

ELON UNIVERSITY

Fall 2015

*How Should We Live (in a community)?*

PHIL 112C

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MWF: 10:50-12:00

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Office hours: MW 12-2 pm

**Course Content:** Let us start with a quote: *People are fulfilled only to the extent that they create their world (which is a human world), and create it with their transforming labor.*<sup>1</sup> This class begins with an assumption: it is essential to being human that individuals must feel invested in the process of constructing and conducting of the communities in which we live. We feel unfulfilled and downtrodden when we are not able to take part in this community-construction. This assumption will guide us as we attempt to answer a single question: *How should we live?* Before we can take up this question, we should stress the importance of orienting a university course in terms of a question. Unlike other courses you may take at Elon – *Chemistry 101, Introduction to British Literatures, Business Basics*, etc. – this course does not presume to have a single answer determined in advance. If you take a basic natural science course, you will learn the basics of what the longstanding scientific community considers the most fundamental facts of that particular area of science. In this class, however, we begin and end with a question. I, your professor, do not presume to know how *you* should live – I would never do that. Instead, we are going to make effective use of the organizing question, and several related questions, in order to carry out this class.

Let us consider the question of our course: *How should we live?* The most important word in this phrase is *we*. This class concerns how *we* should live. The title is not “How should *I* live?” or “How should *you* live?” or “How does *she* live?” Instead, it is “How should *we* live?” This ‘we’ implies more than just me or you alone. ‘We’ necessarily includes others. Think about what it is like when you say ‘we.’ Whom do you include and whom do you exclude? As I read it, ‘we’ is another way of saying ‘community.’ The title of the course thus becomes *How should we live in a community?* or *How should a community live?* Now the reveal: *this is a course on community*. As Elon students, you are not only a part of the greater Elon community, but also a part of several other, often overlapping and interlocking, communities. It might be helpful to try to make a list of the communities to which you belong. This class is thus about our lives, as we live them, right here and right now. Our task this semester is to both *think through and enact community*, that is, we will not only read and talk about community, but live and act as a community – the community of a university philosophy class. To do this, we will read texts that draw connections from across the history of western civilization. From (1) Plato’s account of Socrates in Ancient Athens and (2) Hadot’s reading of the Roman Stoics to (3) 20<sup>th</sup>-century considerations of art and sensation by Jacques Rancière and (4) Jean-Luc Nancy’s critique of the myth of an original perfect community, we will try to reconsider our lives in terms of how we live, act, think, and speak together, in and through human relationships. An important goal this semester will thus be to *transform our lives so as that we can feel involved in and recognize our marks on the construction and conduct of our communities*. In this way, we will hopefully begin to live in fulfilling, meaningful, and significant ways.

**Evaluation of students:** The total possible points for this class is *1000 points*.

*Generating Questions:* For every class period, you must generate one question based on the reading. The length of the question can vary – it can be a few words or a few sentences long – but it must fulfill three conditions in order to receive full points: (1) It must demonstrate the kind of familiarity of a text that can only arise from reading it, (2) it should be philosophically insightful and thought-provoking, and (3) it must concern or be oriented on the question of community. You are thus not

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<sup>1</sup> Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 126.

permitted to ask overly general questions, ones that could apply to any book. To ensure this, each question must be accompanied by a date and a citation to a specific passage(s) on a specific page(s). I recommend that get a small notebook, in which you can write down your question. At the end of the class you would have a notebook that maps the itinerary of your questioning and reading of the texts. So, you must generate a question for every new reading and bring it to class, written on a piece of paper. Although you will not be required to share and submit every day, you must have a question ready in case the class needs your question. I will automatically excuse you for three days – no questions asked. But if there are more than three days in which you do not have your question, then you will be deducted 25 points from (or 25% of) your Generating Question grade, which is worth a possible 100 points or 10% of the grade.

*Community Interviews:* In the hope of keeping out ideas and discussions fresh, we will inject, nearly everyday, a new idea perspective on how we should live as a community. Starting on the third week, one student will present their experience of interviewing a member of the greater Elon or Burlington community about our main question: *How should we live as a community?* You can interview almost anyone, e.g., a faculty member, an administrative assistant, a nurse, groundskeeper, a custodian, a clerk at a gas station, the university chaplain, the owner of the Acorn Inn, the mayor of Burlington, President Leo Lambert, etc. The only requirement is that you must interview someone you do not already know personally. If you need help connecting to someone, just let me know and I will direct you. But I do encourage you to be creative and to truly listen to a member of your community to whom you do not normally listen. One student will present her or his findings in the first five minutes of every class, and should also submit to me a one-page reflective summary of your interview and how it addressed the central question of our course. (100 points or 10% of the grade)

*Class reflections:* At the end of each of our days together one student will offer a philosophical reflection on how our class period engaged our main question. To do this, one designated student will pay special attention to the trajectory of our class discussions, picking out the main themes and issues we cover, trying to discern how our thinking and questioning progresses over each period, and bringing everything into focus in terms of the overall orientation of our pursuit of our question. This student will thus have to pay close attention to the class, and to be able to quickly organize her thoughts. To help with this process, you might want to ask synthesizing or clarifying question during the class in order to keep the discussion on target. You will present your reflection in the last five minutes of every class, and you should submit to me a one-page summary of this (albeit in a much more organized and coherent fashion) at the start of the following class period. (100 points or 10% of the grade)

*Exams:* This is a class on “we,” the community. As such, I would like us not only read about community but, in at least some small sense, to enact community. Your exams are designed so as to initiate one form of community practice – decision-making. Exams are a very tricky operation, and I think they have been misused or perhaps used ineffectively. Think about it: *what is the purpose of an exam? What is an exam for?* If exams are intended to evaluate learning, and if students learn differently, then the form of an exam should not be imposed on a class but instead agreed upon by everyone involved. Your exams will thus have two parts.

First, we all decide, together as a community, on the form of your exam. While I will have final approval of the form, I am open to most suggestions. Remember: you will be graded on the form of the exam you construct. If you construct a poor exam, then your grade will reflect that poor performance. But if you construct an innovative, challenging, thoughtful, and meaningful exam, your grade will reflect such success. The goal is to construct an exam that truly captures evidence of every one of your learning processes. This will not be an easy process, I assure you. One difficulty is that we all must work together, as a community, to decide on the form. Since each student learns differently, the exam we develop must be attentive and respectful to everyone’s learning style. Another difficulty is that we have to consider the length and difficulty of the exam. There will be four exams in this class, so we should do our best to construct an

appropriate form. The only restriction on what kind of exam we construct is that it should embody some fundamental philosophical virtues, e.g., it must require careful and critical thinking, it must show aptitude for posing a deep and inspiring questions and demand following those questions to their furthest point of implication, it must demonstrate a genuine understanding of the issues we covered in class and read in the texts in light of the overarching question of the course (*How should we live in a community?*)

Second, once we all, the community of the classroom, have decided on the form of the exam and constructed it, then you will take the exam. This will be the second part of the exam grade. This will most likely be closer to the common expectations of an exam. If we want, we can even determine the distribution of points for the class. (Exam construction: 50 points or 50% of the grade. Exam performance: 100 points or 10% of the grade. Total points for the three exams: 450 points or 45% of the grade.)

*Final Exam:* While we all are responsible for the form of the first three exams, I am responsible for the form of the final exam. This is my idea: Create a plan, policy, etc. that is intended to bring about a change in your community that will lead to the improvement (in your eyes) of that community? My hope is that the discussions we have and the readings we do throughout the semester will inspire you to consider the current state of your community and then imagine the ways in which your community could grow and flourish. The final exam thus asks you (or several of you) to develop a concrete plan or policy that can be implemented to instigate such growth and flourishing. To connect what we read and discuss to the actual practice of community and your concrete plan, you must link it to a specific text we read. That is, you must select a few concepts, arguments, questions, positions, etc. from our texts and use them as a springboard for creating and implementing your plan or policy for improving your community. To repeat: *your plan must thus be well-grounded in our texts.*

Another possibility is to take advantage of the Residential Campus Innovation Support. Elon makes available a limited amount of funding to support innovative ways to connect existing programs in a manner that meets the goals of the residential campus initiative. For your final exam, you all are encouraged to apply for support for creating and implementing your plan, policy, or project. This can be done in a number of ways. Each student could apply and carry out the project, or students could split into groups and proceed in small numbers, or we could apply as an entire class. To apply, we need to construct the following application (no more than two pages)

- Name, department, contact information of the lead individual for the project
- Names and departments of any collaborators
- Amount requested
- Overall budget, including identification of other funding sources and all expenses
- Responses to the following prompts:
  - o Briefly describe the proposed project/program, including dates for implementation
  - o How is the proposed project/program connected with residential neighborhoods and/or how does it meet the goals of the Residential Campus Initiative?
  - o How will we measure the effectiveness of the proposed project/program?

Applications are submitted to Dr. Jon Dooley, Assistant Vice President for Student Life and Dean of Campus Life. *Applications are due by September 30.* Acceptance of application depends on the degree to which the proposed project/program matches the goals of the Residential Campus Initiative Mission: *To integrate academic and residential experiences in order to further students' intellectual, personal, and community development as lifelong learners and responsible global citizens.* The residential campus initiative embodies the university mission by creating communities that enhance learning and engagement. Students interact with faculty, staff, and fellow students in residential communities designed to extend learning beyond the walls of the classroom. Through planned and informal interactions, students: (1) encounter new ideas and perspectives, (2) debate the larger question of life, and (3) practice active citizenship in a shared community.

*Participation and attendance:* We must be very clear about this: *in order to pass this class, you must participate regularly, enthusiastically, and respectfully.* Philosophy demands continuous engagement, and this is why I put so much emphasis on participation and attendance. Earnest and direct engagement with this class is essential. If you are not participating, you are not doing philosophy. Also, *you must bring the correct book to every class.* For every day you do not bring the book, in the edition listed on this syllabus, you will be deducted points. You *must* have the paper edition of the text. No computers or e-readers are permitted. There is something wonderful about holding a real book, made of paper, in the hand. Enjoy it! Also, all the books are cheap. Buy them early and bring them to class. While I will not take attendance every day, excessive absences will result in a lowering of a student's grade. Missing class means missing class discussions, and discussions are essential to the cultivation of community. You should also be on time to class. Tardiness is rude to us all, and is therefore unacceptable. While unexpected things do happen, if you are late to class regularly, you will be deducted participation points. Then there is the question of phones and texting. I know my thoughts on this, but I want to hear yours. I ask you: *What is the appropriate phone-use policy?* Finally, if you miss a graded assignment due to a legitimate reason, you *must* have an official document (Dr.'s note, funeral program, AAA receipt, call from Obama, etc.) justifying this absence. Without such a document, you will *not* be permitted to make-up the missed assignment. (Participation is worth 50 points or 5% of the grade)

*Grade distribution and calculation table:*

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Possible Points</i>	<i>Your earned points</i>
Generating Questions	150	
Class Reflection	150	
Exam I	150	
Exam II	150	
Exam III	150	
Final Exam	200	
Participation	50	
<i>Total</i>	1000	

*Grade scale:*

A = 92% to 100%	A- = 90% to 91%
B+ = 88% to 89%	B- = 80% to 81%
C+ = 78% to 79%	C- = 70% to 71%
D+ = 68% to 69%	D = 60% to 67%

*Take your professor to lunch!*

You get to take your professor to lunch (at Colonnades, Lakeside, or McEwan) for free (it is an Elon program). Anytime you me to join you and friends for lunch, let me know. I would love to engage in the practice of eating with you and learn more about each of you. Plus, this is a way to deepen our practice of the class as a community.

### **Required Texts**

Pierre Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* Trans. Michael Chase, Belknap Press, 2004. (*Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique?* Paris, Gallimard, 1995)

Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* Trans. Peter Connor (Ed.), Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland, and Simona Sawhney, Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1991. (*La communauté désœuvrée*, Paris: Christian Bourgeois Editeur, 1986)

Plato, *Philebus*. Trans. Dorothea Frede. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1993

Jacques Rancière, *Aisthesis: Scenes from the Aesthetics Regime of Art*. Trans. Paul Zakir. London: Verso, 2013. (*Aisthesis: Scènes du régime esthétique de l'art*. Paris: Editions Galilée, 2011)

## **University Policies and Resources**

### *Elon Honor Code*

Elon's honor pledge calls for a commitment to Elon's shared values of Honesty, Integrity, Respect and Responsibility. To be clear about what constitutes violations of these values; students should be familiar with code of conduct policies in the student handbook, including violations outlined at <http://www.elon.edu/e-web/students/handbook/violations/default.xhtml>. Students with questions about the specific interpretation of these values and violations as they relate to this course should contact me immediately. Violations in academic-related areas will be documented in an incident report which will be maintained in the Office of Student Conduct, and may result in a lowering of the course grade and/or failure of the course with an Honor Code F. (In fact, my policy is that any violation of the honor code results in an immediate grade of "F" for the course, RJ.) Violations specifically covered by academic honor code policies include: plagiarism, cheating, lying, stealing and the facilitation of another's dishonesty. Multiple violations will normally result in a student's temporary suspension from the University.

### *Elon Disabilities Services*

If you are a student with a documented disability who will require accommodations in this course, please register with Disabilities Services in the Duke Building, Room 108 (278-6500), for assistance in developing a plan to address your academic needs. For more information about Disabilities Services, please visit the website [http://www.elon.edu/e-web/academics/support/disabilities\\_services.xhtml](http://www.elon.edu/e-web/academics/support/disabilities_services.xhtml).

### *Elon Writing Center*

Elon's Writing Center in the Center for Writing Excellence is staffed by trained peer-consultants who can help you with all of your writing projects (for any class or major and for any extracurricular, personal, or professional purposes), so take advantage of this excellent academic resource and include a visit to our Writing Center as part of your own writing process. In one-on-one, 45 minute sessions, our consultants will work with you on any kind of writing (such as research or analysis papers, PowerPoint or poster presentations, resumes, or job applications) at any stage of the writing process (such as understanding an assignment; brainstorming, drafting, revising, and editing; developing a research question or starting your research; or writing in-text citations and bibliographies/works cited). We have two multimedia production studios so you can create and work with a consultant on your multimedia and visual texts (such as PowerPoint or Prezi presentations, videos, or websites). Visit our presentation practice room where you can easily record and critique yourself giving a presentation and get feedback from a consultant on your accompanying visuals. The main Writing Center, located in Belk Library, is open extensive hours: M-Th:10am-10pm; Fri: 10am-4pm; Sun: 2pm-10pm. The Writing Center also staffs satellite Writing Centers in CREDE and in the Business School. If you have questions, please contact The Writing Center Director, Dr. Paula Rosinski at [prosinski@elon.edu](mailto:prosinski@elon.edu) or X5842. (<http://www.elon.edu/writingcenter>)

### *Religious Holidays Policies*

In supporting religious diversity, Elon has a policy and procedures for students who wish to observe religious holidays that are in conflict with the academic calendar, allowing students an excused absence. Students who wish to observe a holiday during the semester must complete the online Religious Observance Notification Form (RONF), available at the following website within the first two weeks of the semester. [http://www.elon.edu/e-web/students/religious\\_life/ReligiousHolidays.xhtml](http://www.elon.edu/e-web/students/religious_life/ReligiousHolidays.xhtml). This policy does not apply during the final examination period. Students are required to make prior arrangements with the instructor for completion of any work missed during the absence. Once the completed RONF is received, the Truitt Center will confirm the excused absence with notification to the instructor and the appropriate academic dean, along with a copy to the student. Students may contact the Truitt Center staff with any questions (336-278-7729).

## Student Options Related to Enrollment in Your Course

**Enrollment:** Students should confirm their enrollment in this course through their On-Track account. Students who do not appear on the course roll or do not show the correct course/section listed on On-Track should consult with their instructor immediately.

### Policies on Dropping or Withdrawing from this Course

- Students may drop a course during the designated drop/add period through their On-Track account. A course that is dropped during the designated drop/add period will not appear on the student's transcript or grade report.
- After the designated drop/add period, students may withdraw from a course without penalty through the first half of the semester, following dates published in the academic calendar. Withdrawing from a course during this period will result in a mark of "W" that will appear on the student's academic transcript. Students may withdraw by using the online process located at <http://www.elon.edu/e-web/administration/registrar/DropAddClassesOnline.xhtml>

NOTE: Students should not assume that they will be officially withdrawn from a course based on their failing to attend class or their notifying a faculty member of their intent to withdraw. The student has the responsibility for following the official process of withdrawing from a class.

Students who do not properly withdraw from a course will receive a grade of F.

- Students may not withdraw from a course after the published deadline. Any exception to this policy is the responsibility of the appropriate academic dean's office. When granted, withdrawal from a course after this time will result in a grade of "W" or "F" depending on the student's grade at the time. For additional information on university course policies, students should consult their Academic Catalog: <http://www.elon.edu/e-web/academics/catalog/>

## Class Schedule

### **How should we live?**

Aug. 26

Invitation to a Community

*Writing assignment for next class:* What does our class question – *How should we live as a community?* – mean to you. I do not want you to answer the question yet, but simply ask you to unpack the question in terms of what you think it means. It should be about a page long, and you should be prepared to discuss it in the next class.

Aug. 28

What does our class question mean to you?

### **How should we live: the life of pleasure or the life of reason?**

Aug. 31

Plato, *Philebus* (11a-23b)

Sept. 2

Plato, *Philebus* (23b-30e)

Sept. 4

Plato, *Philebus* (31a-41a)

Sept. 7

Plato, *Philebus* (41a-53c)

Sept. 9

Plato, *Philebus* (53c-end)

Sept. 11

Exam Construction.

### **What are the possible ways of living?**

Sept. 14

Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* (55-76)

Sept. 16

Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* (77-91)

**Sept. 21**

**NO CLASS**

Sept. 23

Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* (91-122)

Sept. 25

Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* (122-145)

Sept. 28

Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* (146-171)

Sept. 30 Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* (172-202)  
Oct. 2 Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* (202-233)  
Oct. 5 Exam Construction

**How should we live aesthetically?**

Oct. 7 Rancière, *Aisthesis* (1-20)  
**Oct. 9 Fall Break**  
Oct. 14 Rancière, *Aisthesis* (21-38)  
Oct. 16 Rancière, *Aisthesis* (39-54)  
Oct. 19 Rancière, *Aisthesis* (55-74)  
Oct. 21 Rancière, *Aisthesis* (75-92)  
Oct. 23 Rancière, *Aisthesis* (93-110)  
Oct. 26 Rancière, *Aisthesis* cont.  
Oct. 28 Exam Construction

**How should we live in a community?**

Oct. 30 Nancy, *Inoperative Community* (1-19)  
Nov. 2 Nancy, *Inoperative Community* (19-42)  
Nov. 4 Nancy, *Inoperative Community* (43-70)  
Nov. 6 Nancy, *Inoperative Community* (71-81)  
Nov. 9 Nancy, *Inoperative Community* (82-109)  
Nov. 11 Nancy, *Inoperative Community* (110-150)  
Nov. 13 Nancy, *Inoperative Community* cont.  
Nov. 16 Nancy, *Inoperative Community* cont.  
Nov. 18 Nancy, *Inoperative Community* cont.  
Nov. 20 Nancy, *Inoperative Community* cont.  
**Nov. 23-27 Thanksgiving Break**  
Nov. 30 Exam Construction  
Dec. 2 Class discussion about final exam projects

**Final Exam:** Create a plan, policy, project, program, etc. for bringing about a change in your community that will lead to its growth and development?