

# ETHICS: VIRTUE

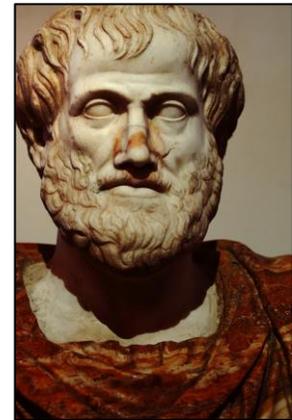
## SEMINAR SYLLABUS



[WINTER 2023]

### DESCRIPTION

“...we are investigating [ethics] not in order that we might know what virtue is, but in order that we might become good”. What does it mean for a human being to be good? This, as human beings, is a question we ought to be able to answer. But even more importantly—having answered it—we ought to be able to live it. In bygone eras, we could perhaps rely upon or place our trust in certain authorities to answer this question for us: to look to others for answers about what it means to be good and what actions we must perform in order to become good. But such is not the case today, in which anarchy of thought has become the norm, authorities are seldom possessed of the virtue they themselves need, and individuals are given the ability to discover (but not to critically assess) what is true or false themselves.



Thus there is a great merit and benefit in studying the wisdom contained in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*: a treatise comprising ten books which details the nature of human happiness, goodness, virtue, and the struggle to attain that which fulfills our being. Aristotle—called by Thomas Aquinas “the Philosopher”—was a keen observer of many things, human beings not the least of which; to study his ethics is to study the human being as a concrete reality, and to discover truths not only about what a human being is, but about the who of the individual self.

### METHOD

The seminar is 8 weeks long, with one recorded lecture and one discussion session each week. Each discussion session is structured around a reading from Aristotle. Participants are expected to have read the assigned reading and listened to the lecture prior to the session, so that they may engage in a semi-structured discussion directed and moderated by the instructor. This is a **discussion-based** seminar, and so all participants are expected to pursue a *deep engagement* with the assigned reading, arriving prepared to converse about Aristotle’s *Ethics*. Moreover, *continual discussion* will foster that participation and engagement throughout the week. Participants will be expected to partake in these discussions on a regular basis and will be challenged to do so directly.

## READING

Each week includes (scheduled below) an assigned reading, most of which are focused on a single book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, with a few weeks necessarily encompassing a bit more. One might find a digital copy of Aristotle's *Ethics* translated into English in the public domain, but it is highly recommended to purchase a good physical copy of a more recent translation—many of the older translations are decidedly inferior. I strongly recommend either [Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics](#) translated by Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins or [Nicomachean Ethics](#) translated by Joe Sachs—or even both (if we are not readers of the original Greek, that is, multiple translations can help us to triangulate the meaning of Aristotle's words). Supplementary readings will be provided by the instructor; **readings are subject to change**.

## LECTURE

Each week there will also be a 40+ minute audio lecture, posted to Teams at the beginning of the week. This lecture will be based upon the assigned reading, but will also stray into related topics, or may use the reading as a launching point for addressing some related issue (perhaps one more general, or perhaps one more specific). The primary (but not sole) purpose of these lectures is to help clarify some of the more difficult concepts and arguments contained within the reading, as well as to raise specific questions that should help structure and guide our discussion sessions.

There *may* be accompanying visual aids (not necessarily) in order to provide some clarity as to textual points, but one *should* be able, in most cases, to simply listen to the lecture (and perhaps consult the visual aids later). This should allow more flexibility: making the lectures suitable accompaniment for a commute, while doing chores, going for a run, etc.

## DISCUSSION

The heart of the seminar is the discussion session (**Saturdays at 10:15-11:15am ET**): where all the thoughts emergent and encountered throughout the week—via the reading, lecture, and on-going conversations in the Teams channel—are brought into explicit conversation. This allows us to attempt a concerted effort at bringing resolution to our difficulties, and—failing such a resolution—to direct our inquiry further.

Each discussion session will begin with a brief synopsis of the week's material and a focusing on whichever aspects of that material seem most pressing. Beyond the direction provided by the instructor, participants are encouraged to bring their own concerns explicitly into view and to engage with the instructor and one another in civil debate and collective inquiry.

## AUDITS OR COMPLETES

All Lyceum Institute seminar participants will be able to either *audit* the seminar or *complete* the seminar. To complete the seminar, the participant **must** submit an essay of 2000+ words pertaining to the subject. This essay may be evaluated for publication in *Reality* and will be included in each Lyceum Institute member's profile, along with the mark of auditing or completing.

## SESSION SCHEDULE

January 14	Happiness and the Good Lecture 1: The Work of a Human Being Required reading:
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>, Book 1</li> </ul>
January 21	<p>The Nature of Virtue</p> <p>Lecture 2: Action and Affection</p> <p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>, Book 2—Book 3, c.5.</li> </ul> <p>Recommended reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “On Moral Philosophy”, Yves Simon.</li> </ul>
January 28	<p>The Moral Virtues</p> <p>Lecture 3: Moral Greatness</p> <p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>, Book 3, c.6—Book 4.</li> </ul> <p>Recommended reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The Virtue of Courage”, R.E. Houser.</li> <li>• “The Virtue of Temperance”, Diana Fritz Cates.</li> </ul>
February 4	<p>Justice</p> <p>Lecture 4: Due Proportionality</p> <p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>, Book 5.</li> </ul> <p>Recommended reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The Virtue of Justice”, Jean Porter.</li> </ul>
	BREAK
February 18	<p>Intellectual Virtue</p> <p>Lecture 5: Prudence and the Unity of Virtue</p> <p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>, Book 6.</li> </ul> <p>Recommended reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The Intellectual Virtues”, Gregory M. Reichberg.</li> <li>• “The Virtue of Prudence”, James F. Keenan, S.J.</li> </ul>
February 25	<p>The Struggle for Virtue</p> <p>Lecture 6: Striving for a Coherent Life</p>

	<p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>, Book 7.</li> </ul>
<p>March 4</p>	<p>The Good of Friendship</p> <p>Lecture 7: Hierarchy of Friendships</p> <p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>, Book 8—Book 9, c.6.</li> </ul>
<p>March 11</p>	<p>The Hierarchy of Happiness</p> <p>Lecture 8: Unitive Goods of Human Life</p> <p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>, Book 9, c.7—Book 10.</li> </ul>