

Assignment (or Activity) title: Ethics Journal
Course: Discovery Seminar: Ethics in Fiction
University: Oxford College of Emory University
Faculty: Brad Hawley

Details about the audience and course context

- How many students are in the class? 20-30
- What is the teaching modality (in person, virtual, hybrid)? In person
- What grade level/year are the majority of students? First year
- Where does this course fall in the curriculum? (Is it in the core or organized within a particular course of study?) This Discovery Seminar is a required course for first-year students at Oxford College of Emory University
- What virtues are integrated into the course: compassion and empathy

Assignment

Ethics Journal (use a physical and not a digital journal): First, go to the store or order online a journal that you find aesthetically pleasing that you want to use all semester. For this class, you will take notes in your journal every time you read an assignment for class. When reading fiction, you should pay particular attention to justice, love (in all its various forms), and/or compassion (and its connection to empathy). We will consider many types of ethical ideas and virtues, but these are our key virtues for the course.

Compassion/empathy is the one virtue that we will always consider, because reading fiction, as I've already mentioned, is a way of practicing the habit of compassion/empathy, and because the virtues of love and justice are based, in part, on one's ability to exercise compassion for another person. I will not read these journals, because I know some of what you write might be private. But your journal grade will be based on your being able to read from it in class every day as we discuss fiction and ethics (you can be selective and not read in front of your peers any of your writing that is too personal for you).

1. Ethics in the Fiction—Ethics and Compassion/Empathy: What ethical arguments are being made in the fictional narrative? (How do you know?) How is your empathy engaged in the fiction? Which characters are we asked to have empathy for and in what ways? In other words, be specific about the ways in which the fiction asks you to practice the virtue of compassion.

2. Moral Exemplars in the Fiction: Are any of the characters offered as exemplars, or models, for ethical behavior? (Explain what aspects of their character the author is asking us to admire and imitate in our lives. What virtues do certain characters have?) You should also consider characters offered as negative examples, particularly in the Criminal comics—do these criminals have any virtues?
3. Practicing Compassion/Empathy—Habit formation: How have you been practicing empathy through the reading of this fiction? What types of people have you been asked to empathize with in these stories? You can also consider, if you'd like, other ways you have practiced compassion and empathy: You might have experienced empathy while reading for another class or while reading the news, or even through hearing the story of a friend. Are you listening to those around you who may need someone to hear them?
4. Other Ethical Concerns in Your Life, including Exemplars and Intellectual Virtues: How do the ethics alluded to in the literature apply to your life? Are there any exemplars in the fiction that model certain virtues for you? How might you be practicing intellectual virtues in this class? What about in other classes? Are any academic assignments that you have requiring you to practice any particular intellectual virtues?