



The Wartime Quartett (Anscombe, Foot, Midgely, Murdoch)

Within the course of their lifetimes Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot, Mary Midgley and Iris Murdoch were all significant and influential figures within philosophy. Despite the challenges of being a woman in philosophy at the time, they published ground-breaking papers, held prestigious positions, and have inspired many influential thinkers up to the present day. Anscombe's work *Intention* is a recognized classic, Foot is generally credited as an initiator of the interest in neo-Aristotelian virtue theory, Midgley was the public face of philosophy in Britain for many years, and Murdoch's wide-reaching thinking is recognized as having inspired a variety of philosophers such as John McDowell, Cora Diamond and Charles Taylor. In recent years there has been growing interest in their work, and particularly in the thought that they constitute a rare all-female philosophical school. This course will introduce students to each of their work, primarily focusing on their broadly ethical thought. It will also situate their thinking in the context of the philosophical trends of the time and consider the extent to which it is right to think of them as a philosophical school. (This course is adapted from Dr. Cathy Mason's syllabus and other resources available on womeninparenthesis.co.uk).

Participation Requirements

Reading of the set texts is mandatory. Everyone is required to send me—via email to pablo.hubacher@icloud.com—**one** different question about something they didn't understand or want to discuss about the text until Wednesday evening. In our session on Thursday we will then discuss some of those questions. You can miss it twice. If you miss it more than two times, *i.e.*, three times, I will fail you.

In addition, at the beginning of each block there will be four group presentations of 20 minutes. We will assign the groups in the first session.

Examination

This module is bookable in a series of modules, depending on your degree. This also determines the type of examination should you wish to do your module exam ('Modulprüfung') about this seminar:



<i>Degree</i>	<i>Type of Module</i>	<i>If exam, then paper of</i>
MA Knowledge & Society	SM1	8'000-10'000 words
MA Knowledge & Society	SM2	8'000-10'000 words
MA Philosophy	BM1	6'000-8'000 words
MA Philosophy	SM4	10'000-12'000 words
MA Philosophy	SM8	10'000-12'000 words
MEd Practical Philosophy (Haupt-, Real-, Sekundar- und Gesamtschulen)	BM2	5 pages
MEd Practical Philosophy (Gymnasium und Gesamtschulen)	BM2	6'000-8'000 words
BA Philosophy	SM1	6'000-8'000 words

Time and Place

The seminar takes place on Thursdays from 12–13:30 in room S 16.

Ilias

I will upload the primary and secondary literature on Ilias, as well as the slides and syllabus.

Background Readings

Apart from the set texts, I strongly encourage everyone to read Rachael Wiseman & Clare McCumhail's *Metaphysical Animals* (Penguin, 2023) alongside the course. It has been translated into German as 'The Quartett—Wie vier Frauen die Philosophie zurück ins Leben brachten' (C.H: Beck, 2022). It has 12 chapters, I recommend reading one each week in addition to the set texts. I also added some further literature if you want to dive in deeper, also a potential resource for the student presentations.



Syllabus

Block 0: Introduction

- 16.4. Week 1: Course Overview
23.4. Week 2: Lecture on the Philosophical Background

Further reading:

- Ayer, A.J. (2001 [1936]), *Language Truth and Logic*, Penguin.
- Wittgenstein, L. (2001 [1921]), *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. Pears / B. McGuinness, Routledge.
- McCumhail, Claire & Wiseman, Rachael (2023), *Metaphysical Animals*, Penguin: Preface & Players.

Block 1: Anscombe

- 30.4. Week 3: Anscombe: ‘Mr Truman’s Degree’, first student presentation.

Further reading:

- Anscombe, Elizabeth, 1982. “Medallist’s Address: Action, Intention and ‘Double Effect’”, in *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, 56, Washington, D.C.: American Catholic Philosophical Association: 12–25.
- Wiseman, Rachael (2016), *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Anscombe’s Intention*, New York: Routledge, Ch 1.
- McCumhail, Claire & Wiseman, Rachael (2023), *Metaphysical Animals*, Penguin: Prologue

- 7.5. Week 4: Anscombe: ‘On Modern Moral Philosophy’

Background reading:

- McCumhail & Wiseman (2023), *Metaphysical Animals*, Penguin: Ch. 1
- See the essays in the homonymous collection of the Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement from 2004 edited by O’Hara.

- 14.5. NO CLASS (Ascension)



21.5. Week 5: Anscombe: §1-16 from *Intention* (pp. 1-25)

Background reading:

- McCumhail, Claire & Wiseman, Rachael (2023), *Metaphysical Animals*, Penguin: Ch. 2.
- Wiseman, Rachael (2016), *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Anscombe's Intention*, Routledge, Chs. 2-6.
- Hubacher Haerle, Pablo (2026), "Uncertain Actions", *Synthese*, 207(1):23: Section 1.

28.5. NO CLASS (Pentecost)

4.6. NO CLASS (Corpus Cristi)

Block 2: Foot

11.6. Week 6: Foot: 'Is Morality a System of Hypothetical Imperatives?', second student presentation.

Background reading:

- McCumhail, Claire & Wiseman, Rachael (2023), *Metaphysical Animals*, Penguin: Ch. 3.
- Hacker-Wright, John (2022), *Philippa Foot's Metaethics*, Cambridge University Press: Chs. 1-2.

18.6. Week 7: Foot: *Natural Goodness*: Intro, Chs. 1-3.

Background reading:

- McCumhail, Claire & Wiseman, Rachael (2023), *Metaphysical Animals*, Penguin: Ch. 4.
- Hacker-Wright, John (2022), *Philippa Foot's Metaethics*, Cambridge University Press: Chs. 3.

25.6. Week 8: Foot: *Natural Goodness*, Chs. 6-7.

Background reading:

- Foot, Philippa (2001), *Natural Goodness*, Chs. 4-5.
- Hacker-Wright, John (2022), *Philippa Foot's Metaethics*, Cambridge University Press: Chs. 4.



Block 3: Midgley

2.7. Week 9: Midgley: ‘Philosophical Plumbing’, third student presentation.

Background reading:

- McCumhail, Claire & Wiseman, Rachael (2023), *Metaphysical Animals*, Penguin: Ch. 5.
- McElwain, Gregory (2019), *Mary Midgley: An Introduction*, Chs. 1-2.

9.7. Week 10: Midgley: ‘The Concept of Beastliness’

Background reading:

- McCumhail, Claire & Wiseman, Rachael (2023), *Metaphysical Animals*, Penguin: Ch. 6
- McElwain, Gregory (2019), *Mary Midgley: An Introduction*, Chs. 3-5.

Block 4: Murdoch

16.7. Week 11: Murdoch: ‘The Idea of Perfection’.

Background reading:

- Broackes, Justin (2022), “How to Read *The Sovereignty of Good*” in Caprioglio Panizza & Hopwood (eds.), *The Murdochian Mind*, Routledge: pp. 40–54.
- Moran, Richard (2012), “Iris Murdoch and Existentialism” in Broackes (ed.), *Iris Murdoch: Philosopher*, Oxford University Press.
- Mason, Cathy (2026), *Iris Murdoch’s Moral Philosophy*, Oxford University Press.
- McCumhail, Claire & Wiseman, Rachael (2023), *Metaphysical Animals*, Penguin: Ch. 7.

23.7. Week 12: Murdoch: ‘Against Dryness’, fourth student presentation.

Background reading:

- McCumhail, Claire & Wiseman, Rachael (2023), *Metaphysical Animals*, Penguin: Epilogue