

# Shame, in Antiquity & Today

PHIL 105W/205W

Instructor: Willie Costello

Autumn Quarter. 4 units. Prerequisites: None. WAYS Certification: TBD. Meetings on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 13:30 to 14:50 in Bldg 260 Rm 012. Office hours on Tuesdays from 15:00 to 16:00 in Bldg 100 Rm 102M, or by appointment (email: [williec@stanford.edu](mailto:williec@stanford.edu)). Course readings available from [bit.ly/phil105w](http://bit.ly/phil105w). Course website available through [canvas.stanford.edu](http://canvas.stanford.edu).

## *Course description*

What is the moral significance of shame? Is our sense of shame an important safeguard against our otherwise selfish impulses, or a childish aversion to social disapproval? Are our feelings of shame concerned with who we really are as people, or merely with how we appear to others? Is the shaming of others ever justified, and if so, when? Is shame a universal human experience, or does its nature and significance vary across cultures and time?

This course is an investigation into these and related questions, about the nature of shame and its role in our moral psychology and ethical lives. Readings will include classic ancient Greek works by Plato, Homer, and Sophocles; modern scholarship on those ancient sources; and contemporary ethical discussions of shame. No background in ancient Greek or contemporary moral philosophy is required.

## *Course learning objectives*

By the end of this course, you should be able to...

- appreciate the multifaceted nature of shame and its various connections to other aspects of morality
- explain the major features and presuppositions of ancient Greek and modern conceptions of shame
- identify these features and presuppositions as they appear in actual philosophical texts

- analyze and evaluate different conceptions of shame
- research and defend an original thesis dealing with the above topics
- read philosophical texts carefully, charitably, and critically
- critique others' work with respect, charity, and encouragement
- cultivate a personally effective approach to academic research and writing

### *Course contract*

This course is a collaboration between me, you, and your classmates. You will be regularly called upon to actively participate in class discussions and other activities, and your contributions will directly influence what we cover in seminar. **It is not necessary that you agree with everything I or anyone else says in this class, but it is necessary that you always listen and respond with respect.** With this in mind, I put forth the following “course contract”, applying to everyone in the class (students and instructor alike):

- we have the responsibility to **contribute** to the collective learning process (which includes asking questions when we're not understanding something)
- we have the responsibility to **be receptive** to other points of view than our own
- we have the right to **dissent or differ** from the instructor and from others in the class
- we have the responsibility to **welcome challenges** to our own opinions, and be willing to support our claims with further reasons (or be honest when we don't have any)
- we have the right to **personal dignity**, which at no point should be infringed upon in any way by the conduct of others

### *Texts*

The required texts for this course are the following, which are available for purchase at the Stanford Bookstore:

- Plato (edd. Cooper & Hutchinson), *Complete Works* (Hackett, 9780872203495) – \$59
- Homer (tr. Robert Fagles), *Iliad* (Penguin, 9780140275360) – \$19
- Sophocles (edd. Grene & Lattimore), *II: Ajax, etc.* (Univ. of Chicago, 9780226311555) – \$13
- Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Univ. of California, 9780520256439) – \$30
- Martha Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity* (Princeton, 9780691126258) – \$45
- Jon Ronson, *So You've Been Publicly Shamed* (Riverhead, 9781594634017) – \$16

All additional readings can be downloaded from: [bit.ly/phil105w](http://bit.ly/phil105w)

## Evaluation

Your grade for the course will be determined by the following components: micro-assignments (informal reading exercises, done at home and submitted before each class meeting); exit tickets (informal writing exercises, done in class and submitted at the end of each class meeting); one in-class discussion lead; and a term paper on a topic of your choosing, preceded by a term paper think piece and a peer review of another student's think piece. The full grade breakdown is as follows:

<i>Component</i>	<i>Weight</i>	<i>Due date</i>
Micro-assignments	17%	before each class
Exit tickets	9%	during each class
Discussion lead	4%	once during class
Term paper think piece (1000 words)	10%	11/12
Think piece peer review (750 words)	10%	11/26
Term paper (3000–4000 words)	50%	12/15

- » **Micro-assignments:** Before each class you are to complete an exercise relating to the day's required reading – a “micro-assignment”. The purpose of these micro-assignments is: (a) to deepen your appreciation of the readings; (b) to enhance our classroom discussions of the readings; and (c) to help you develop ideas for your term paper.

**Micro-assignments must be completed and submitted on Canvas by 12 noon before each class meeting.** Micro-assignments submitted after this deadline will receive no credit. **Each micro-assignment counts for 1% of your final grade, up to 17%.** You will have, in total, nineteen opportunities to submit micro-assignments over the course of the term (there is no micro-assignment for the first class). This means that **you can skip two micro-assignment without penalty.** (You do not need to tell me when you're choosing not to submit a micro-assignment.) Full credit for micro-assignments is awarded when the student has made a honest attempt to complete the task; determination of this criterion is at the discretion of the instructor.

- » **Exit tickets:** At the end of each class you will be asked to write (on an index card that will be provided to you) a short reflection relating to the day's discussion – an “exit ticket”. The purpose of these exit tickets is: (a) to provide you an opportunity to review and reflect on what you've learned; and (b) to maintain a record of class attendance.

**Exit tickets must be handed in to me at the end of each class meeting.** You will have, in total, twenty opportunities to hand in exit tickets over the course of the term (one for each class), and each exit ticket counts for 0.5% of your final grade, up to 9%. This means that **you can skip**

**two exit tickets without penalty.** Full credit for exit tickets is awarded when the student has made a honest attempt to respond to the assigned prompt; determination of this criterion is at the discretion of the instructor.

- » **Discussion lead:** Once during term you will be called upon to lead the first part of our in-class discussion. This will involve briefly summarizing the highlights from the day's reading(s), raising some open-ended questions about the readings, and guiding the class in discussing those questions. The day on which you'll do this will be arranged with you in advance. I will model how to do these discussion leads in our first few meetings, before passing the responsibility off to you and your peers. The purpose of these discussion leads is: (a) to give you some practice at leading a discussion, an essential skill for pretty much anyone to have; and (b) to give everyone the benefit of listening to someone other than me lead the day's discussion for a while.
- » **Term paper:** The major assignment for this course is a term paper. This is an opportunity for you to think about a specific example of shame in depth and explore what it tells us about the nature and moral significance of shame. Your term paper should be a focused, argumentative essay, between 3000 and 4000 words in length, and defend a specific and original thesis about shame.
- » **Term paper think piece:** Midway through term you are to hand in a "think piece": a preliminary investigation into the idea you intend to explore further in your term paper. Your think piece should be at least 1000 words in length. It should not be merely an outline of your term paper. It should present an original thesis about shame and support that thesis via an in-depth analysis of a specific example of shame. The purpose of this think piece is: (a) to give you a head-start on your term paper; and (b) to give you some early feedback on your ideas, so that you have some guidance on how to develop them in the weeks to come.
- » **Think piece peer review:** After submitting your own think piece, you are to write an (anonymous) peer review of another student's (anonymized) think piece. Your peer review should provide constructive, formative feedback on the think piece you have received, presenting two developed responses to the think piece's thesis. It should be approximately 750 words in length. The purpose of this peer review is: (a) to develop your ability to charitably and constructively respond to others' ideas; and (b) to provide you, in return, with some ideas for how you might think to develop your own think piece.
- » **Your think piece, peer review, and term paper must be submitted via Canvas by end of day on the day they are due** (or, for all you night owls, by 8 A.M. the following morning at the latest), preferably in PDF format. **Late papers will be docked 5% for each 24 hour period between the**

**due date and when they are handed in** (unless accompanied by valid medical documentation). Late papers may be submitted up to 7 days after the due date; any papers not received by this time will automatically receive a 0. Assignment instructions and formatting guidelines will be provided along with assignment prompt.

- » **In-class participation:** You are expected to be an active participant in our seminar meetings. One (obvious) way to be an active participant is by asking questions and sharing your thoughts with the class; but this is not the only way, nor will it necessarily be the way that works best for you. Other ways to be an active participant include: attentively listening to classroom discussions; participating in break-out discussion groups with your classmates; and/or coming to talk to me after class or during office hours.

### *Technology in the classroom*

**Use of portable electronic devices (laptops, smartphones, tablets, etc.) is not allowed in this class.** Even if you're not actively using your device, you may not have it out in front of you. Keep it in your bag; or even better, don't even bring it with you to class. Everyone's attention should be focused on what's happening in class, and use of electronic devices can be distracting to those around you. You should, however, **bring a notebook and writing instrument with you every day to class**, for taking notes and to facilitate with in-class activities. You should also **bring paper copies of the day's readings and of your micro-assignment submission.**

### *Honor Code*

One of the aims of this (and really, *any* university-level) course is to develop your ability to express yourself intelligently and responsibly. Part of what expressing yourself intelligently and responsibly involves is situating your own views in relation to others'. Plagiarizing others' views, or failing to acknowledge views you are responding to, runs counter to this aim. Because of this, plagiarism and all other forms of academic dishonesty will be treated with the greatest severity in this course. You should make yourself familiar with the University's Honor Code; see <http://communitystandards.stanford.edu>.

### *Accessibility*

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation

Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, URL: [studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oea](http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oea)).

### *Academic Resources*

The Hume Center for Writing and Speaking offers support in any and all areas of both writing and speaking. Both scheduled appointments and drop-in tutoring are available and always encouraged. New, residence-based tutoring is also available in dorms.

- Writing Tutors: [undergrad.stanford.edu/tutoring-support/hume-center/writing](http://undergrad.stanford.edu/tutoring-support/hume-center/writing)
- Speaking Tutors: [undergrad.stanford.edu/tutoring-support/hume-center/speaking](http://undergrad.stanford.edu/tutoring-support/hume-center/speaking)
- Academic Skills Coaching: [adinag.youcanbook.me](http://adinag.youcanbook.me)

### *Email*

Questions should ideally be brought to me in person, either at lecture or during my office hours. If you would prefer to correspond via email, my email address is [williec@stanford.edu](mailto:williec@stanford.edu). I will respond to emails within two business days.

### *Basic Schedule*

DATE(S)	READINGS*	TOPIC
9/26–28	Ronson (2015)   Deonna et al. (2012)	Introducing shame
10/3–5	Benedict (1947), Wong and Tsai (2007)   <i>Iliad</i>	Shame culture, yesterday & today
10/10–12	Williams (1993)   <i>Ajax</i>	Shame in ancient Greek culture
10/17–19	<i>Symposium, Protagoras</i>   <i>Apology, Republic II</i>	Shame in popular Greek morality
10/24–26	<i>Gorgias</i>	Shame & ancient ethics
10/31–11/2	McKim (1988)   Moss (2005)	Shame & philosophical method
11/7–9	<i>Republic IV, Phaedrus</i> , Moss (2005)   Taylor (1985)	Shame & moral psychology
11/14–16	<i>Republic V, VIII, IX</i>   Calhoun (2004)	Shame & politics
11/28–30	Nussbaum (2004)	Shame & the law
12/5–7	Nagel (1998)   Velleman (2001)	Shame & beyond

\*Refer to the detailed schedule below for fuller specifications of each day’s readings.

## Detailed Schedule

Each day's readings are sorted into the following three categories:

- » **REQUIRED:** You have to read it! The main reading we will be discussing in class
- **RECOMMENDED:** You will benefit from reading it! I may refer to its ideas in class
- ★ **EXTRA:** Totally optional, for when you're really interested in the day's topic.

Reminder: All the readings listed below is either found in one of the required texts or available freely from [bit.ly/phil105w](http://bit.ly/phil105w).

9/26–28    Introducing shame

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### TUESDAY

- » **REQUIRED:** Ronson (2015): Chapters 4 & 6
- **RECOMMENDED:** Ronson (2015): Chapters 1–3

### THURSDAY

- » **REQUIRED:** Deonna et al. (2012): Chapters 1 & 2
- ★ **EXTRA:** Deonna et al. (2012): Introduction, Chapters 3 & 4

10/3–5    Shame culture, yesterday & today

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### TUESDAY

- » **REQUIRED:** Benedict (1947): pp. 222–225
- » **REQUIRED:** Wong and Tsai (2007)
- **RECOMMENDED:** Cairns (1993): Introduction §0.4 (pp. 27–47)
- ★ **EXTRA:** Cairns (1993): Introduction §0.3 (pp. 14–26)

### THURSDAY

- » **REQUIRED:** Homer, *Iliad*: VI, lines 237–end [lines 283–end in Fagles]
- » **REQUIRED:** Homer, *Iliad*: XV, lines 260–end [lines 310–end in Fagles]
- » **REQUIRED:** Homer, *Iliad*: XXII (the whole thing)
- **RECOMMENDED:** Cairns (1993): Introduction §§0.1–0.2 (pp. 1–14)

- RECOMMENDED: Cairns (1993): Chapter 1, §§1.2 & 1.7 (pp. 68–83 & 139–146)
- ★ EXTRA: Dodds (1951): Chapter 1

10/10–12 Shame in ancient Greek culture

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TUESDAY

- » REQUIRED: Williams (1993): Chapters 1 & 4, Endnote One
- RECOMMENDED: Williams (1993): the rest of it

THURSDAY

- » REQUIRED: Sophocles, *Ajax*
- RECOMMENDED: Williams (1993): Chapters 4 (reread)

10/17–19 Shame in popular Greek morality

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TUESDAY

- » REQUIRED: Plato, *Protagoras*: 320c–328d (Protagoras’s “Great Speech”)
- » REQUIRED: Plato, *Symposium*: 178a–180b & 215a–222c (the speeches of Phaedrus and Alcibiades)
- ★ EXTRA: Adkins (1960): Chapters 3, 8, 9

THURSDAY

- » REQUIRED: Plato, *Apology*: esp. 28a–30b (but read the whole thing)
- » REQUIRED: Plato, *Republic*: Book II, 357a–362c (“The Ring of Gyges”)
- ★ EXTRA: Dover (1974): §§I.A, v.A, v.B

10/24–26 Shame & ancient ethics

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TUESDAY

- » REQUIRED: Plato, *Gorgias*: start–483c

THURSDAY

- » REQUIRED: Plato, *Gorgias*: 483c–end



10/31–11/2 Shame & philosophical method

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TUESDAY

- » **REQUIRED:** McKim (1988)
- \* **EXTRA:** Jenks (2012)
- \* **EXTRA:** Cain (2008)

THURSDAY

- » **REQUIRED:** Moss (2005): §§1–2
- \* **EXTRA:** Futter (2009)

11/7–9 Shame & moral psychology

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TUESDAY

- » **REQUIRED:** Plato, *Republic*: Book IV, 436a–441c
- » **REQUIRED:** Plato, *Phaedrus*: 246a–257b (Socrates’ “Palinode”)
- » **REQUIRED:** Moss (2005): §§3–4

THURSDAY

- » **REQUIRED:** Taylor (1985): Chapter 3

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**11/12 TERM PAPER THINK PIECE DUE!**

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11/14–16 Shame & politics

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TUESDAY

- » **REQUIRED:** Plato, *Republic*: Book V, 462a–473a
- » **REQUIRED:** Plato, *Republic*: Book VIII, 562a–563e
- » **REQUIRED:** Plato, *Republic*: Book IX, 571a–580a

THURSDAY

» **REQUIRED:** Calhoun (2004)

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**11/26**      **THINK PIECE PEER REVIEW DUE!**

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11/28–30      Shame & the law

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TUESDAY

» **REQUIRED:** Nussbaum (2004): Introduction, Chapter 4

THURSDAY

» **REQUIRED:** Nussbaum (2004): Chapters 5 & 6

12/5–7      Shame & beyond

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TUESDAY

» **REQUIRED:** Nagel (1998)

THURSDAY

» **REQUIRED:** Velleman (2001)

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**12/15**      **TERM PAPER DUE!**

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## References

- Adkins, A. W. H. (1960). *Merit and Responsibility: A Study in Greek Values*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Benedict, R. (1947). *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. London: Secker & Warburg.
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- Dodds, E. R. (1951). *The Greeks and The Irrational*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
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- Jenks, R. (2012). 'The Power of Shame Considerations in Plato's *Gorgias*.' *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 29(4): 373–390.
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- Wong, Y. and Tsai, J. (2007). 'Cultural models of shame and guilt.' In J. L. Tracy, R. W. Robins, and J. P. Tangney (eds.) 'The self-conscious emotions: Theory and research,' 209–223. New York: Guilford Press.