



## Topics in Philosophy II B (Columbia Dual BA) | PIU11042

Year	Junior Freshman
ECTS Credits	10
Contact Hours	26 hours (22 hours of lectures; 4 hours of tutorials)
Pre-requisite	None
Semester	2
Module Leader & Lecturer	Dr Farbod Akhlaghi & Dr Ashley Shaw
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### Module Outline:

This module has two components, and each explores a different topic in philosophy.

#### **Component 1: Transformative Experience (Dr Akhlaghi)**

Suppose you were considering becoming a parent, getting married, going to university, choosing a career, or emigrating to a new country. These and many other major life-decisions are typically *transformative choices*. They concern *transformative experiences* that change who we are and what we care about, and we may not be able to know what they would be like for us at our time of choosing. But, if so, how can you make a rational decision to become a parent, if doing so will change what you care about, and if you can only know what it would be like to do so once you do? Would it be wrong for a friend, family member, or romantic partner to try to stop you from making a transformative choice, like, say, getting married? And what role do transformative choice and experience play in other dimensions of our lives, such as art, religious experience, and social identity, or wider debates in philosophy over scepticism, the possibility of moral knowledge, or medical ethics? Together, we will explore these and other challenging philosophical questions regarding transformative experience.

#### **Component 2: Emotion and Rationality (Dr Shaw)**

An ancient picture of our psychology contrasts rationality with emotion. Both are central to human life. To be rational involves (in part) being sensitive to reasons on which we reflect and deliberate. But what is it to have emotions like fear, anger, joy, guilt and so on? How do they relate to other states of mind like belief, pleasure, intention, or desire? What's the point of having various emotions? Do emotions inform us in some way about the world? Are emotions themselves rational or justified, and can they contribute to making certain actions rational? Or are emotions a distorting form of interference in an otherwise orderly



psychology? We will examine a few philosophical theories of emotion, drawing where appropriate on work in cognitive science to enrich our philosophical investigation. Confronting these questions about the nature of emotion, will also shed light on and force us to consider issues about the nature of rational agency.

## Assessment:

Coursework: two essays (one from each Component), 25% each and 50% in total.

Examination: two exam questions (one from each component): 25% each and 50% in total.

## Recommended Reading List:

An extensive and detailed reading list will be made available at the start of the module. The following resources offer helpful preparatory reading:

### Component One:

- Chan, Rebecca. (2023). Transformative Experience. In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta.
- Paul, Laurie. (2014). *Transformative Experience*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ullmann-Margalit, Edna. (2006). Big Decisions: Opting, Converting, Drifting. *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplements* 58: 157–172.

### Component Two:

- Roberts, R. C. (1988). What an Emotion is: A Sketch. *The Philosophical Review*, 97(2), 183. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2185261>
- Scarantino, Andrea and Ronald de Sousa, "Emotion", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2021/entries/emotion/>