COURSE OUTLINE
PHIL 301 PHILOSOPHICAL FUNDAMENTALS

Winter term 2017: TTH 14:30 – 16:00

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 12:30-14:30

This course is required of, and open only to, students who have begun an undergraduate honours degree in philosophy, and who have completed Philosophy 210 or the equivalent. Philosophical Fundamentals is a ‘skills’ course. The primary aims are to ensure that you can read and charitably reconstruct an argument in a text, and that you can present an argument and critically evaluate it, both in conversation and in writing.

The course will address four related themes in political philosophy: friendship, justice, equality and autonomy. We will approach these themes historically and through contemporary readings. The topics are all such that they can be considered in both personal and political terms, and so we will discuss the relation between personal relationships and political relationships. For example, we will ask whether friendship is possible between people who are not equals, whether justice is friendship on a political scale, and whether equality presupposes autonomy.

Among the philosophers we will be reading are: Plato, Aristotle, Michel de Montaigne, Gabriel Suchon, Étienne de la Boétie, Ronald Dworkin, G. A. Cohen, and Natalie Stoljar.

REQUIRED READING: required readings will be posted on the MyCourses page for the course. Students should expect to read 30-50 pages a week, and should come to class prepared to discuss the reading assigned for each week.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: participation in class discussions (10%), a set of discussion questions due on a date determined by the instructor (10%), an oral presentation (15%), a write-up of the presentation incorporating points raised in discussion (25%); a final paper (40%). You will be required to present the question the final paper will address, and how you propose to proceed to answer it, prior to final submission.

Policy on the use of technology in the classroom:
Pursuant to McGill University’s policy regarding electronics in the classroom, the use of electronic devices (computers, iPads, cell phones, etc.) is not permitted in lectures. All electronic devices must be turned off and stored during the lecture period. Students who wish to be able to use an electronic device in class must apply by e-mail for permission from the instructor. The recording of lectures is not permitted and is illegal without the consent of the instructor. Please consider these policies before enrolling in this course.

Policy on extensions:
No extensions will be granted without an appropriate medical note. Late work will be penalized at the rate of a third of a grade per calendar day past the due date. For example, an assignment that is evaluated as a B, if one day late, will be assigned a grade of B-; the same paper, if two days late, would receive a C+.

Required syllabus statements:
McGill University values academic integrity. All students must, therefore, understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of
Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.