

PH381-15 Philosophy of the Emotions

26/27

Department

Philosophy

Level

Undergraduate Level 3

Module leader

Lorenzo Serini

Credit value

15

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

Multiple

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

Emotions are at the centre of our lives. They are involved in how we think, act, and relate to others. You are likely experiencing some of them as you read, perhaps feeling intrigued by the title of this module and curious to find out more. Hopefully, you will not be bored by the end of this description... We are intimately familiar with our emotions, yet much about them remains puzzling. Emotions infuse our lives with meaning, for better or worse: at times, supporting our wellbeing, at others, getting in the way. They are not merely private experiences, but also shape our relationships with others – consider, for example, friendship and love. Some emotions, such as compassion and anger, further play a central role in our moral and political lives.

All of this makes emotions an interesting topic of investigation. In this module, we explore what is distinctive about a philosophical investigation of our emotional lives, including specific emotions. Emotions raise a range of questions across different areas of philosophy, including philosophy of mind, ethics, moral philosophy, moral psychology, and political philosophy. We focus on three central questions in the philosophy of emotions:

- (1) What is an emotion?
- (2) Are emotions good or bad for us?
- (3) Can we regulate our emotions, and if so, how?

We address these questions by drawing on a wide range of texts from the history of philosophy, from antiquity to the present, including figures and traditions from diverse cultural contexts. We

also examine sophisticated accounts of specific emotions, such as anger, hope, sympathy, compassion, self-love, shame, and love.

Although we engage with exciting texts from the history of philosophy, our investigation is not purely historical. The module's aim is to do philosophy of the emotions through the history of philosophy. We evaluate the theoretical contribution of historical theories and accounts of the emotions to more recent philosophical debates, as well as their practical relevance for contemporary life.

Module aims

- Identify central issues and debates in the philosophy of emotion
- Address important philosophical questions about emotion through engagement with the history of philosophy
- Engage with diverse figures from the history of philosophy who have made significant contributions to these questions
- Cultivate students' skills in close reading and critical analysis of texts from different traditions, from antiquity to the present, and from culturally different context
- Develop students' ability to engage critically and independently with primary and secondary sources, enabling them to form and articulate their own views and arguments on the topics
- Encourage reflection on the continuing relevance of theories and accounts of emotions in the history of philosophy for contemporary philosophical debates as well as for broader personal and societal contexts
- Promote emotional literacy

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Indicative outline syllabus

Week 1: Introduction & What is an emotion? (1) William James on emotions as bodily feelings

Week 2: What is an emotion? (2) Martha Nussbaum on emotions as value judgments

Week 3: Seneca and the other Stoics on anger and the therapy of the emotions

Week 4: Aristotle and Confucius on emotion and virtue

Week 5: Thomas Aquinas on hope

Week 6: Reading Week

Week 7: Adam Smith and Sophie de Grouchy on sympathy

Week 8: Jean-Jacques Rousseau on self-love and compassion

Week 9: Bernard Williams on shame

Week 10: Simone de Beauvoir on love

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Closely read and critically analyse texts of high complexity
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of key theories and accounts of emotions in the history of philosophy
- Identify central issues and debates in the philosophy of emotion
- Compare and evaluate differing philosophical theories and accounts of emotions
- Apply philosophical analysis to specific emotions to reflect on emotional experience in personal, moral, and political contexts
- Develop and defend their own philosophical views through well-reasoned arguments
- Demonstrate written communication skills through the completion of assignments
- Demonstrate oral communication skills through active participation in learning sessions

Indicative reading list

[Reading lists can be found in Talis](#)

Research element

Students will produce essays that require research into relevant primary and secondary literature and the development of independent critical analyses and arguments.

Subject specific skills

Students will

- Practice and enhance their close reading and critical analysis skills;
- Practice and enhance their philosophical skills in interpretation and argument;
- Practice and enhance their scholarly ability to engage primary and secondary sources to evaluate, critique, and build upon existing views in the literature;
- Be able to interpret and evaluate different philosophical theories and accounts of emotions in their specific historical contexts;
- Acquire an appreciation of how key figures in the history of philosophy have shaped our understanding of the emotions;
- Be able to apply philosophical theories of emotion to real-world moral and political issues, critically assessing their implications for contemporary debates;
- Practice and enhance their ability to communicate clearly and effectively about issues concerning emotion in the history of philosophy and in contemporary philosophical debates.

Transferable skills

Students will

- Practice and enhance their critical thinking skills—their ability to independently analyse and

- evaluate conflicting views;
 - Practice and enhance their written and oral communication skills;
 - Develop self-awareness by recognizing and reflecting on their own emotions and ethical values;
 - Cultivating a degree of emotional literacy;
 - Develop intercultural awareness;
 - Time management;
 - Independent research skills.
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Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	18 sessions of 1 hour (12%)
Seminars	8 sessions of 1 hour (5%)
Private study	124 hours (83%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

No private study requirements defined for this module.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

Assessment group A4

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Seminar participation	10%		No
500-word exercise (10%)	10%		Yes (extension)

The 500-word exercise gives a choice among three options:

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
a) Interpret and analyse one of the assigned passages. Or b) Interpret and analyse a passage of your choice from any of the readings (essential; recommended; further) Or c) Write a reflective piece in which you connect a personal experience of emotion to a key question, theory, or account we have explored in the module. Aim to demonstrate both self-awareness and critical engagement with the academic material.			
2500-word essay	80%		Yes (extension)
2500 word essay			

Assessment group R1

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
3000 word essay	100%		Yes (extension)

Feedback on assessment

Students will receive their essays back with written comments. They can also share and discuss a one-page essay plan, for which they will receive either verbal or written feedback, according to their preference. Students are encouraged to discuss their assignments with their tutors during advice and feedback hours. Seminars also provide valuable opportunities to receive feedback from both tutors and peers.

Availability

Courses

This module is Optional for:

- UPHA-VL78 BA in Philosophy with Psychology
 - Year 2 of VL78 Philosophy with Psychology
 - Year 3 of VL78 Philosophy with Psychology
- Year 4 of UPHA-VL79 BA in Philosophy with Psychology (with Intercalated year)
- UHIA-V1V5 Undergraduate History and Philosophy
 - Year 2 of V1V5 History and Philosophy
 - Year 3 of V1V5 History and Philosophy
- Year 4 of UHIA-V1V6 Undergraduate History and Philosophy (with Year Abroad)
- UMAA-GV17 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 2 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 2 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy

- Year 2 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
- Year 3 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
- Year 3 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
- Year 3 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
- UMAA-GV18 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year
 - Year 4 of GV18 Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year
 - Year 4 of GV18 Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year
- UMAA-GV19 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations
 - Year 2 of GV19 Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations
 - Year 3 of GV19 Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations
 - Year 4 of GV19 Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations
- UPHA-V700 Undergraduate Philosophy
 - Year 4 of V700 Philosophy
 - Year 4 of V700 Philosophy
- Year 4 of UPHA-V702 Undergraduate Philosophy (with Work Placement)
- UIPA-V5L8 Undergraduate Philosophy and Global Sustainable Development
 - Year 2 of V5L8 Philosophy and Global Sustainable Development
 - Year 2 of V5L8 Philosophy and Global Sustainable Development
 - Year 3 of V5L8 Philosophy and Global Sustainable Development
 - Year 3 of V5L8 Philosophy and Global Sustainable Development
- Year 4 of UIPA-V5L9 Undergraduate Philosophy and Global Sustainable Development (with Intercalated Year)
- UPHA-VQ72 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature
 - Year 2 of VQ72 Philosophy and Literature
 - Year 3 of VQ72 Philosophy and Literature
 - Year 4 of VQ72 Philosophy and Literature
 - Year 4 of VQ72 Philosophy and Literature
- Year 4 of UPHA-VL80 Undergraduate Philosophy with Psychology (with Work Placement)
- UPHA-VQ52 Undergraduate Philosophy, Literature and Classics
 - Year 2 of VQ52 Philosophy, Literature and Classics
 - Year 3 of VQ52 Philosophy, Literature and Classics
 - Year 4 of VQ52 Philosophy, Literature and Classics
- UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics
 - Year 2 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
 - Year 2 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
 - Year 2 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
 - Year 3 of V7MR Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite with Economics Major)
 - Year 3 of V7MR Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite with Economics Major)
 - Year 3 of V7MP Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite)
 - Year 3 of V7MP Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite)
 - Year 3 of V7MP Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite)
 - Year 3 of V7MP Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite)
 - Year 3 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
 - Year 3 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
 - Year 3 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)

- UPHA-V7MM Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics (with Intercalated year)
 - Year 3 of V7MS Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite with Economics Major) (with Intercalated Year)
 - Year 3 of V7MS Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite with Economics Major) (with Intercalated Year)
 - Year 3 of V7MQ Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite) with Intercalated Year
 - Year 3 of V7MM Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite) (with Intercalated year)
 - Year 3 of V7MM Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite) (with Intercalated year)
 - Year 3 of V7MH Philosophy, Politics and Economics - Economics/Philosophy Bipartite (Economics Major) (with Intercalated year)
 - Year 3 of V7MF Philosophy, Politics and Economics - Economics/Politics Bipartite (Economics Major) (with Intercalated year)
 - Year 3 of V7MI Philosophy, Politics and Economics - Philosophy/Economics Bipartite (Philosophy Major) (with Intercalated year)
 - Year 3 of V7MJ Philosophy, Politics and Economics - Philosophy/Politics Bipartite (with Intercalated year)
 - Year 3 of V7MG Philosophy, Politics and Economics - Politics/Economics Bipartite (Politics Major) (with Intercalated year)
- UPHA-V7MW Undergraduate Politics, Philosophy and Law
 - Year 2 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law
 - Year 2 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law
 - Year 3 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law
 - Year 3 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law
- Any PH programme
- Any PH programme