THE ETHICS OF BLAME

Blame is a central kind of reaction to the actions, feelings, and character of human beings. But it is ethically problematic in its own right. This course will consider a range of fundamental questions about blame: What is blame? What kind of evaluation, desire, emotion, and/or other attitudes are central to blame? Most importantly: why and when should we blame? Who has standing to blame someone, and under what circumstances? What is the value of blame, and what is its function in interpersonal interaction? Should we, and can we, live without it? With readings from Confucius, Nietzsche, Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., and a range of 20th- and 21st-century philosophers, this course aims to guide students through articulating and defending their own views on these questions through class discussion, short writing assignments, and a substantial final paper.

Instructor: Eugene Chislenko, chislenko@temple.edu
        Office hours: Anderson Hall 750, Th 3:30-5:30pm or by appointment

Course requirements: (1) Up to 100 pages of reading each week (all on course website)
        (2) Class participation (10%)
        (3) Five in-class reading quizzes (20%)
        (4) Two 3-page papers (30%)
        (5) 2-page peer feedback assignment (10%)
        (6) 8-page final paper (30%)

SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND READINGS

I. What is Blame?

1. Tu 8/24: **Introduction: The Importance of Blame**
2. Th 8/26: **Why is Blame so Hard to Think About? Blame as Sanction, Belief, and Emotion**
        Reading: George Sher, *In Praise of Blame*, Chapter 5 ("What Blame Is Not")
3. Tu 8/31: **Blame as Response to an Impaired Relationship**
        Reading: T.M. Scanlon, *Moral Dimensions: Permissiblity, Meaning, Blame*, Chapter 4 ("Blame"), pp. 122-166
4. Th 9/2: **Blame as Seeking Alignment**
        Reading: Miranda Fricker, "What's the Point of Blame? A Paradigm Based Explanation"
5. Tu 9/7: **Blame as Attention**
        Reading: Eugene Chislenko, "Blame as Attention"

6. Th 9/9: **Review and discussion**
    No new reading. **First paper due Monday, 9/13 at noon**.

II. Alternatives to Blame

7. Tu 9/14: **The Spirit of Non-Violent Resistance, I**
    Reading: Mahatma Gandhi, *Non-Violent Resistance (Satyagraha)*, §§1-2, 7, 12-15, 25-26, 68, 73, 76, 88, 100
8. Th 9/16: **The Spirit of Non-Violent Resistance, II**
    Reading: Martin Luther King, Jr., "The Power of Nonviolence," "An Experiment in Love," "Speech before the Youth March for Integrated Schools," "My Trip to the Land of Gandhi," "I Have a Dream," selections from *Stride Toward Freedom* and *The Strength to Love*
9. Tu 9/21: **Life without Blame, I**
    Reading: Confucius, *The Analects*, I.1,4,16; IV.1,2,4,17; V.23,25,27; VII.19,22; XII.16; XIV.29,34,35,37; XV.15,19,24,25; XVI.10; XVII.24; Kwong-loi Shun, "On Anger"
10. Th 9/23: **Life without Blame, II**
    Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Preface to Second Edition and #276, 279, 295, 304, 307, 319-23, 327, 334, 378, 382-3
11. Tu 9/28: **Defenses of Blame, I**
    Reading: Barbara Houston, "In Praise of Blame"
12. Th 9/30: **Defenses of Blame, II**
    Reading: Samuel Reis-Dennis, "Anger: Scary Good"; watch Myisha Cherry, "Anger is not a Bad Word" at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uysTk2EIotw
13. Tu 10/5: **Review and discussion**
    No new reading.
14. Th 10/7: **Writing workshop**
    No new reading. **Second paper due Monday, 10/11 at noon**.

III. Excuses and Forgiveness

15. Tu 10/12: **Getting Out of Blame**
    Reading: Marcia Baron, "Excuses, Excuses"
16. Th 10/14: **The Importance of Personal History**
    Reading: Gary Watson, "Responsibility and the Limits of Evil"
17. Tu 10/19: **Forgiveness**
    Reading: Paul Hughes and Brandon Warmke, "Forgiveness"
18. Th 10/21: **Racialized Forgiveness**

Reading: Myisha Cherry, "Racialized Forgiveness"
19. Tu 10/26: **Forgiving Too Fast**
Reading: Watch Myisha Cherry, "Can you Find it in your Heart to Forgive? Race, Requests, & Repair," + Q&A, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UERZo9x6d0Y
20. Th 10/28: **Review and discussion**
No new reading.

IV. Hard Cases

21. Tu 11/2: **Who are You to Blame Me?**
Reading: Macalester Bell, "The Standing to Blame: A Critique"
22. Th 11/4: **Meddling**
Reading: Maria Seim, "The Standing to Blame and Meddling"
23. Tu 11/9: **Hypocrisy**
Reading: Kyle Fritz and Daniel Miller, "Hypocrisy and the Standing to Blame"
24. Th 11/11: **Standing and Commitment**
Reading: Patrick Todd, "A Unified Account of the Moral Standing to Blame"
25. Tu 11/16: **Applying Our Views of Blame, I**
Reading: T.M. Scanlon, *Moral Dimensions: Permissiblity, Meaning, Blame*, Chapter 4 ("Blame"), pp. 166-214
26. Th 11/18: **Applying Our Views of Blame, II**
Reading: Matt King, "Attending to Blame"
Final paper draft due Friday, 11/19 at noon.

No class 11/22-26. Happy fall break!

27. Tu 11/30: **Writing workshop**
Reading: your partner's paper draft.
Peer feedback assignments due Wednesday, 12/1 at noon.
28. Th 12/2: **Open Discussion**
No new reading. **Final paper due Monday, 12/13 at noon**.

COURSE POLICIES

Office Hours: Come to office hours often! Talking one-on-one or in small groups is one of the best ways to get a handle on the material and methods of the course. You'll probably get more out of it if you come with specific questions, but coming to talk about the issues in a more general way is fine too. If you have friends in the class, feel free to come as a small group. If you want to meet

but have a schedule conflict, let me know and we can find a different time. I'll also hold extra office hours each time a paper deadline is coming up.

Quizzes: There will be five short reading quizzes, usually at the beginning of class. This is a way of keeping attendance, holding you accountable for doing the readings, and reflecting how you are doing in the course. You won't know in advance which day there will be a quiz. Each quiz will be graded as an A, B, C, D, or F (no plus or minus grades). The fifth quiz is a makeup quiz, and replaces your lowest quiz grade, so you can miss one quiz or get one F with no penalty. I.e., your four highest quiz grades will be averaged together as 20% of your course grade. Your answer does not need to be perfect in every detail to get an A; if you read the assigned reading a few times and take some notes on the main ideas, you should have no trouble.

The instructions on each quiz will be as follows: "Reading quiz: Please answer the following question about the reading for today, summarizing the relevant parts of the reading." The question will be a basic question about the main ideas of the reading for that day, taken from a list of reading questions which you will have in advance. At least one quiz will be in Unit I, and will be on one of the following questions:

- For class 2: On what grounds does Sher reject the view that blame is an emotion?
- For class 3: What is blame, according to Scanlon? How does he defend his view?
- For class 4: What is blame, according to Fricker? How does she defend her view?
- For class 5: What is blame, according to Chislenko? How does he defend his view?

Plagiarism: *All* written work for the course must be your own. Be sure to cite any works you use, including web sites, books, and articles. Presenting *anyone* else's work as your own is considered plagiarism. Please follow this link to see Temple University's Policy on Student Conduct Code, which includes academic honesty: policies.temple.edu/PDF/398.pdf. The Philosophy Department Plagiarism Policy mandates an "F" grade, and reporting to the Chair and the CLA Undergraduate Affairs Office, for plagiarized work.

Disabilities: Any student who has a need for accommodations based on the impact of a documented disability or medical condition should contact Disability Resources and Services (DRS) in 100 Ritter Annex (drs@temple.edu; 215-204-1280) to request accommodations and learn more about the resources available to you. If you have a DRS accommodation letter to share with me, or you would like to discuss your accommodations, please contact me as soon as is practical. I will work with you and with DRS to coordinate reasonable accommodations for all students with documented disabilities. All discussions related to your accommodations will be confidential.

Statement on Academic Freedom: Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. Temple University has adopted a policy on Student and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy # 03.70.02) which can be accessed through the following link: **http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02**