



PHIL*2120 Ethics

Fall 2018

Section(s): C01

Department of Philosophy

Credit Weight: 0.50

Version 1.00 - September 05, 2018

1 Course Details

1.1 Calendar Description

Philosophical ethics is the attempt to systematize, explain, and justify the standards by which we evaluate our conduct as persons. The course may include treatment of controversial ethical issues such as abortion, euthanasia, war, and the treatment of animals and will cover many of the following questions: can we expect to find a single, universal code of ethics that applies to all human beings, or do such codes vary for each society or even for each individual? What are the roles of reason and emotion in ethics? Is morality grounded on a principle, and if so, what is it? Are there any traits of character that one must have to be a good person? Given that traditional ethical codes have been almost universally sexist, how must ethics be refashioned in order for women to achieve equal recognition?

Pre-Requisite(s): 2.00 credits or (1 of PHIL*1000, PHIL*1010, PHIL*1050)

1.2 Course Description

The study of *ethics* is rooted in one of the central goals of philosophy as it was set out in Ancient Greece: the pursuit of knowledge should ultimately tell us not merely what the "good" is, but *how to live* a good and virtuous life. This course will pursue this basic demand through a study of primary texts in the history of Western philosophy from which contemporary questions and theories of morality and ethics have developed (virtue ethics, deontology, utilitarianism, critical ethics). We will pay special attention to what these different theories tell us about the nature of the human being for whom action in the world takes on an ethical significance. We will begin our study with Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, a text that poses the question of ethics in regards to the human being as the subject of "virtue." With Aristotle we will consider what he proposes as the ultimate end of ethical life, as well as issues of desire, habit, the body, and some of the limits that humans face in achieving this end. We will then turn to the Stoicism of Epictetus, which asks about human freedom and the capacity for proper action in light of the restrictions placed on us by nature. With Immanuel Kant in the modern period, the question of morality will be posed in terms of knowledge: Under what conditions can an *imperative* count as truly *moral*, and can such a universal moral maxim tell us meaningfully how to act? With John Stuart Mill, we see an account that grounds action in utility, and we will critically examine how this compliments or challenges Kant's principle of moral judgment. In the final weeks of the course, we will consider philosophical material that focuses on more concrete applications of ethics to social life: the system of punishment and surveillance (Foucault), the exploitation of

female labor (Federici), and the connection between ethical pluralism and democracy (Dewey). Throughout the course we will take up diverse material (such as film, literature, public commentary) on concrete human experiences through which we can apply the ethical theories studied, including addiction, animal cruelty, imprisonment, and punishment.

1.3 Timetable

Timetable is subject to change. Please see WebAdvisor for the latest information.

1.4 Final Exam

There will be no final exam, but a final essay assignment due.

2 Instructional Support

2.1 Instructor(s)

Casey Ford PhD

Email: ford@uoguelph.ca

Office: MCKN 355

Office Hours: Monday, 11:00 - 12:00.

3 Learning Resources

3.1 Required Texts

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|---|-----------|---------------|
| • Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> | Hackett | 9780872204645 |
| • Epictetus, <i>Discourses</i> * | Penguin | 9780140449464 |
| • Immanuel Kant, <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> | Cambridge | 9780521626958 |
| • John Stuart Mill, <i>On Liberty, Utilitarianism, and Other Essays</i> | Oxford | 9780199670802 |

* Additional readings will be available on CourseLink.

4 Learning Outcomes

4.1 Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. (1) to **textually analyze** of some of the most important and influential works in the history of ethical philosophy; (2) to **understand the philosophical problems** and continuity of this tradition; (3) to **write clear philosophical explanations** (4) to **think critically about ethical issues** both intellectually and practically (5) to **generate and discuss philosophical ideas**, questions, and responses meaningfully with your colleagues.

4.2 Work Outcomes

Reading and writing will be significant components of this course. Students will be asked to read approximately 20-30 pages per week, and write approximately 20 pages throughout the semester. Feedback will be provided by your TAs to assist you in improving your writing, and we are happy to work closely with each of you inside and outside of the classroom.

5 Teaching and Learning Activities

5.1 Course Format

This course will be a combination of lectures and small group discussions in your tutorials. Each lecture will be devoted to a portion of text specified in the reading schedule below. Together with your TA and colleagues you will meet once a week to talk about these ideas in a smaller discussion based setting. Together we will work through the problems and questions motivating each work, explain their important ideas, critically assess their arguments, and think about the significance of these ideas and arguments in the context of both the history of philosophy and the practical problems of social life.

5.2 Course Schedule

<u>Class</u>	<u>Assigned Reading</u>	<u>Assignments</u>
Ethics as Virtue		
1	M Sept. 10	Introduction to Class: What is Ethics? Syllabus Discussion

	<p>W</p> <p>Sept. 12</p>	<p>Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>: Book 1, Chapters 1-7 (pp. 1-10)</p>	
	<p>Tutorials</p>		
2	<p>M</p> <p>Sept. 17</p>	<p>Aristotle, <i>Ethics</i>: Bk. 1 (all, pp. 1-18)</p> <p>Aristotle, <i>Politics</i>, Bk. 1, Chs. 1-2 *</p>	
	<p>W</p> <p>Sept. 19</p>	<p>Aristotle, <i>Ethics</i>, Bk. 1 (cont'd)</p> <p>Bk. 2, Ch. 1 (pp. 18-19)</p>	
	<p>Tutorials</p>		<p>CQ 1 Due</p>
	<p>M</p> <p>Sept. 24</p>	<p>Aristotle, <i>Ethics</i>, Bk. 2 (all, pp. 18-30)</p>	

3	<p>W</p> <p>Sept. 26</p>	<p>Aristotle, <i>Ethics</i>, Bk. 2 [Focus: Chs. 8-9]</p>	
	<p>Tutorials:</p> <p>Peg O'Connor, "The Light at the End of Suffering," <i>The New York Times</i> (<i>The Stone</i>, April 7, 2013) *</p> <p>William James, excerpt from <i>Varieties of Religious Experience</i> *</p>		<p>CQ 2 Due</p>
4	<p>M</p> <p>Oct. 1</p>	<p>Epictetus, <i>Discourses</i>: Book I.1 (pp. 5-8)</p> <p>Bk. II.21 (pp. 133-5) & II.15</p> <p>(pp. 109-11)</p>	
	<p>W</p> <p>Oct. 3</p>	<p>Epictetus, <i>Discourses</i>, Bk. III.23 (pp. 168-72)</p> <p>Bk. IV.1 (pp. 174-96)</p>	

			Critical Analysis Due
	Tutorials		
5	M Oct. 8	<i>No Lecture – Fall Study Break (lecture rescheduled to Friday, Nov. 30)</i>	
	W Oct. 10	Immanuel Kant, <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> : “Preface” and “First Section” [Focus: pp. 9-10, 12-17]	
	Tutorials: Video interview with Christine Korsgaard (by University of Groningen) * [on the moral treatment of animals]		CQ 3 Due
Ethics and Moral Law			
	M Oct. 15	Kant, <i>Groundwork</i> , “First Section”	

6	<p>W</p> <p>Oct. 17</p>	<p>Kant, <i>Groundwork</i>, "Second Section" [Focus: pp. 26-36, 40-1]</p>	
	<p>Tutorials</p>		<p>CQ 4 Due</p>
7	<p>M</p> <p>Oct. 22</p>	<p>Kant, <i>Groundwork</i>, "Second Section" [Focus: pp. 26-36, 40-1]</p>	
	<p>W</p> <p>Oct. 24</p>	<p>Kant, <i>Groundwork</i>, "Third Section"</p>	
	<p>Tutorials: Franz Kafka, "The Penal Colony" *</p>		
	<p>M</p> <p>Oct. 29</p>	<p>Kant, <i>Groundwork</i>, "Third Section"</p> <p>Conclusion to Kant and deontology</p>	<p>Midterm Exam Due</p>

8			
	W	John Stuart Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , pp. 115-139	
	Oct. 31		
	Tutorials		
Ethics, Utility, and Punishment			
9	M	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , pp. 115-139	
	Nov. 5	Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , pp. 55-63	
	W		
	Nov. 7	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , pp. 140-177	
	Tutorials		CQ 5 Due

10	M Nov. 12	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , pp. 140-177	
	W Nov. 14	Michel Foucault, <i>Discipline and Punish</i> , "Panopticism," pp. 195-209 *	
	For Tutorials: Foucault cont'd		CQ 6 Due
11	M Nov. 19	Silvia Federici, excerpts from <i>Caliban and the Witch</i> *	
	W Nov. 21	Federici, excerpts from <i>Caliban and the Witch</i> *	

	Tutorials: Podcast “Silvia Federici on How Capitalism Endures” (KPFA, <i>Against the Grain</i> , 04/26/17, 57:46) *		CQ 7 Due
12	M Nov. 26	John Dewey, <i>Reconstruction in Philosophy</i> , “Reconstruction in Moral Concepts” *	
	W Nov. 28	Dewey, “Reconstruction in Moral Concepts” *	CQ 8 Due
	F Nov. 30	<i>Lecture cancelled for film screening of Steve McQueen’s Hunger (2008) [time/location TBD]</i>	
	Tutorials: <i>Tutorials cancelled for film screening</i>		
TBD	Film Reflection Due		

TBD	Final Essay Assignment Due
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6 Assessments

6.1 Marking Schemes & Distributions

Participation (25%)

General Expectations. The study of philosophy is an essentially collaborative practice. It requires one to encounter the ideas of another and to develop responses that are critical and charitable. Active participation in the classroom, in relation both to the texts being studied and your colleagues, will be a significant part of a rewarding experience in this course. Serious philosophical involvement will mean making your ideas, interests, and interpretations known and working with others to challenge them. It is your responsibility as a student to determine the level and quality of your participation, and to communicate regularly with the instructor about the required work to receive the grade you desire. Students will be expected to attend all class sessions. Moreover, you will be expected to come to class having read the assigned material and with careful notes from your readings.

Critical Questions. Your participation grade will involve completing 8 Critical Questions throughout the semester. You must formulate a philosophical question about the reading for a particular class session or week in which the question can be posed, and attempt to answer this question with your own interpretation. All Critical Questions must be turned in as hardcopies by you to your TAs at the end of your tutorials. TAs will not accept digital copies or late assignments unless medical documentation is provided demonstrating your inability to attend tutorials. They should not be shorter or longer than 1/2 single-spaced page. See assignment sheet for instructions.

Midterm Exam (25%)

This take-home exam will involve short explication and interpretative questions pertaining to all the material covered in the course up until the due date of the exam (including Aristotle, Epictetus, and Kant). Questions must be answered within a limited space as specified on the exam sheet. Spatial limitations will force you to edit your writing carefully to produce explanations that are both comprehensive and concise. Answers must be explanatory rather than critical; you will be evaluated primarily on how well you answer the question or explain the specified idea. Students will be evaluated on the comprehensiveness, clarity, and conciseness of explaining philosophical arguments and concepts. There will be a short in- class portion of the evaluation on the exam date focusing on required material from tutorial discussions.

Critical Analysis Essay (15%)

For this assignment, you will be given a philosophical question to answer in relation to the first ethical theory studied in the course (Aristotle). You must first explicate the ethical idea or argument in clear, nuanced, and sophisticated explanations. You must then critically appraise and evaluate the idea.

Final Essay Assignment (25%)

This essay will be an opportunity to develop the major philosophical skills developed in the course, including the explication of ideas and arguments, critical appraisal, and application to concrete situations. The essay will focus on one of the major theories and thinkers studied in the course, and be required to develop, analyze, and appraise this idea through one sustained example in the social, human, political world.

Film Analysis (10%)

This short essay is an opportunity to creatively and rigorously analyze a film according to one of the ethical concepts or ideas studied in the course. Essay will be 1 single-spaced page.

7 Course Statements

7.1 Course Policies

- Assignments. All assignments must be submitted as hardcopies in lecture or tutorials by the due date specified on the schedule below. Late assignments will only be accepted on compassionate grounds with approval from the instructor *prior to* the due date.
 - Conduct. All students are expected to engage respectfully with their colleagues in philosophical discussion. Any student disrupting the attention, work, and personal safety of the class will be asked to leave.
 - Electronic Devices. Computers are permitted only for note-taking purposes and should not be used to the distraction of the class. *Cellphones are strictly not permitted* during class. Please excuse yourself from the room in the case of an emergency.
 - Assistance. If you require any special assistance as a student, we will make our best effort to help you in any way we can to succeed and find the classroom to be an accessible and rewarding space. Please contact me or your TA with any information that would assist us in this.
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8 University Statements

8.1 Email Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

8.2 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. The regulations and procedures for [Academic Consideration](#) are detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar.

8.3 Drop Date

Courses that are one semester long must be dropped by the end of the fortieth class day; two-semester courses must be dropped by the last day of the add period in the second semester. The regulations and procedures for [Dropping Courses](#) are available in the Undergraduate Calendar.

8.4 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.

8.5 Accessibility

The University promotes the full participation of students who experience disabilities in their academic programs. To that end, the provision of academic accommodation is a shared responsibility between the University and the student.

When accommodations are needed, the student is required to first register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS). Documentation to substantiate the existence of a disability is required, however, interim accommodations may be possible while that process is underway.

Accommodations are available for both permanent and temporary disabilities. It should be noted that common illnesses such as a cold or the flu do not constitute a disability.

Use of the SAS Exam Centre requires students to book their exams at least 7 days in advance, and not later than the 40th Class Day.

More information: www.uoguelph.ca/sas

8.6 Academic Misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of 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. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.

Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

The [Academic Misconduct Policy](#) is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar.

8.7 Recording of Materials

Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

8.8 Resources

The [Academic Calendars](#) are the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate, graduate and diploma programs.
