–3pm
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Philosophy of Emotion

Course Description

This seminar focuses on recent philosophical work on emotions. Our guiding theme will be the complex relationship between emotions, rationality, and value, with special attention paid to the variety of models of emotional rationality philosophers have proposed in recent years. The class is divided into four parts. Part I focuses on the relation between emotions and evaluative judgments. Part II will turn to recent discussions concerning the temporality of emotions. Part III will focus on an extended case study of two specific emotions in their relation to one another: jealousy and love. Finally, Part IV will be devoted to reading Stephen Darwall's recent book, *The Heart and Its Attitudes*. In addition to reading many philosophers on emotion—from important twentieth-century authors like Iris Murdoch and Stanley Cavell to pathbreaking contemporary authors like Martha Nussbaum, Amia Srinivasan, and Vida Yao—we will consider some literary case studies, in particular Shakespeare's *Othello* and Euripides' *Medea*.

Texts

Please obtain copies of the following texts:

1. Stephen Darwall. 2024. *The Heart and Its Attitudes*. Oxford University Press.
2. Peter Goldie. 2000. *The Emotions: A Philosophical Exploration*. Oxford University Press.
3. Berislav Marušić. 2022. *On the Temporality of Emotions: An Essay on Grief, Anger, and Love*. Oxford University Press.
4. William Shakespeare. 2016. *Othello*. Second Norton Critical Edition. Ed. Edward Pechter. W.W. Norton and Company.

All remaining assigned texts will be made available as PDFs on Brightspace.

Assignments and Evaluation

Presentation (25%)

Once during the semester, you will give a brief presentation to the class on one of the week's assigned readings. Your presentation should be 10-15 minutes long. Rather than trying to be comprehensive, I recommend that you focus on an idea, concept, or argument that you find particularly interesting. Your goal is to present this clearly and set up class discussion with one or two questions. I recommend that you discuss the content of your presentation with me beforehand. As part of your presentation, please include at least one form of visual aid, whether a handout, PowerPoint presentation, use of the blackboard, or other media.

Reading Notes (25%)

Most weeks you will complete a set of Reading Notes on one of that week's assigned texts (see the schedule below for exceptions; you are not required to turn in a set of Notes on the day you give your presentation). When multiple chapters by the same author have been assigned, pick just one chapter as your focus. Notes should be submitted the day before class by 5:00pm via Brightspace.

The structure for the Reading Notes each week is as follows:

- In three to four sentences, sum up the thesis and structure of the text (as if you were writing a brief abstract of the text on behalf of the author).
- In two to three sentences: what was the most illuminating, helpful, or insightful part of the reading and why?
- In two to three sentences: what is one pressing question you have about the reading (especially one you would be eager to discuss in class)?

Reading Notes will be graded either “meets expectations” or “does not yet meet expectations.” Reading Notes receiving the latter grade can be rewritten within one week and resubmitted for a potential change of grade. To receive an “A” for this portion of the class, you should turn in and receive a grade of “meets expectations” on ten Reading Notes (for the purposes of grading, your Final Paper Prospectus and materials for the Writing Workshop count towards this total; see below). For each Reading Note less than this, your grade will be reduced by one half grade (A to A–, A– to B+, etc.).

Final Paper Prospectus

In preparation for your final paper, you will write a 200- to 300-word prospectus outlining your idea for your final paper. You should include a preliminary formulation of the problem you want to address, your thesis statement, and a rough roadmap of the paper's structure. You should also

include a prospective bibliography, which should include a combination of texts assigned in this class and sources you have researched independently.

Writing Workshop Materials

Our final session will be devoted to workshopping your final papers. Please both upload to Brightspace and bring printed copies of the following to class: (i) a rough draft of the introductory section of your paper, which should include a formulation of your thesis; (ii) a one-page outline of the structure of your paper; and (iii) a revised prospective bibliography. Please note: *you should bring enough copies for everyone in class.*

Taking turns, we will take a few minutes to read through your text. Then we will go around the room to discuss what we've read, raise questions, comments, points for clarification, criticisms, point out strengths and weaknesses, work still to be done, etc. The author will listen and take careful notes while the discussion takes place but will not themselves participate in the discussion.

Final Paper (50%)

A final paper (15 to 20 pages) is due one week after our final class meeting. It should be uploaded to Brightspace under "Assignments." Though the paper should engage primarily with texts assigned in class, you should also explore additional relevant literature in your paper topic area.

Screen Policy

This semester we'll experiment with a *screen-free classroom* for the first three class meetings at least. The goal is to promote lively conversations in which we are fully present, confident that we have one another's attention, and are able spontaneously to react to each other and the text in the moment. We'll try this for the first three class meetings and then have a group discussion to decide collectively whether we'd like to continue, modify, or abandon the policy for the rest of the semester.

As long as the policy is in effect, please: (i) bring physical copies of the texts to class; (ii) take notes either on paper or low-tech writing tablets that are grayscale and lack web-browsing, email, messaging, etc.; and (iii) leave your laptops, tablets, and phones silenced in your bag (not in your pocket and not on the seminar table). If you have reason to request an exception to this policy, please let me know.

Accessibility

Vanderbilt University is committed to accessibility for all students. To receive accommodations students are to apply through the Student Access Center. The Center can be reached at studentaccess@vanderbilt.edu and is located in the Sarratt Building, Suite 216.

Academic Integrity

All students are required to make themselves familiar with the Vanderbilt University Honor Code. All cases of suspected misconduct in this course will be submitted to the Honor Council.

Course Schedule & Readings

	Date	Readings	Notes
1	1/9		No Class (APA Eastern)
Part 1. Emotions and Value			
2	1/16	Martha Nussbaum, “Emotions as Judgments of Value and Importance” (2004) Annette Baier, “Feelings that Matter” (2004) Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, “Enough Already with ‘Theories of the Emotions’” (2004)	
3	1/23	Roberts C. Roberts, “What an Emotion Is” (1988) Karen Jones, “Quick and Smart? Modularity and the Pro-Emotion Consensus” (2006)	Weekly Reading Notes begin this week
4	1/30	Peter Goldie, <i>The Emotions: A Philosophical Exploration</i> , ch. 1–3 (2000)	Class begins and ends 30 minutes early this week: 2:40–5pm
5	2/6	Talbot Brewer, “On Alienated Emotions” (2011) Amia Srinivasan, “The Aptness of Anger” (2018)	Class begins and ends 30 minutes early this week: 2:40–5pm

Part 2. Emotional Change			
6	2/13	<p>Berislav Marušić, <i>On the Temporality of Emotions: An Essay on Grief, Anger, and Love</i>, Preface and ch. 1–2 (2022)</p> <p><i>Recommended Readings:</i> *Agnes Callard, “The Reason to Be Angry Forever” (2017) *Oded Na’aman, “The Rationality of Emotional Change: Toward a Process View” (2018)</p>	
7	2/20	Berislav Marušić, <i>On the Temporality of Emotions: An Essay on Grief, Anger, and Love</i> , ch. 3–5 and conclusion (2022)	
Part 3. Jealousy and Love			
8	2/27	<p>William Shakespeare, <i>Othello</i> (1604)</p> <p>Stanley Cavell, “Epistemology and Tragedy: A Reading of <i>Othello</i>” (1979)</p>	
9	3/6	<p>Jerome Neu, “Jealous Thoughts” (2000)</p> <p>Jerome Neu, “Jealous Afterthoughts” (2000)</p>	Class held at a different time this week: 11:10am–1pm
	3/13	Spring Break	No Class
10	3/20	<p>Euripides, <i>Medea</i> (~431 BCE)</p> <p>Peter Goldie, <i>The Emotions: A Philosophical Exploration</i>, ch. 8 (2000)</p>	Screening of <i>Medea</i> (dir. Pasolini, 1969) earlier in the week: Tuesday, March 18, 7pm in Furman 114
11	3/27	<p>Iris Murdoch, “The Idea of Perfection” (1971)</p> <p>Vida Yao, “Grace and Alienation” (2020)</p>	

Part 4. The Heart and Its Attitudes			
12	4/3	Stephen Darwall, <i>The Heart and Its Attitudes</i> , ch. 1–5 (2024)	Final Paper Prospectus Due (No Reading Notes this week)
13	4/10	Stephen Darwall, <i>The Heart and Its Attitudes</i> , ch. 6–10 (2024)	
14	4/17	Writing Workshop	Writing Workshop Materials Due (No Reading Notes this week)

Final Paper Due April 24 by 11:59pm