

Philosophical Journal Project

Keeping a philosophical journal

*Graded for completion and effort. **Due December 7 by email or in instructor's mailbox.***

For this component of your participation, you're invited to develop and maintain a philosophical journal. (We encourage you to keep a physical journal that you can carry easily, like a Moleskine notebook; you're also welcome, however, to use an online tool like Evernote or Google Docs or a Word document instead).

Your journal is a written environment to reflect on the arguments and ideas in the course as they apply to your own values. You may or may not want to share the full content of your journal with the instructor: we only need to verify that you've completed the components of the project. (You may wish to use an **alias** to identify your journal, rather than your real name. Your TA alone will maintain a list of aliases, while the instructor alone will review the journals, ensuring that neither the instructor nor TA will link your journal to your identity without your permission).

- Try to compose an entry in your journal about course content at least once per week, identifying ideas that struck you as particularly relevant or interesting, focusing on the projects specified below.

Part I: Introductory Reflections: Your Values

Week 2 (Sep 12-16). [Approximately 30 minutes].

- **Values Wheel.** This preliminary project in ethics encourages you to rank your values – roughly, what matters most to you – and to reflect on your alignment with your values in practice. (Paper copies have been handed out in class; you may also download a fresh copy of the values wheel from the course webpage). Note that there is no 'right or wrong' with this exercise: it's a project in independent reflection.
 - Store your Values Wheel somewhere safe when complete. (You may wish to keep it with your journal).
 - In your journal, consider the following question: Would a life that put your top ten values into practice constitute a 'eudaimonic' (flourishing, well-lived) life *for you*? Why, or why not?

Week 3 (Sep 19-23)

- This week, identify **one day** when you can spare at least **fifteen minutes** (in three blocks of five minutes) to write in your journal. Set three alarms for yourself today: one for morning, one for afternoon, and one for evening.

- When the morning alarm goes off, take five minutes to write in your journal about which of your values (referring to your values wheel) you expect to come into play in the course of your day, and how.
- When the afternoon alarm goes off, take five minutes to write a progress report.
- When the evening alarm goes off, reflect on how your values aligned with your practice today – without any judgement. You might also consider whether this kind of alignment is important to you. Why, or why not?

Week 4 (Sep 26–30)

- This week, consider the following triad of concepts.
 - Self-expression: How you *express* yourself in the world and with others, through actions and speech.
 - Self-image: How you describe your identity and values: who do you *think* you are? How do you picture yourself? How do you think your Self-image is informed? (What's the role of upbringing and socialization, for example, in forming your Self-image?)
 - Self: Who you *really* are. This might be different from your self-image (who you *think* you are) and your self-expression (how you act). Do you think there is such a thing as Self distinct from Self-image and Self-expression?
- How important is alignment between Self and Self-Image you?
- How important is alignment between Self-Image and Self-Expression for you?
- How important do you think alignment between all three factors might be for you?

Week 5 (Oct 3-7)

- Consider ancient theories of *eudaimonia* discussed so far in class. In your journal, with reference to the ancient ideas we have reviewed (and ideas that you may draw from other sources), describe what *you* think are good criteria for a well-lived or meaningful life.

Part II: Your inner cast of characters**Week 6 (Oct 10-14): Reflections**

- **Set aside 20 minutes to introspect mindfully.** This can be at any time during the week: you don't need to set aside a day of multiple blogs this week.
 - Thinking through your recent decisions and experiences, **imagine yourself as a "cast of characters," an internal community comprised of multiple personalities that you inhabit at different times.** (You might find it helpful to draw on stories, graphic novels, films, games, music, art, or poetry to identify characters that are important to you, as analogies for these personalities).
- **Describe your initial impression of your inner "cast of characters."** You may use words, examples, stories, or art to describe each of them and their relationship. Spend as much time as you'd like, and describe as many characters as you'd like; we'd encourage getting a few good pages out. You don't need to give full descriptions of every one.

**Week 7 (Oct 17-21): Emotions as motivators**

- One day this week, take your Journal with you.
 - **Record a range of emotions that motivate your decisions today, and describe the details.**
 - **Attempt to give a *name and description* to each emotion that motivates action.**
 - **Try to isolate emotions from other motivators, like extrinsic pressures.**

You might find it helpful to watch YouTube clips from the film **Inside Out**, and consult the list of **basic emotions** presented by Shaver et al. (2011), listed [here](#):

- **Love** (including Affection, Lust, Longing)
- **Joy** (including Cheerfulness, Zest, Contentment, Pride, Optimism, Enthrallment, Relief)
- **Surprise**
- **Anger** (including Irritation, Exasperation, Rage, Disgust, Envy, Torment)
- **Sadness** (including Suffering, Sadness, Disappointment, Shame, Neglect, Sympathy)
- **Fear** (including Horror, Nervousness)

Reading: Motivation and Emotion

<http://www.alleydog.com/101notes/mot-emot.html#.Vocg5LyMpNM>

Week 8 (Oct 24-28): External Influences

One day this week, take your Journal with you.

- Record a range of external pressures that motivate your decisions today, and describe the details.

Examples may include:

- **Conformity** (pressure to conform to others in your group)
 - Consider your readings & discussion on the **Asch** experiments
- **Authority** (pressure to obey authority)
 - Consider your readings & discussion on the **Milgram** experiments
- **Incentives** (pressure to behave in order to earn certain incentives)

Week 10 (Oct 31–Nov 4): Reason and Rationality

One day this week, take your Journal with you.

- Record a range of rational considerations that motivate your decisions today, and describe the details.
- Describe how rationality, as a motivator, strikes you as different from emotion and external pressure in your experience.

Week 11 (Nov 7–11): Personalities – Your Cast of Characters

One day this week, take your Journal with you.

- This week, review your list from Week 1. Attempt to build on (or revise) that list to consolidate at least seven distinct personalities or characters “in” you that motivate action. These may be drawn from your study of emotions, external influences and incentives, rationality, and other inward clusters of motivation.
- Attempt to name and individuate these personalities. You might use names and characters from film, comics, or fiction, or invent your own.

Part III: Conclusion

Week 12 (Nov 14–18): Constitutional Summary

One day this week, take your Journal with you.

- In your journal, (a) describe the actual current “constitution” of your internal citizenry. How is your “cast of characters” really *organized*? Who’s in *charge*? Who gets a say, and who are the primary stakeholders? Then, (b) argue creatively for which constitution would, in your view, be *best* for you (most beneficial and rewarding and genuine). Your current internal organization may or may not be the organization that you consider best.
 - For example: are you presently (and should you be) a decentralized democracy, in which all internal voices and characters have equal rights – resembling the moderately anarchic early Google? Or are all your decisions approved by a single creative authority – like the highly centralized early Apple? Or perhaps your real decisions are made by a small board of governors. Who – if any – should be promoted to or demoted from this board?

Week 13 (Nov 21-25)

- Review your journal to date. Write a short summary of your ideas and how they’ve developed over the term.
- Complete a **fresh** (brand new) copy of the Values Wheel. Compare your updated results to those in Week 1, and reflect on any changes in your journal.

Week 14 (Nov 28–Dec 2)

- Free journaling