

University of Guelph
PHIL2120DE Ethics
Winter 2011

Instructor: Dr Alan Belk, abelk@uoguelph.ca

The following information is taken from the online course.

Required Text:

Ethics: selections from classical and contemporary writers.
Ed. Oliver Johnson and Andrews Reath. Thomson-Wadsworth. 10th edition.

Recommended Text:

Vaughn, Lewis. Writing Philosophy: A Student's Guide to Writing Philosophy Essays.
Oxford University Press, 2006.

Course Description

"[T]he soul of every [person] does possess the power of learning the truth and the organ to see it with; and...just as one might have to turn the whole body round in order that the eye should see light instead of darkness, so the entire soul must be turned away from this changing world, until its eye can bear to contemplate reality and that supreme splendour which we have called the Good." These are the words of Plato, whose Republic is the single most important works in the history of Western thought. For Plato, one could not be moral unless one was also engaged in rational reflection about central ethical concepts like goodness, justice, and virtue. Ethics, or moral philosophy, is the branch of philosophy that addresses the issues related to acting and living well: What are the aims of a good life? What kinds of goods are worth having? How ought we to act toward other people? Ethics challenges us to examine our conceptions of goodness, our ideas about personal relationships and social obligations, and to take seriously the possibility that humans can reason themselves to some kind of truth about morality.

In this course we will consider some of the most important moral philosophers in the history of western philosophy. We will examine the ways in which each of these philosophers has attempted to answer some of the fundamental questions of morality. Through a careful reading of their texts, we will come to recognize why each of these thinkers has played such a significant role in shaping the way people have come to think about goodness and happiness. So, although this course is primarily historical in its focus, the issues we will be examining form the groundwork for approaching practical moral issues that arise in our society and in our own lives. Of course, philosophy is never straightforward, and we will have to weigh the strengths and weaknesses of a number of competing moral views.

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Identify ethical viewpoints in the tradition of Western philosophical thought
- Recognize the broader theoretical foundations for the various ethical views one encounters in daily life
- Weigh the practical and theoretical implications of a variety of ethical theories
- Apply ethical theory to moral dilemmas
- Analyze and critically evaluate the arguments made in philosophical texts

Assessment and Grading

Your evaluation for this course is broken down as follows:

Evaluation Item	Value
Quiz 1	10%
Quiz 2	10%
Short Paper	25%
Discussion Participation	20%
Final Examination	35%
TOTAL	100%

Unless indicated otherwise for specific pieces of work, I use the grading guidelines laid down in the undergraduate calendar at

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-grds-proc.shtmldar>

SEVEN STANDARD STATEMENTS – WINTER '11

E-mail Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their <uoguelph.ca> email account regularly: email is the official route of communication between the university and its students.

When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement...

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. See the undergraduate calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>

Drop Date

The last date to drop one-semester **Winter '11** courses, without academic penalty, is **Friday March 11th**. For regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses, see the Undergraduate Calendar: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

Copies of out-of-class assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

Academic Misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and enjoins all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>

Recording of Materials

Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded in any electronic media without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer.

Resources

The Undergraduate Calendar is the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate programs. It can be found at:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/>