

## THE MORAL PHILOSOPHY OF ELIZABETH ANSCOMBE

Elizabeth Anscombe was one of the 20th century's leading moral philosophers, moral psychologists, and Catholic thinkers, and the founding figure in contemporary philosophy of action. This seminar will cover her major contributions to moral philosophy, including her writings on intention, justification, practical reason, virtue, knowledge, Aristotle and Aquinas, Catholic doctrine, and modern moral philosophy, as well as some contemporary extensions of and reactions to those views. We will attempt to understand the relations between and the influence of these views, and critically examine the extent to which they are defensible.

**Instructor:** Eugene Chislenko, [chislenko@temple.edu](mailto:chislenko@temple.edu)

Office hours: Anderson Hall 750, Thursdays 2:30-4:30pm or by appointment

**Course requirements:** (1) Approximately 50 pages of difficult reading each week  
 (2) Active class participation (10%)  
 (3) Six 1-page response papers OR two 3-page papers OR two 10-15 minute in-class presentations (25%)  
 (3) Peer commentary on final paper draft (15%)  
 (4) 3000-word final paper (50%)

There is one required book: G.E.M. Anscombe, *Intention*. Please make sure you have a copy.

For helpful secondary literature, see the Oxford Bibliography on Canvas. Particularly helpful are:

- \* Rachael Wiseman, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Anscombe's Intention* (2016)—a great book, both sharp and accessible. Available online through [library.temple.edu](http://library.temple.edu).
- John Schwenkler: *Anscombe's Intention: A Guide* (2019)—systematic, exegetical, and critical.
- Ford, Hornsby, and Stoutland, eds., *Essays on Anscombe's Intention* (2011)—an influential collection, uneven in quality, with a focus on Anscombe's discussions of knowledge.
- Gormally, Jones, and Teichmann, eds., *The Moral Philosophy of Elizabeth Anscombe*—some good pieces on particular issues in Anscombe's ethics.

### SCHEDULE OF SEMINAR MEETINGS AND READINGS

1. Tu 1/14: **Introduction**

2. Tu 1/21: **The Project of *Intention***

Reading: Anscombe, "Mr. Truman's Degree"

Rachael Wiseman, "The Intended and Unintended Consequences of *Intention*"

Anscombe, *Intention*, §§1-4 (pp. 1-9)

3. Tu 1/28: **The Question "Why?"**  
 Reading: Anscombe, *Intention*, §§5-18 (pp.9-28)  
 Angela Smith, "Responsibility as Answerability"
4. Tu 2/4: **The Structure of Intentional Action**  
 Reading: Anscombe, *Intention*, §§19-31 (pp.28-54)  
 Rachael Wiseman, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Anscombe's Intention*, pp.93-105
5. Tu 2/11: **The Practical Syllogism**  
 Reading: Anscombe, *Intention*, §§32-43 (pp. 54-80)  
 Judith Jarvis Thomson (at that time Judith Jarvis), "Review" of *Intention*
6. Tu 2/18: **Anscombe and Aristotle**  
 Reading: Finish *Intention* (pp.80-94)  
 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book III, Chapters 1-5  
 Anscombe, "Practical Truth"
7. Tu 2/25: **Modern Moral Philosophy**  
 Reading: Anscombe, "Does Oxford Philosophy Corrupt the Youth?"  
 Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy"

*[No class 3/3 – happy spring break!]*

8. Tu 3/10: **The Ethics of Killing**  
 Reading: Anscombe, "The Dignity of the Human Being"  
 Anscombe, "Murder and the Morality of Euthanasia"  
 Anscombe, "War and Murder"  
 Luke Gormally, "On Killing Human Beings"
9. Tu 3/17: **Sexual Ethics**  
 Reading: Anscombe, "On *Humanae Vitae*"  
 Anscombe, "Contraception, Chastity and the Vocation of Marriage"  
 Anscombe, "You Can Have Sex Without Children: Christianity and the New Offer"
10. Tu 3/24: **Promises and Authority**  
 Reading: Anscombe, "Rules, Rights, and Promises"  
 Anscombe, "On Promising and its Justice"  
 Anscombe, "Authority in Morals"
11. Tu 3/31: **Goodness and Desirability**  
 Reading: Candace Vogler, *Reasonably Vicious*, Chapter 2: "In Some Sense Good"
12. Tu 4/7: **Visit to Anscombe Archive**  
 Visit to Anscombe Archive at Penn. **Final paper due Monday, April 6 by noon.**
13. Tu 4/14 **Mini-conference, I**  
 Reading: Final paper drafts. **Peer commentaries due Monday, April 13 by noon.**
14. Tu 4/21 **Mini-conference, II**  
 Reading: Final paper drafts. **Final paper rewrite due Friday, May 1 by noon.**

## COURSE POLICIES

**Office Hours:** Come to office hours often! The material is hard and you need to talk through it. Come with specific questions if you can, but coming to talk in a more general way is fine too. It's also fine to come as a small group. If you want to meet but have a schedule conflict, let me know.

**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](http://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 accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability, including accommodations for access to technology resources and electronic instructional materials required for the course, should contact me privately to discuss your situation by the end of the second week of classes, or as soon as you can. If you haven't already, please contact Disability Resources and Services (DRS) in 100 Ritter Annex or 215-204-1280 to learn more about the resources available to you. I will work with DRS to coordinate reasonable accommodations for all students with documented disabilities.

**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](http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02)

**Short assignments:** Choose ONE of the following options. (

- (1) In weeks 2-10, write six 1-page response papers, defending a thought about the readings for the *upcoming* seminar meeting.
- (2) In weeks 2-10, write two 3-page papers, defending a thought about the readings for the *preceding* three meetings.
- (3) In weeks 2-10, make two 10-15 minute in-class presentations, including a handout or PowerPoint presentation, summarizing the reading for the week, raising what you think are the most important issues for discussion, and defending your own views both about what Anscombe is saying and about whether she is right.

For each option, email each written assignment (response paper, paper, or handout/PowerPoint for your upcoming presentation) by Monday at noon, as a Word or PDF file (I slightly prefer Word, but either is fine) to [chislenko@temple.edu](mailto:chislenko@temple.edu), no more than one per week, the last one by Monday, March 30. Before the third class meeting, you must email your choice of option to [chislenko@temple.edu](mailto:chislenko@temple.edu), and, in the case of option (3), agree on two presentation dates. Parts of short papers may be integrated into class discussion. You may combine halves of two options.

## FINAL PAPER AND PEER COMMENTARY ASSIGNMENT

Write a term paper on a topic of your own choosing, from within the topics covered in this seminar. Say clearly at the beginning of the paper what your paper will do. Defend your view through discussion of relevant parts of the readings for the course, as well as your own thoughts and examples. Explain all key terms so that someone who has not taken the course can understand your paper. Discuss explicitly the best reasons why someone might disagree with you, and how you might convince that person. Your paper should show an understanding of course readings and class discussion, and of which parts of the readings are relevant for your topic. But the assignment is to work out and defend your own view. Summary of what we have covered so far should take up less than half your paper. When choosing a topic, think about what you're most interested in, and also what you have something to say about that goes beyond what we have covered in class.

**Length:** 3000 words, *not* including notes and bibliography (usually about 10-12 pages), double spaced, with 12-point font and at least 1-inch margins. This is standard APA colloquium length.

**Logistics:** Your paper is due **Friday, April 10, by noon**. A rewrite is due **Friday, May 1, by noon**. Each will be graded independently as 20% (first submission) and 30% (rewrite) of your course grade. Please email your paper as a Word file or PDF (I slightly prefer Word, but either is fine) to [chislenko@temple.edu](mailto:chislenko@temple.edu), with your name and a title at the top of the first page. *Late papers* will be marked down one third of a grade (from A to A-, A- to B+, etc.) for each day or fraction of a day they are late, including Saturday and Sunday. *Grades are non-negotiable*, and will not be changed for any reason. I'm open to *extensions* in extenuating circumstances, if you ask at least at least two weeks before the deadline.

**Peer commentary:** In the last two weeks of class, we will have a mini-conference, with discussion of everyone's paper drafts, all of them read by everyone in advance. Each conference session will start with a 10-minute presentation by someone other than the author, followed by a few minutes for the author to reply and then a Q&A with the author. You will each comment on one of the two conference days, with your commentary **due by email by noon on the preceding Monday** to [chislenko@temple.edu](mailto:chislenko@temple.edu). Your commentary must be 1500 words or less, and must include, not necessarily in this order: (1) a clear statement of the view the author defends in the paper; (2) a summary of the author's main line of argument, including responses to objections; (3) praise for what you think the paper does well; (4) your main objections or criticisms (pick the ones you think are most important!); and (5) constructive suggestions for improving the paper. Your commentary will be graded mainly on its clarity of summary and on its offering useful, probing, constructive criticism that helps the author improve the paper.