

COURSE OUTLINE

PHIL 2120-01: ETHICS

WINTER 2017

Lectures:

MW 9:30-10:20 ROZH 103

Seminar Meetings

Please check your registration and attend the seminar for which you registered:

Section 01-01: Wednesday, 3:30PM - 4:20PM, Mackinnon, Room 311

Section 01-02: Tuesday, 11:30AM - 12:20PM, Mackinnon, Room 317

Section 01-03: Thursday, 3:30PM - 4:20PM, Mackinnon Room 317

Section 01-04: Thursday, 4:30PM - 5:20PM, Mackinnon Room 307

Section 01-05: Friday, 1:30PM - 11:20PM, Rozhanski Room 109

Teaching Assistants:

Sections 1 & 2: Robert Minatel, email: rminatel@uoguelph.ca

Sections 3 & 4: Michael Furac, email: mfurac@uoguelph.ca

Sections 5: Shannon Boss, email: bosss@uoguelph.ca

Instructor:

John Hacker-Wright, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy

Email: jhackerw@uoguelph.ca

Phone: (519)824-4120 x 56765

Office: 330 Mackinnon

Office Hours: M 10:30-11:30 and by appointment

A Letter to the Student:

Welcome to Ethics! The goal of this course is to introduce you to moral philosophy, the branch of philosophy concerned the basic concepts we use in evaluating persons and actions, for example: right, wrong, good, bad, courageous, just, and so on. Some of the questions we will address include: what is morality/ethics? Can there be universal moral truths? If so, how can we know them? What principles might ground thinking correctly about moral issues? Other readings will focus on specific controversial moral issues such as abortion, euthanasia, and our obligations toward non-human animals.

Moral philosophy is the focus of my research and much of my teaching. I was led to this area in large part because I grew up in a rural area of central Illinois, and began early in my teenage years to question values received as true by many people around me. Conflict with others led me to reflect on my moral principles and how I could justify them to others. This led me to get philosophical about morality.

As I learned about the tradition of philosophical reflection on morality stretching back over 2500 years, I realized how deep the problems are in moral philosophy. Like other areas of philosophy, it can be very difficult and abstract at times, but part of the interest of moral philosophy, if it is undertaken sincerely, is that it has a very direct consequence for our lives. I hope that you will do so and join me in this very important area of human inquiry.

Sincerely,

John Hacker-Wright

Course Information and Policies

Course Description

This course will introduce you to the field of moral philosophy. Moral philosophy is generally divided into three subfields: metaethics, normative ethics, and applied ethics. We will address issues in each of these areas. Specifically, we will address the following questions in each area:

I. Metaethics: the nature of morality and values

What is morality? How is it similar to or distinct from other subject matters such as science, art, and religion?

Is morality something that is the same for all? Does it vary from culture to culture or from person to person?

Can moral questions be resolved using reason? Or are our answers to these questions a matter of personal preference?

II. Normative Ethics: the underlying principles of morality

What principle or principles best capture the basis for reasoned judgments about right and wrong?

Should we always be attempting to increase the total happiness or well-being of people, or are there other important concerns that should guide our moral judgments, such as respecting individual rights?

III. Applied Ethics: controversial moral issues.

Is it ever morally permissible intentionally to take someone's life? For instance, is it permissible to take someone's life if he is dying and in severe pain and asks you to do so? Is there something morally wrong with abortion?

We will read philosophy from the various time periods, with some emphasis on recent philosophical writings that address these issues.

Learning Goals

After this course you will ...

1. ... **understand** what moral philosophy is about and why it is worth doing.
- 2 ... be able to **describe** various philosophical approaches to thinking about right and wrong, goodness and badness in behaviour and character.
3. ... be able to **reflect effectively** about and (4) **productively discuss** moral issues (such as abortion and the treatment of animals) from the standpoint of different philosophical frameworks.
5. ... **possess** a richer sense of your own philosophical commitments about morality and moral issues.

Required text

The following text is required for the course. I have also put it on reserve in the library, so that you can consult it there, but ideally you will purchase it and bring it to class with you.

Steven M. Cahn, *Exploring Ethics: An Introductory Anthology*, 4th ed., Oxford University Press, 2016

Assignments and Evaluation

Your final grade will be calculated on the basis of three components.

1. There will be 3 **writing assignments**; see Reading Schedule for due dates. These papers will ask you to develop an argument about morality and ethical issues, informed by course material. The first paper will be worth 10%; the second paper will be worth 15%, and the third worth 20%. For each paper, you will be able to find the assignment and a rubric on our Courselink website. In addition, we will discuss writing strategies for philosophy in class and in your seminars.
2. **Reading quizzes**. These questions are designed to help you to grapple with the reading in a deeper and more systematic manner, which you need to do in order to develop philosophical views in response to them. The quizzes will be on Courselink and are to be completed by the dates listed on the syllabus. The two lowest grades will be dropped. These will contribute 25% to your grade.
3. A **comprehensive final exam** at the end of the course. This will be a combination of multiple choice question and short answer questions that will challenge you to undertake an overview of the material we have learned over the semester. We will conduct a review

session at the end of the semester with sample test questions to ensure that are well prepared and that you have a good idea of the style of question that I will be asking. This will contribute the remaining 30% of your grade.

Late Policy

Please let me know if you will not get your work handed in on time and arrange for the delivery of your work. Note that this is your responsibility. For the **papers** only, you will have a 24 hour grace period during which there will be no deduction. After the grace period, **each 24-hour period will result in a 5% reduction on your final mark for that assignment**, unless you can demonstrate grounds for academic consideration as defined in the Undergraduate Calendar (click [here](#)). Reading quizzes will be assessed a 10% deduction per 24 hrs late without grace period.

The **final exam must be taken at the appointed time**, unless you can demonstrate grounds for academic consideration as defined in the Undergraduate Calendar (click [here](#)).

Classroom Environment

To reduce distraction from thinking about philosophy, this will be a **technology free** classroom. This means that before class begins you must turn off and put away all laptops, tablets, cell-phones, pagers, or other electronic devices. For use in class, please bring only paper, pen or pencil, and the text. Be prepared to participate, listen, and take notes.

For students registered with the Centre for Students with Disabilities who may have been counting on using a laptop in class, I will happily arrange for a note-taker.

Hopefully you will all see the rationale for this policy and comply with it voluntarily, but I do reserve the right to remove a student from the classroom for not complying with this policy.

E-mail Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their <uoguelph.ca> e-mail account regularly: e-mail 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.](#)

Drop Date

Courses that are one semester long must be dropped by the end of the fortieth class day (**Friday, 9 March 2018**); 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.](#)

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.

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. [For more information see the SAS web site.](#)

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Each student at the University of Guelph has rights which carry commensurate responsibilities that involve, broadly, being a civil and respectful member of the University community. [The Rights and Responsibilities are detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar.](#)

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.](#)

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.

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.

Schedule of Readings

EE=Exploring Ethics, ed. Steven Cahn

CL = Text available on Courselink

SQ = Study Question at end of EE chapters.

Date	Topic/Reading	Assignments due
Jan 8 – Begin Unit I – Metaethics (3.5 Weeks)	What is moral philosophy?	
Jan 10	What is moral philosophy? Plato’s <i>Crito</i> Read: EE 2-21	Quiz 1 – Complete by Friday, Jan 12 at 5:00pm
Jan 15	What is moral philosophy? EE 45-49, EE 67-70	
Jan 17	Why be moral? EE 71-82	Quiz 2 – Complete by Friday, Jan 19 at 5:00pm
Jan 22	Why be moral? EE 83-89	
Jan 24	Are morals objective? EE 90-100	Quiz 3 – Complete by Friday Jan 26 at 5:00pm
Jan 29	Are morals objective? EE 54-66	Paper 1 Assigned
Feb 5: Begin Unit 2 – Normative Ethics (4.5 Weeks)	Utilitarianism EE 118-129	
Feb 7 –	Utilitarianism EE 130-138	Quiz 4 – Complete by Friday Feb 9 at 5:00

Feb 12	Kant EE 102-112	
Feb 14	Kant EE 114-117	Paper 1 Due by Friday Feb 16 at 5:00 in Dropbox
Feb 19	Winter Break	
Feb 21	Winter Break	
Feb 26	Contract Theory EE 154-161	
Feb 28	Contract Theory EE 162-67	Quiz 5 – Complete by Friday Mar 2 at 5:00pm
Mar 5	Aristotle EE 135-140	
March 7	Aristotle EE 141-143	Paper 2 Assigned Quiz 6 – Complete by Friday Mar 9 at 5:00pm
March 12 –Begin Unit 3 – Applied Ethics (3.5 Weeks)	Killing and Letting Die: The Trolley Problem EE 446-452	
March 14	Killing and Letting Die: Is Death Bad? EE 453-472	Quiz 7 – Complete by Friday Mar 16 at 5:00pm
March 19	Killing and Letting Die: Euthanasia EE 246-262	
March 21	Killing and Letting Die: Obligation to Aid EE 264-277	Paper 2 Due by Friday Mar 23 at 5:00 in Dropbox Paper 3 Assigned
March 26	Killing and Letting Die: Abortion EE 186-204	
March 28	Killing and Letting Die: Abortion EE 232-244	Quiz 8 – Complete by Friday March 30 at 5:00
April 2	Killing and Letting Die: Non-human Animals EE 360-388	
April 4	Review	Review Paper 3 Due by Friday April 6 at 5:00 in Dropbox

Final Exam Monday, April 13 8:30AM – 10:30 PM, Room TBA