

## **Metaethics Topics I**

Prof. Flavio Williges

Tuesdays: 2:00 PM – 6:00 PM

### **Loneliness and Anxiety: Their Ethical and Existential Implications**

#### **1. Course description**

Anxiety and loneliness can manifest in both adaptive and disruptive forms. Psychiatrists and psychologists, drawing on extensive evidence, have highlighted that millions of people worldwide today experience disruptive forms of these emotions. The philosophy of emotions, in both the analytic and phenomenological traditions, has engaged with the task of understanding these affective experiences and their implications.

In the phenomenological tradition, anxiety and loneliness are approached as broad affective modalities—moods, atmospheres, or existential feelings—that shape our experience of the world. The focus is on their unsettling structure and their impact on cognition and the body. By contrast, the analytic tradition, which conceptualizes emotions as intentional states directed toward specific objects, tends to emphasize the possible epistemic and moral value of these emotions.

This course offers a critical engagement with these two philosophical traditions, examining their key contributions and exploring how they might complement or diverge from one another. The aim is to develop a broader understanding of anxiety and loneliness—emotions that can both confine individuals and serve as tools for reflection and moral orientation. In the final part of the course, we will introduce a third line of inquiry: theories that articulate a socio-economic and cultural reading of these emotions, connecting philosophical analysis to the tradition of social critique of emotions.

#### **2. Class Dynamics and Assessment**

In line with UFSM's promotion of the internationalization of graduate studies, this semester, the course will be taught in English. Classes will be conducted in English, and students will be encouraged to read, present, and ask questions in English. There will be two assessments. The first will be the submission of a review (for the professor and classmates) and an oral presentation (1 per student) of the weekly reading. Each student will be responsible for at least one text from the semester's material. The student in charge of a text will present it and then facilitate questions and provide answers to the audience's inquiries. The presentation (seminar) will be worth 10.00. In addition to the presentation, students will take a final in-class essay exam worth 10.00. The final grade will be the sum and division of the partial grades.

#### **3. Class Schedule:**

**March 11** – Emotions, Moods, and Existential Feelings

Reading: Goldie, P. *Emotions: A Philosophical Exploration*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, Chapter 2.

Ratcliffe, M. "Existential Feelings." In *The Routledge Handbook of Phenomenology of Emotion*, edited by Thomas Szanto and Hilge Landweer. New York, 2020, pp. 250–261.

### **March 18** – Loneliness as an Emotion of Absence

Reading: Roberts, T., & Krueger, J. (2020). "Loneliness and the Emotional Experience of Absence." *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 59(2), 185–204. Portico.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/sjp.12387>

Ratcliffe, M. (2022). "Loneliness, Grief, and the Lack of Belonging." Unpublished manuscript.

### **March 25** – Disruptive Forms of Loneliness

Reading: Krueger, J., Osler, L., & Roberts, T. (2023). "Loneliness and Absence in Psychopathology." *Topoi*, 42(5), 1195–1210.

### **April 1** – Disruptive Forms of Loneliness

Readings: Motta, Valeria. "Loneliness: From Absence of Other to Disruption of Self." *Topoi* (2023) 42:1143–1153.

### **April 8** – Disruptive Forms of Loneliness

Reading: Williges, Flavio. "Perturbations in Bodily Experience and the Self in Chronic Loneliness." 2023. Unpublished manuscript.

### **April 15** – The Biocognitive Approach to Anxiety

Reading: Kurth, Charlie. "Anxiety: A Case Study in the Value of Negative Emotion." *Shadows of the Soul*, edited by Tappolet, Teroni & Konzelmann. Routledge (2018).

### **April 22** – The Moral Value of Anxiety

Reading: Kurth, Charlie. "Moral Anxiety and Moral Agency." *Oxford Studies in Normative Ethics*, 5:171-195 (2015).

Brady, Michael S. "Anxiety's Allure." In *The Moral Psychology of Anxiety*. New York: Lexington Books, 2024, pp. 197–212.

### **April 29** – The Morality of Anxiety

Reading: Williges, F. "The Moral Value of Anxiety: Issues and Perspectives." *Ethics and Normativity*. In Ribeiro, L., Somavilla (Eds.). Belo Horizonte: UFMG Press, 2025. Forthcoming Chapter.

### **May 6** – The Phenomenological Approach to Anxiety

Reading: Aho, Kevin. *Contexts of Suffering: A Heideggerian Approach to Psychopathology*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield International (2019).

### **May 13** – The Phenomenological Approach to Anxiety

Reading: Glas, Gerrit. "An Enactive Approach to Anxiety and Anxiety Disorders." *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology*, Volume 27, Number 1, March 2020, pp. 35–50.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/ppp.2020.0005>

Ratcliffe, Matthew. *Real Hallucinations: Psychiatric Illness, Intentionality and the Interpersonal World*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2017.

### **May 20** – Anxiety, Self, and Society

Reading: Williges, Flavio. "Anxiety as an Unsettling Emotion: The Dynamics of Self-Instability" (Paper in progress).

### **May 27** – Anxiety, Self, and Society

Reading: Safatle, Vladimir. "Towards a New Model of Critique: The Possibilities of Contemporary Recovery of the Concept of Social Pathology." In Vladimir Safatle, Nelson da Silva Junior, Christian Dunker (Eds.). *Pathologies of the Social: Archaeologies of Psychic Suffering*. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica Editora, 2018.  
Quintana, Laura. *Rabia: Afectos, Violencia, Inmunidad*. Madrid: Herder, 2022.

### **June 3** – Course Assessment

### **June 10** – End of the Semester

## **Bibliography**

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<https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073911430131>

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<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11245-023-09896-4>

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Ratcliffe, M. (2012). *The Phenomenology of Existential Feeling. Feelings of Being Alive*, 23–54. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110246599.23>

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[[https://www.lonelinessphilpsych.org/uploads/1/3/5/7/135752353/loneliness\\_and\\_grief.pdf](https://www.lonelinessphilpsych.org/uploads/1/3/5/7/135752353/loneliness_and_grief.pdf)]

Ratcliffe, M. (2023). Lonely Places and Lonely People. *Topoi*, 42(5), 1123–1132.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11245-023-09931-4>

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**Grief Worlds: Study of Emotional Experience**. Cambridge/ Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2022.

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Slaby, J. (2007). Affective intentionality and the feeling body. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 7(4), 429–444. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-007-9083-x>

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