

# Philosophical Perspectives on Work

## Ayn Rand University 2025

### Quarter 1 (October - December)

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#### **INSTRUCTOR**

Tristan de Liège ([tdeliege@aynrand.org](mailto:tdeliege@aynrand.org))

#### **COURSE WEBSITE**

Logistical details about the course are available at the course website, including:

- Live class schedule and Zoom link for attending live classes
- Recordings of past classes
- Office hour details
- Teaching assistant information
- How to join the ARU Discord server

The course website is accessible through your dashboard after logging into the ARU website. The direct link to the site is [Philosophical Perspectives on Work](#).

Please contact [university@aynrand.org](mailto:university@aynrand.org) if you have any issues accessing the site.

#### **GENERAL POLICIES**

Familiarize yourself with the [ARU Handbook](#) if you have not already done so. Unless specified otherwise in this syllabus, all policies in the Handbook are in effect for this course.

#### **COMMUNICATION**

- Course announcements are posted in the Announcements tab of the course website and automatically emailed to all participants. Please make sure you are receiving these emails and that they are not going to your spam folder. If you join after the start of class, be sure to check the Announcements tab for anything you may have missed.
- For questions about course content, structure or schedule, please ask during the live class or in the course channel on the ARU Discord server (see the Discord tab of the course website).
- Questions about your assignments and grades should be directed to the teaching assistant.
- For personal administrative issues (e.g., website problems), email [university@aynrand.org](mailto:university@aynrand.org).
- If you have a technical issue preventing submission of an assignment, email your assignment to the TA and cc [university@aynrand.org](mailto:university@aynrand.org) to troubleshoot the matter.

## **LIVE CLASSES AND RECORDINGS**

See the course website for the schedule of live classes and the Zoom link to attend. Participants are strongly encouraged to attend classes live for the best experience. However, we are aware this is not always possible and recordings of live classes are posted on the course website and on the ARU App/ARI Campus website, usually within an hour or two after the conclusion of each live class. Contact [university@aynrand.org](mailto:university@aynrand.org) if you have any issue accessing a recording.

If you attend class live, please turn on your camera unless you are in a setting with a distracting background or your device is not on a stable surface. It makes for a much better experience for all participants when faces are visible.

## **COURSE OVERVIEW**

The goal of this course is for us to have a richer appreciation of the history of philosophical perspectives on work, through a brief sampling of some of the most important developments and perspectives, and in so doing also gain a richer appreciation of Ayn Rand's unique perspective on work. However, our goal is not merely academic: we are studying philosophy in order to live better lives - lives that are richer in appreciation of ourselves and the society we live in and that are wiser and more rational. Work is central to all of our lives, and if we can have a richer perspective on our own work, and how others think about work around us, we can empower ourselves. So partly the benefit will be personal, for ourselves and our own lives, but partly the benefit will be in terms of philosophical detection: understanding the views and errors of others around us and how to avoid them, as well as identifying the truth is others' views.

Philosophy is difficult and it takes time to appreciate and understand developments in one line of thought/inquiry. I think Ayn Rand's perspective on work is very unique and valuable, but to really see that fully I think we need to understand the developments in thought around work that came before her.

## **READINGS**

Please refer to the Course Outline.

## **ASSIGNMENTS & GRADES**

### **ASSIGNMENTS:**

One 10-15 page paper addressing a topic of your choice related to reading/lecture discussion, to be approved by Tristan in advance (before Week 8). Due 2 weeks after the end of the course.

Each week, submit one developed question, 2-3 sentences, regarding the reading. The submission is due Wednesdays by 12 pm PT.

### **GRADING:**

10% - Weekly Question

85% - Final Paper

## 5% - Participation

Note: Participation means **active** participation, not merely attendance. If you can't attend live,, committing to coming to office hours is an alternative, and if that can't be done, contact me and we can discuss another way to get participation credit. The weekly question is worth 10% and the participation is worth 5%.

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# Course Outline

## Week 1: Ancient Perspectives (Plato, Aristotle)

- Greek Sociological Context
- Hesiod, *Works and Days*, Lines 1-120
- Plato, *Laws* Book 10 901e-920
- Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I, Parts 4, 8-11, Book IX, Parts 2-3
- Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I, Book X 7-9

## Week 2: Medieval Perspectives (Augustine, Aquinas, Luther)

- Medieval European Sociological Context
- Augustine, *City of God*, 22: 22-24
- Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Question 180
- Martin Luther, *Freedom of a Christian*, 12-19, 24-30

## Week 3: Enlightenment, Pt. 1 (Diderot, Smith, Hume, Locke)

- European Context 1500-1750
- Diderot/d'Alembert - Nobility of Glassmakers, Industry, Craft, Masterships
- Adam Smith - Book I, Chapter 1-2, Book III, Chapter I
- Hume, *Political Discourses*, "Of Commerce", *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, "Of Justice"
- Locke, "Two Treatises of Government"

## Week 4: Enlightenment, Pt. 2 (Rousseau, Jefferson, Franklin, Condorcet)

- Rousseau, "On the Origin of Inequality"
- Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Query xix, Letter to Madison Dec 20 1787
- Franklin, Selections on Wealth, Luxuries and Virtue
- Condorcet, *Outlines...*, "Tenth Epoch"

## Week 5: Historiography of the Industrial Revolution (Weber, McCloskey)

- American/European Context 1750-1900
- Weber, *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 13-50

- McCloskey, *Bourgeois Equality*, 270-282, 284-294, 488-496

Week 6: Karl Marx

- The Illusion of German Ideology
- *Capital*, Part 1, Section 2: "The Two-Fold Character of the Labour Embodied in Commodities"

Week 7: Feminism and Egalitarianism (Kittay, Guntler, Rawls)

- American Context 1900-1980
- Kittay, *Love's Labor*, 27-51
- Guntler, *The Ethical Dimension of Work: A Feminist Perspective*
- Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 13-35, *A Theory of Justice*, 426-444, 529-546

Week 8: Ayn Rand

- *The Objectivist Ethics*
- *A Companion to Ayn Rand*, Part II, *The Fountainhead* on the Activity of Valuing (53-58), *The Fountainhead* on Work as the Meaning of Life (58-68), The Range of Life Sustaining Values (87-90)
- *The Fountainhead*, Roark's Courtroom Speech
- *Atlas Shrugged*, 98-99, 239-247, 608-609