**Anscombe, Foot, Midgley and Murdoch**

**Lecturer:** Cathy Mason

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**Office:** D404

**Office hours:** Wednesday, 9:30-11:30 and Friday, 9:30-11:30

*Please email to arrange a slot if you’d like to attend office hours*

**Semester:** Winter 2023

**Date and Time:** Wednesdays, 15:40-17:20

**Room:** D-107

**No. of Credits and no. of ECTS credits:** 2 credits, 4 ECTS credits

**Prerequisites:** none

**Course level:** MA/PhD elective

**Format:** seminars

**Course Description**

Within the course of their lifetimes Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot, Mary Midgley and Iris Murdoch were all significant and influential figures within philosophy. Despite the challenges of being a woman in philosophy at the time, they published ground-breaking papers, held prestigious positions, and have inspired many influential thinkers up to the present day. Anscombe’s work *Intention* is a recognized classic, Foot is generally credited as an initiator of the interest in neo-Aristotelian virtue theory, Midgley was the public face of philosophy in Britain for many years, and Murdoch’s wide-reaching thinking is recognized as having inspired a variety of philosophers such as John McDowell, Cora Diamond and Charles Taylor.

In recent years there has been growing interest in their work, and particularly in the thought that they constitute a rare all-female philosophical school. This course will introduce students to each of their work, primarily focusing on their broadly ethical thought. It will also situate their thinking in the context of the philosophical trends of the time and consider the extent to which it is right to think of them as a philosophical school.

**Course Objectives**

In studying this course, students will:

* Become acquainted with some of the major ideas of each of the thinkers
* Critically engage with their ethics and philosophy of mind/action
* Develop a sense of whether it is right to think of them as forming a philosophical school

**Course Requirements**

* Attendance each week, including for those auditing the class, is mandatory. Please email as soon as possible if you cannot make it to a class.
* All students must read at least one text each week.
* All students should participate in class discussions: before each seminar students should read the text(s), and consider a) what do I think the reading is saying? b) why do they seem to be saying it? c) does that seem right? d) are there things that seem unclear? e) are there issues raised by the text that you’d like to discuss?
* All students taking the class for grade must present once during the term

**Assessment**

In-class presentation: 15%

Short mid-term assignment: 25%

Final written work: 60%

Late essays will be penalized unless there are special circumstances warranting an extension. In this case, contact me as soon as possible to request an extension.

Students should discuss their final essay title and plan with me.

**Assessment and Grading Criteria**

Students will be assessed according to their:

* Understanding of the key issues and texts
* Clarity and nuance of expression
* Ability to clearly structure their work
* Offering clear and sustained and sound arguments
* Contribution to the debates

Some good advice on writing philosophy essays can be found here: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

**General Resources**

There are lots of excellent resources available on the Wartime Quartet. The following are introductory materials.

These acclaimed recent biographies focused on the Quartet:

* MacCumhaill, C., and Wiseman, R.. *Metaphysical Animals* (Chatto and Windus: 2022)
* Lipscomb, B., The Women are Up to Something (OUP: 2021)

This podcast series examines the four:

* https://www.womeninparenthesis.co.uk/curated-resources/podcasts/

**Weekly Topics and Schedule**

**Part I: Anscombe**

Week 1: Introduction to the Quartet; Modern Moral Philosophy

* Anscombe, ‘Modern Moral Philosophy’, *Philosophy* (1958)
* Radio Interview with Clare Mac Cumhaill and Rachael Wiseman: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m0000r9b>
* Optional further reading: newspaper exchange between Jonathan Wolff and Mary Midgley (this looks like a lot, but each is less than a page long!), <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/nov/26/modern-philosophy-sexism-needs-more-women>; <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/28/golden-age-female-philosophy-mary-midgley>

Week 2: Anscombe’s *Intention* I

* Reading: Selections from Anscombe’s *Intention* (1957)

Week 3: Anscombe’s *Intention* II

* Reading: Selections from Anscombe’s *Intention* (1957)

**Part II: Foot**

Week 4: Introduction to Foot’s Ethics

* Reading: Introduction and ch. 1 of Foot, *Natural Goodness* (2001)

Week 5: Foot’s Naturalism

* Reading: Chapters 2 and 3 of Foot, *Natural Goodness* (2001)

Week 6: Practical Rationality and Happiness

* Reading: Chapters 4 and 6 of Foot, *Natural Goodness* (2001)

**Part III: Midgley**

Week 7: Animal Life and Human Life

* Reading: Selections from *Beast and Man* (1978)

Week 8: Human Nature

* Reading: Selections from *Beast and Man* (1978)
* Optional further Reading: Anscombe, ‘Human Nature’ in *Human, Life, Action and Ethics* (2005)

**Part IV: Murdoch**

Week 9: Action and Ethics

* Reading: Murdoch, ‘Vision and Choice in Morality’, *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* (1956)

Week 10: *The Sovereignty of Good* I: Beauty, Skill and Virtue

* Reading: Murdoch, ‘The Sovereignty of Good Over Other Concepts’ in *The Sovereignty of Good* (1970)

Week 11: *The Sovereignty of Good* II: The Transcendence of the Good

* Reading: Murdoch, ‘On God and Good’ in *The Sovereignty of Good* (1970)

Week 12: *The Sovereignty of Good* III: Human Nature, Minds and Ethics

* Reading: Murdoch, ‘The Idea of Perfection’ in *The Sovereignty of Good* (1970)