

# The Objectivist Center

## **Graduate Seminar 2005: Objectivist Ethics and Politics**

At George Washington University  
Washington, D.C. July 31–August 5, 2005  
Instructors: David Kelley and William Thomas  
Syllabus and Schedule: Version 2.1

**Classroom:** Phillips Hall, room 414B, in the Academic Center, 801 22nd St. NW.

**Housing:** Lafayette Hall, 2100 Eye St. NW, at the corner of 21st. It has air-conditioned single rooms. Room check-in is available at Thurston Hall, 1900 F St. NW from 3 PM to 8 PM. After hours, call CLLC. (But please try to arrive by 4 PM for the seminar start.). You can probably dump your luggage at Lafayette Hall, so don't schlep all the way to Thurston without at least giving Will Thomas a call first.

**Dining:** Each participant will be provided with \$30/day to use at nearby restaurants, unless equivalent food is being catered or, as in the opening and closing dinner, provided.

**Course materials:** We have made copies of all the readings except one: Badhwar et al you will need to bring.

**Travel:** Lafayette Hall is two blocks south from the GWU-Foggy Bottom Washington Metro stop (on the Orange and Blue Lines).

**Parking:** Parking is available for \$15/day in the GWU "University Garage" 2211 H Street NW.

**The TOC office:** 1001 Connecticut Avenue, at the intersection of K, 17<sup>th</sup>, and Connecticut Ave. It is across the park from the Farragut West stop on Blue/Orange lines and is right on top of the red line Farragut North stop. TOC office hours are M–F 8:30-4:30, and all the other times we are there.

**Contact:**

GWU Campus Living and Learning Center (CLLC): 202-994-CLLC. [www.gwu.edu](http://www.gwu.edu)

The Objectivist Center: (202) 296-7263 [www.objectivistcenter.org](http://www.objectivistcenter.org)

David Kelley: (845) 325-3897 [dkelley@objectivistcenter.org](mailto:dkelley@objectivistcenter.org)

William Thomas: (518) 669-1867. [wthomas@objectivistcenter.org](mailto:wthomas@objectivistcenter.org)

### **Sunday, 7/31:**

*Check in after 3 PM*

*Plan to arrive by 4 PM*

*Orientation 5 PM*

*Dinner 5:30–7:20 at TGIF or J-Street food court (GW)*

*Evening Session: 7:30–9:00*

Topic	Reading and discussion
The nature of rights as normative principles: Natural rights vs. principles for political-legal order	*Ayn Rand, "Man's Rights" and "The Nature of Government." *Randy Barnett, <i>Structure of Liberty</i> Chapter 1: Introduction, "The Natural Law Method of Analysis" 4–17. Leonard Peikoff, <i>Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand</i> , pp. 350-63

**Monday, 8/1:**

*Breakfast: 8:00-8:45 AM at Starbucks or J-Street food court (GW)*

Morning Session 9:00 AM to 12:00 Noon

Topic	Reading/Exercise/Papers
Rand’s philosophical validation of rights Relationships between concept of rights and concepts of justice, obligation, coercion The role of philosophy and social science (economics, political science, history, psychology) in the validation of rights	*Tara Smith, <i>Moral Rights and Political Freedom</i> , Ch. 2, “The Justification of Rights.” pp. 31–59 *Kelley, “Life, Liberty, and Property” <i>Social Philosophy &amp; Policy</i> 1,2 (Sp 1984).

*Lunch: 12:00–1:30 PM at area restaurants or J-Street food court (GW)*

Afternoon Session: 1:30 PM to 4:30 PM

Topic	Reading/Exercise/Papers
Rand’s philosophical validation of rights--critics Is it internally consistent? Is it adequate? Do we need a deontic principle?	*Eric Mack, "Moral Individualism and Libertarian Theory" in <i>Liberty for the 21st Century</i> , Machan and Rasmussen, eds. *Kelley, <i>A Life of One’s Own</i> , pp. 63–77 Further reading,: Kelley: <i>A Life of One’s Own</i> , Chapters 4,5,6.

*Dinner 6:00-7:30 at area restaurants or J-Street food court (GW)*

**Tuesday 8/2:**

*Breakfast: 8:00-8:45 AM Starbucks or J-Street food court (GW)*

Morning Session 9:00 AM to 12:00 Noon

Topic	Reading/Exercise/Papers
Self-interest: What is it? What are its components? How do we know? The structure of ends Are goals/values commensurable? Central goal: must there be one? can there be one? Ethical context.	*Rand, “Letter to John Hospers, April 29, 1961” in <i>Letters of Ayn Rand</i> 544–563 *Peikoff, OPAR, pp. 297-303 *Thomas & Kelley, “Productive Work as One’s Central Purpose,” in LSO “Beta” draft beta, pp. 166–170. *David Schmidtz: <i>Rational Choice and Moral Agency</i> , chap 3-4 58–98

*Lunch: 12:00–1:30 PM at area at restaurants or J-Street food court (GW)*

Afternoon Session: 1:30 PM to 4:30 PM

Topic	Reading/Exercise/Papers
Life and value: what is the connection? Closer look at issues, arguments, interpretations	Peikoff, OPAR, pp. 207-20 *Harry Binswanger, <i>The Biological Basis of Teleological Concepts</i> pp. 89-136, 153-163 from his book. *Rand, "Causality Versus Duty," in <i>Philosophy: Who Needs It?</i> pp. 94-101 *Charles King, "Life and the Theory of Value: The Randian Argument Reconsidered," in <i>Philosophic Thought of Ayn Rand</i> pp. 102-121 Douglas Rasmussen, "Rand on Obligation and Value," <i>Journal of Ayn Rand Studies</i> 4, no. 1 (Fall 2002): 69-86.

Dinner 6:00-7:30 at area restaurants or J-Street food court (GW)

Evening Session: 7:30-9:00

Topic	Reading/Exercise/Papers
Effective writing	McCloskey, "Make Your Mark" (handout)

**Wednesday 8/3:**

Breakfast: 8:00-8:45 AM at Starbucks or J-Street food court (GW)

Morning Session 9:00 AM to 12:00 Noon

Topic	Reading/Exercise/Papers
Character, emotions, and action Reason and emotion Self-esteem Moral intuitions Self-deception Life and happiness/flourishing	*Neera Badhwar et al., <i>Is Virtue Only A Means To Happiness?</i> Lester Hunt, "Flourishing Egoism," <i>Social Philosophy and Policy</i> , Vol 16, #1 (Winter 1999)

Lunch: 12:00-1:30 PM Area at restaurants or J-Street food court (GW)

Afternoon Session: 1:30 PM to 4:30 PM

Topic	Reading/Exercise/Papers
Analysis of virtue Objectivist vs. other approaches. Validation of virtues Is virtue an end in itself?	* Kelley & Thomas, LSO (revised, not Beta), (chap 5 through "Virtues and Rationality" section, TOC to provide). *Peikoff, OPAR, 220-229 *Julia Annas, "Being Virtuous and Doing the Right Thing"

Dinner 6:00-7:30 PM at area restaurants or J-Street food court (GW)

**Thursday 8/4:**

*Breakfast: 8:00-8:45 AM at Starbucks or J-Street food court (GW)*

Morning Session 9:00 AM to 12:00 Noon

Topic	Reading/Exercise/Papers
Objectivity in moral theory The grounding problem: finding a factual basis for normative concepts and principles The derivation problem: reason and evidence vs. intuition in establishing derivative values and virtues The objective theory of values: the role of conceptual epistemology, agent-relativity, and choice	*Rand, "What is Capitalism?" in <i>Capitalism the Unknown Ideal</i> , esp. pp. 21–26 *Peikoff, OPAR, 241-49 Tara Smith, "Morality's Roots in Life," Chapter 4 of <i>Viable Values</i> , esp. "Value's Objectivity" and "Objections" pp. 97-123. *Richard Boyd "How to be a Moral Realist" from <i>Essays on Moral Realism</i> edited by Geoffrey Sayre-McCord (Cornell University, Ithaca and London: 1988)

*Lunch: 12:00–1:30 PM Area at restaurants or J-Street food court (GW)*

Afternoon Session: 1:30 PM to 4:30 PM

Topic	Reading/Exercise/Papers
Egoism Agent, end, and beneficiary "Self-regarding" and "other-regarding" actions	*Eric Mack. "Problematic Arguments in Randian Ethics." <i>Journal of Ayn Rand Studies</i> 5,1 (Fall 2003): pp. 1–66. [excerpt t.b.a] *Peikoff, OPAR, 229-41

*Dinner 6:00-7:30 PM at area restaurants or J-Street food court (GW)*

**Friday 8/5:**

*Breakfast: 8:00-8:45 AM at Starbucks or J-Street food court (GW)*

Morning Session 9:00 AM to 12:00 Noon

Topic	Reading/Exercise/Papers
Harmony of interests, trader principle Analyzing ethical problems	Rand, "What is Capitalism?" in <i>CUI</i> and "The Conflicts of Men's Interests" in <i>VOS</i> *Michael Huemer. "Is Benevolent Egoism Coherent?" <i>Journal of Ayn Rand Studies</i> 3,2 (Spring 2002): pp. 259–288. *Michael Young "On Egoism and Predatory Behavior" <i>Journal of Ayn Rand Studies</i> 5,2 (Spring 2004), pp. 441–56. *Michael Huemer "Rejoinder to Michael Young: Egoism and Prudent Predation" <i>Journal of Ayn Rand Studies</i> 5,2 (Spring 2004), pp.457–68.

Lunch: 12:00–1:30 PM at area restaurants or J-Street food court (GW)

Afternoon Session: 1:30 PM to 4:30 PM

Topic	Reading/Exercise/Papers
Review and Discussion	t.b.a

Final dinner: 7:00 PM at restaurant t.b.a.

**Saturday 8/6: Depart**

Check out by 11:00 AM

**The Reading List, Graduate Seminar in Objectivist Ethics and Politics:**

(Reproduces in one place the readings assigned to reach day, with bibliographic references.)

Familiarity with the basic Objectivist corpus, including *The Virtue of Selfishness*, *Capitalism the Unknown Ideal*, *Philosophy: Who Needs It*, *Objectivism: the Philosophy of Ayn Rand* (by Leonard Peikoff), and *The Logical Structure of Objectivism “Beta” Draft*, (by William Thomas and David Kelley) is expected.

**For Sunday:**

**Required:**

- \*Ayn Rand, “Man’s Rights” and “The Nature of Government.”
- \*Randy Barnett, *Structure of Liberty* Chapter 1: Introduction, “The Natural Law Method of Analysis” 4–17.

**Recommended:**

Leonard Peikoff, *Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand*, pp. 350-63

**For Monday:**

**Required:**

- \*Kelley, “Life, Liberty, and Property” *Social Philosophy & Policy* 1,2 (Sp 1984).
- \*Kelley, *A Life of One’s Own*, pp. 63–77.
- \*Eric Mack, "Moral Individualism and Libertarian Theory" in *Liberty for the 21st Century*, Machan and Rasmussen, eds.
- \*Tara Smith, *Moral Rights and Political Freedom*, Ch. 2, “The Justification of Rights.” pp. 31–59

**Recommended:**

David Kelley: *A Life of One’s Own*, Chapters 4,5,6.

**For Tuesday:**

**Required:**

- \*Harry Binswanger, *The Biological Basis of Teleological Concepts* pp. 89-136, 153-163 from his book.
- \*Charles King, “Life and the Theory of Value: The Randian Argument Reconsidered,” in *Philosophic Thought of Ayn Rand*, Rasmussen & Den Uyl, eds., pp. 102-121
- \*Rand, "Causality Versus Duty," in *Philosophy: Who Needs It?* pp. 94–101
- \*Rand, “Letter to John Hospers, April 29, 1961” in *Letters of Ayn Rand* 544–563
- \*Peikoff, OPAR, pp. 297-303
- \*David Schmidtz: *Rational Choice and Moral Agency*, chap 3-4 58–98

\*William Thomas & David Kelley, "Productive Work as One's Central Purpose," in *LSO "Beta" draft beta*, pp. 166–170.

**Recommended:**

Peikoff, *OPAR*, pp. 207-20

Douglas Rasmussen, "Rand on Obligation and Value," *Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* 4, no. 1 (Fall 2002): 69–86.

**For Wednesday:**

**Required:**

\*Julia Annas, "Being Virtuous and Doing the Right Thing" (available for download at <http://www.u.arizona.edu/~jannas/>)

\*Neera Badhwar et al., *Is Virtue Only A Means To Happiness?*

\*David Kelley & William Thomas, *Logical Structure of Objectivism* (revised, not Beta), (chap 5 through "Virtues and Rationality" section, TOC to provide).

\*Peikoff, *OPAR*, 220-229

**Recommended:**

Lester Hunt, "Flourishing Egoism," *Social Philosophy and Policy*, Vol 16, #1 (Winter 1999)

**For Thursday:**

**Required:**

\*Richard Boyd "How to be a Moral Realist" from *Essays on Moral Realism* edited by Geoffrey Sayre-McCord (Cornell University, Ithaca and London: 1988)

\*Eric Mack. "Problematic Arguments in Randian Ethics." *Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* 5,1 (Fall 2003): pp. 1–66. [excerpt t.b.a]

\*Peikoff, *OPAR*, 229-41

\*Peikoff, *OPAR*, 241-49

\*Rand, "What is Capitalism?" in *Capitalism the Unknown Ideal*, esp. pp. 21–26

**Recommended:**

Tara Smith, "Morality's Roots in Life," Chapter 4 of *Viable Values*, esp. "Value's Objectivity" and "Objections" pp. 97-123.

**For Friday:**

**Required:**

\*Michael Huemer. "Is Benevolent Egoism Coherent?" *Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* 3,2 (Spring 2002): pp. 259–288.

\*Michael Young "On Egoism and Predatory Behavior" *Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* 5,2 (Spring 2004), pp. 441–56.

\*Michael Huemer "Rejoinder to Michael Young: Egoism and Prudent Predation" *Journal of Ayn Rand Studies* 5,2 (Spring 2004), pp.457–68.

**Recommended:**

Rand, "What is Capitalism?" in *CUI* and "The Conflicts of Men's Interests" in *VOS*