Winter 2014

PHIL 454: Ancient Moral Theory
Topic: Reason and Desire
Aristotle, Stoicism, Epicureanism

PHIL 454: Tuesday-Thursday: 10:05 AM-11:25 AM, Leacock Building 210
Professor Gaëlle Fiasse
http://www.mcgill.ca/philosophy/people/faculty/fiasse

Contacting me
Email: write to me at gaelle.fiasse@mcgill.ca: please write “PHIL 454” in the subject.
Phone: 514-398-4400 extension: 094409
Office hours (Leacock 940): Thursday 1:20-2:20PM and by appointment

Topic:
Can we separate reason from desire? Do we really have to suppress our passions in order to be moral? What is the role of experience in leading an ethical life?
While some philosophers want to separate reason from emotions, passions, feelings or desires, Aristotle defines ethical choice as an intellect which desires (noûs orektikos) or a desire which understands (orexis dianoëtikê). We will analyze the correlation between desire and reason, by focusing closely on the ethics of Aristotle. While Aristotle will be our major point of reference, we will also pay attention to the control of the passions in Stoicism, and the roles of pleasure and desire in Epicureanism. Through the theme of reason and desire, we will revisit the notion of happiness in ancient philosophy, the role of pleasure, the distinctions made between different desires, the correlation between the activity and its determination, the definition of a voluntary action, the relationship between reason and what is external to it.

Evaluation:

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One four-page assignment</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Jan. 30</td>
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<tr>
<td>One seven-page research paper</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>March 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>One four-page assignment</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>April 10</td>
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Required textbooks (available at McGill Bookstore):

Course Pack