

**PHIL 1111: The Emotions
Fall 2026**

Instructor: Gus Turyn (mat298@cornell.edu)

Office hours: Thursday, 9:00-10:00 am and by appointment

Office number: Goldwin Smith Hall 217

Class meeting times: Tuesday and Thursday, 10:10-11:25 am

Classroom: Goldwin Smith Hall 160

Course overview

Few things are as central to everyday life as our emotions. We spend a tremendous amount of effort seeking out warm feelings and thrills and avoiding unpleasant or awkward interactions. The disgust that stems from biting into a rotten piece of fruit can ruin your day; a heartfelt compliment from a friend that leaves you happy can make your week. But what are the emotions? Are they feelings, belief-like states, forms of perception, or something else? Can it be right or wrong to feel an emotion? What sorts of considerations, if any, are relevant to whether an episode of an emotion is apt or accurate? In this course, we will investigate philosophical work on emotion through extensive in-class discussion and writing.

Texts

All readings will be posted on Canvas.

Grading

Essay 1: 5%

Essay 2: 10%

Essay 3: 20%

Essay 4: 20%

Participation: 25%

Discussion boards: 20%

Participation

Learning philosophy requires that we ask questions about the texts that we read and about other people's views. The majority of our class time will be spent discussing the readings that are assigned as homework. We will take more away from these discussions to the extent that more people participate in them.

To encourage attentive participation, electronic devices will not be permitted during class (unless explicitly noted otherwise). If you want to have your notes on the reading available for the purposes of in-class discussion, I encourage you to handwrite your notes or print them out.

If you don't have the opportunity to make a point or ask a question in class that you wanted to, you can also come to my office hours, schedule a meeting at another time, or send me an email

explaining the point that you wanted to make or the question that you wanted to ask; doing so will also earn you credit for participating.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Though I do not grade you directly on attendance, it will be difficult for you to earn participation credit if you miss class with any regularity.

Discussion boards

Each week, you should post at least one comment/question about an assigned reading and one reply to a classmate's post by 8 pm the day before the class meeting during which we discuss that reading. Comments/questions should go beyond the surface level. Don't just say whether you liked or disliked a reading or say that you don't understand an argument; try to explain *what* you agreed with in the reading or *why* you don't understand an argument.

Discussion board posts and comments will be graded on the following scale: full credit (100%), partial credit (70%), or no credit (0%). Late comments/questions will automatically receive no credit. Comments/questions that do not reflect serious engagement with the arguments in the texts that we read will also receive no credit. Your lowest two weekly scores will be dropped.

Academic integrity

All of the written work that you submit this semester should be your own. You may not submit work written by others—classmates, friends, uncited online sources, and so on. You also may not submit work written by generative AI. Any work that is not your own will not receive credit. You should familiarize yourself with Cornell's academic integrity policy before submitting any written work.

Essays

This is a writing-intensive course; you will write four essays, three of which will be substantively rewritten. A detailed prompt will be handed out for each essay assignment.

Tentative schedule

All readings are subject to change. Check Canvas for the most up-to-date schedule.

Week 1	8/25: Course introduction	8/27: Agnes Callard, 'The reason to be angry forever'
Week 2 Essay #1 due on 8/31	9/1: Chapter 2 of Christine Tappolet, <i>Philosophy of Emotion</i>	9/3: Selections from Aristotle's <i>Rhetoric</i>
Week 3	9/8: No new readings	9/10: Section 1 and 3 of A.W. Price, 'Emotions in Plato and Aristotle'

Week 4	9/15: Book 1 of Seneca, <i>On Anger</i>	9/17: Pages 144-154 of Christopher Gill, 'Stoicism and Epicureanism'
Week 5 Essay #2 draft due 9/20 Essay #2 draft meetings	9/22: Selections from Hume's <i>A Treatise of Human Nature</i>	9/24: David Owen, 'Reason, belief, and the passions'
Week 6	9/29: Essay workshop; no new readings	10/1: William James, 'What is an emotion?'
Week 7 Essay #2 rewrite due 10/11	10/6: Chapter 1 of Christine Tappolet, <i>Emotions, Value, and Agency</i>	10/8: Martha Nussbaum, 'Emotions as judgments of value and importance'
Week 8	10/13: OCTOBER BREAK; NO CLASS	10/15: Sections 1, 4, and 6 of Andrea Scarantino, 'Insights and blindspots of the cognitivist theory of emotions'
Week 9	10/20: Andrea Scarantino, 'The motivational theory of emotion'	10/22: Lisa Feldman Barrett, 'Constructionist approaches to emotion'
Week 10 Essay #3 Draft meetings	10/27: Essay workshop; no new readings	10/29: Selections from Robert Frank, <i>Passions Within Reason</i>
Week 11 Essay #3 due 11/13	11/3: Shaun Nichols and Rachana Kamtekar, 'Agent-regret and accidental agency'	11/5: Michael Brady, 'The irrationality of recalcitrant emotions'
Week 12	11/10: TBA	11/12: D'Arms and Jacobson, 'The moralistic fallacy'
Week 13	11/17: Srinivasan, 'The aptness of anger'	11/19: Berislav Marušić, 'Do reasons expire?'
Week 14	11/24: Essay workshop; no new readings	11/26: THANKSGIVING BREAK, NO CLASS
Week 15 Essay #4 draft meetings	12/1: Oded Na'aman, 'The rationality of emotional change: a process view'	12/3: TBA LAST DAY OF CLASS

Week 16		Essay #4 due during final exam period
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