Seminar Information:

PHIL 210
Professor Shields
Lectures: M 4.00-6.50 in RWAC 472

Office Hours and Contact Information:

Office: Arts & Humanities Building 447
Office hours: W 14.00-15.00 and by appt.
e-mail: CJShields@ucsd.edu
website: cjishields.com

N.b. I prefer e-mail to telephone as a manner of student contact. I make an effort to answer student e-mails promptly, but please be aware that I measure promptness in this domain in days rather than hours or minutes.

Texts:

Required:


Not required, but it will be useful for you to have available (and every philosopher should own):


Less complete but superior in terms of translation, and with a marvelous annotated glossary is:


Recommended:

In progress and available on Canvas:
• Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. w/ introduction and notes by Christopher Shields

Other readings are accessible via Philosopher's Index, available in Geisel Library. Where copyright infringement is not an issue, I will provide links or upload .pdfs to our Canvas site.

N.b. For the primary reading: I will expect that you will have read Irwin’s translation; but I invite you to read my translation as well, which will be incrementally available on our Canvas site.

Requirements and Protocol:

Seminar participants will offer one seminar presentation and write one essay, in the neighbourhood of 4,000-5,000 words. It is assumed, though not required, that your essay will grow out of your seminar presentation.

Due date for the essay: 20 March

Essay topics will be developed on an individual basis in conjunction with the seminar leader.

The essay is to be submitted electronically in a main-stream word-processing format or (if you use something non-standard) as .pdf documents, to the addresses given above. Papers will be accepted until 17.00 on its due date.

Attendance is expected at all seminar meetings.

Prospectus:

*Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* advances a comprehensive eudaimonistic ethical theory, rooted in a highly nuanced account of human nature. The work draws freely upon its author’s metaphysical and psychological theories and so cannot be fully understood without a foundational understanding of his commitments in these areas. We will, accordingly, begin with a précis of the metaphysical and psychological basis of Aristotle’s ethics as a prolegomenon to our study of the *EN*; we will then visit and revisit relevant details as the term progresses.
Our plan will be to march through the entire *EN*, more or less one book per week, though two seminars will need to cover two books each due to public holidays falling on our term dates; we will thus cover the entire *EN* in our ten week term. Our focus will be on the text itself, though we will advert to a small fraction of the vast secondary literature on this text as an aid to understanding.

Each seminar meeting will comprise three components: (i) a discursive overview of the book(s) to studied; (ii) a deep examination of a special problem (or set of special problems) encountered in the stretch of primary text read for that meeting; and (iii) a student presentation on a theme pertinent to those issues, to be developed in concert with the seminar leader.

**Topics and Readings:**

**Week One**

**Topics:**

- Metaphysical and Psychological Background to the *EN*
- The Character and Plan of the *EN*
- Eudaimonism
- The Function Argument

**Reading:**

- *EN* i
- Kraut, 'Aristotle Ethics,' *Stanford Encyclopedia* of §§1-3
  Note that this entry also contains an up-to-date bibliography of important secondary literature in English, arranged thematically.

**Week Two:** No lecture: Martin Luther King Day
Week Three

Topics:

• The Role of Virtue in Ethical Theory
• The Archê of Practical Reasoning
• The Acquisition of Virtue
• The Doctrine of the Mean
• A First Approach to Particular Virtues

Reading:

• EN ii
• Brown, ‘What is the Mean Relative to Us in Aristotle’s Ethics?’ Phronesis 42 (1997), 77-93

Week Four

Topics:

• Voluntary Action and Character
• Preference
• Wish
• Our Powers and Abilities in the Domains of Vice and Virtue

Reading:

• Ackrill, ‘Aristotelian on Action,’ Mind NS 87 (1978), 595-601
Week Five

Topics:

- Individual Virtues of Character (TBD by participant presentations)
- Justice

Reading:

- EN iv-v

Week Six: No lecture: Presidents’ Day

Week Seven:

Topics:

- Intellectual Virtues

Reading:

- EN vi
- Kraut, 'Aristotle Ethics,' *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* §6

Week Eight:

Topics:

- *Akrasia*
- Intemperance
- Pleasure: Preliminary Treatment
Reading:

• EN vii

Week Nine

Topics:

• Friendship
• Eudaimonism and Other-regarding Attitudes

Reading:

• EN viii-ix
• Kraut, 'Aristotle Ethics,' Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy §9
• Annas, ‘Plato and Aristotle on Friendship and Altruism,’ Mind 86 (1977), 532-554

Week Ten

Topics:

• Pleasure: Final Treatment
• Happiness and Contemplation
• Intellectualism in Ethics

Reading:

• EN x
• Kraut, 'Aristotle Ethics,' Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy §8

Week Ten+

Topics:

• The Best Life After All
• Quodlibetal