



PHIL*2120 Ethics

Fall 2019

Section(s): C01

Department of Philosophy

Credit Weight: 0.50

Version 7.00 - September 16, 2019

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-Requisites: 2.00 credits or (1 of PHIL*1000, PHIL*1010, PHIL*1050)

1.2 Course Description

A study of four of the most influential texts in ethics, covering the areas of Virtue Ethics (Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*), Utilitarianism (J.S. Mill's *Utilitarianism*), Existentialism (Simone de Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity*), and Stoicism (Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*).

Texts:

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Penguin ISBN 9780140449495)

Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Dover ISBN 0486454223)

Beauvoir, *Ethics of Ambiguity* (Open Road ISBN 9781504054225) – BUY THIS EDITION – AN OLDER ONE HAS DIFFERENT PAGINATION. YOU CAN BUY IT FROM INDIGO OR AMAZON.CA
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Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* (Penguin ISBN 9780140449334)

Course requirements:

- a) Either two 1250 word essays (25% each) on works not covered in class or one 2500 word essay (50%) and

b) a final exam on the class readings (50%).

* Canadian textbook distributors no longer supply this book but Indigo and Amazon sell it in Canada. Hardcopies and an e-book that you can read online will be available on Ares at the library website.

1.3 Timetable

Lectures are held from 4:30 PM to 5:20 PM on Mondays and Wednesdays in MCKN 031

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

1.4 Final Exam

Exam time and location is subject to change. Please see WebAdvisor for the latest information.

2 Instructional Support

2.1 Instructional Support Team

Instructor:	Kenneth Dorter
Email:	kdorter@uoguelph.ca
Telephone:	+1-519-824-4120 x53218
Office:	MCKN 353
Office Hours:	Office hours: Mondays 2:30-3:30 and Wednesdays 1-2 in MCKN 353.

Teaching Assistants:

T01 - Wednesday 12:30-1:20 - Josh Grant-Young

T02 - Wednesday 1:30-2:20 - Josh Grant-Young

T03 - Thursday 10:30-11:20 - Dylan White

T04 - Thursday 11:30-12:20 - Dylan White

Please confirm days and times with WebAdvisor for up-to-date information.

2.2 Teaching Assistants

Teaching Assistant:	Joshua Grant-Young
Email:	jgrantyo@uoguelph.ca
Office:	MCKN 361
Office Hours:	Friday from 10 to 11 am
Teaching Assistant:	Dylan White
Email:	dwhite11@uoguelph.ca
Office:	MCKN 366
Office Hours:	Tuesday from 1 pm to 2 pm

3 Learning Resources

Required resources:

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Penguin ISBN 9780140449495)

Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Dover ISBN 0486454223)

Beauvoir, *Ethics of Ambiguity* (Open Road ISBN 9781504054225) – **BUY THIS EDITION – AN OLDER ONE HAS DIFFERENT PAGINATION. YOU CAN BUY IT FROM INDIGO OR AMAZON.CA (not available from bookstore).**

Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* (Penguin ISBN 9780140449334)

4 Learning Outcomes

4.1 Course Learning Outcomes

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

1. Understand, explain and assess major historical and/or conceptual developments in moral philosophy, including perspectives on the nature of moral judgments and different normative frameworks for making moral decisions, and apply them to issues in areas such as business, economic justice, biomedical interventions, and the treatment of

- animals and the environment.
2. Identify and critically evaluate the practical significance of central issues in moral philosophy, social and political philosophy and existentialism.
 3. Read and comprehend original source materials in the history and problems of philosophy
 4. Write clearly and cogently on basic problems in philosophy.
 5. Be familiar with the moral philosophy of Aristotle, Mill, Beauvoir, and Marcus Aurelius.
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5 Teaching and Learning Activities

Dates will depend on class discussion. I'll let you know by email when we move on to the next reading.

5.1 Lecture

- Topics:** Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics (Penguin ISBN 9780140449495): Books I (except chapters vi & xii), 2, 3, 6 (except ch. iv, vi, viii, xi), 7 (except ch. i, v, vi, xi-xiv) & 10 (except ch. i, iii, iv, ix).
- Topics:** Mill, Utilitarianism (Dover ISBN 0486454223): 1-22 (chapters 1 & 2), 23-35 (chapters 3 & 4), 35-55 (chapter 5).
- Topics:** Beauvoir, Ethics of Ambiguity (Open Road ISBN 9781504054225): 5-35 (chapter 1), 37-78 (chapter 2), 139-173 (chapter 3 & conclusion).
- Topics:** Marcus Aurelius, Meditations (Penguin ISBN 9780140449334): 10-45 (books 2 to 5), 46-93 (books 6 to 9), 94-122 (books 10 to 12).

5.2 Seminar

Topics: Seminars will meet with a TA once a week. Dates TBA.

6 Assessments

In addition to the final exam (50%) you may write either two 1250 word essays (25% each) or one 2500 word essay (50%). 1250 or 2500 words are minimum lengths – essays may be longer if justified by the content. You can also use the first 1250 word essay as a trial run for the 2500 word essay, or you can expunge the grade for your first essay by submitting a 2500 word essay later. **All essays must be submitted to the Turnitin dropbox on Counselink.**

6.1 Assessment Details

exam (50%)

The final exam (Tues 2019/12/03, 02:30PM - 04:30PM, room TBA) will consist of essay questions on the material covered in class. The essay questions will be selected from a list handed out at the last class, which will be a review class.

Essays (50%)

Choose one or two of the following topics, depending on whether you're writing a single 50% essay or two 25% essays. Check with me if you want to choose a different topic.

1) What is the basis of morality? a) If it's the individual's own values, does that mean no one can ever be immoral – including serial killers, rapists, and child abusers – unless they violate their own moral code? And if they believe those things are right, they'd be immoral only if they didn't do them? b) If it's the values of society, does that mean no society can ever be immoral – even if it practices genocide, slavery, or degradation – as long as it follows its own values? And dissenters, like the Germans who rescued Jews from the Nazis, are immoral because they go against their society's values? Are obedient conformists always more moral than "conscientious objectors"? c) If the basis of morality is neither the individual nor the society, what is it?

2) If a friend or parent is breaking the law, and we believe that the law is just and that the actions of our friend or parent are unjust, and we're unable to persuade the person to reform that behavior, should we report the criminal activity to the authorities?

3) Several years ago a woman who went to a hospital emergency room because of abdominal pains was told she was having a baby. When the baby's head started to emerge she pulled out a gun and killed it. She wasn't charged with murder because until the baby was fully born it was still a fetus and not a person. Most people would probably disagree that this was a legal abortion rather than murder. On the other hand, if someone takes a morning-after pill which causes the ejection of a fertilized egg, most people would probably not think of that as the murder of a human being. Cases like these make it difficult to defend either the claim that abortion is never wrong, or the claim that abortion is always wrong; and there is no obvious place to draw a line between the two that would enable us to say when it is right and when it is wrong. How can we decide?

4) Many people believe that religion contributes to morality by making us care about goodness and about the consequences of our behavior. Others argue that religion does more harm than good because it encourages intolerance and hatred for those who don't share our beliefs, and because there's no necessary correlation between religious precepts and moral goodness—some religious doctrines may even be immoral. Is religion a force for morality or an obstacle to morality?

5) If a powerful country believes that another country, ruled by an unpredictable dictator, is developing weapons of mass destruction, or is committing genocide against a minority group, should it invade that country and depose the dictator?

6.2 Essay Guidelines

Note: All essays must be submitted to the appropriate Turnitin dropbox on Courselink.

1. Deadlines:

- 2500 word essay: November 11.
- 1250 word essays October 16 and November 11. For the first deadline late essays will be accepted until the end of the week without penalty; after that you'll have to defer to the single essay option.

For the second deadline late essays will be penalized one mark (out of 100) per day. No essay will be accepted after 9 a.m. the day before the final exam. Students will not normally be required to answer questions about their essay but may in some cases. I'll email you if any questions arise so check your email daily since I won't be able to grade it if I can't reach you.

2. Subject: See Essay Topics, above.

3. Content: State your views clearly and give your reasons for holding them. Consider possible objections to your views. The more challenging you make it the better: treating answers as

obvious is not worth as much as seeing how they are controversial and difficult.

4. Format: The five paragraph model you learned in high school was training wheels to teach discipline. People don't really write essays like that. Just organize your ideas to be as clear as possible. Use double spaced full sized font (12 point). 1250 or 2500 words are minimum lengths - essays may be longer if justified by the content.

5. Style: Use "I" rather than awkward and outdated circumlocutions like "the author." And use inclusive language like "humankind" instead of "mankind", "people ... they" instead of "a person ... he." Other possibilities: "he or she", "she or he", "s/he", etc.

6. References: Give references to all information and ideas taken from someone else, even if they aren't direct quotations. Otherwise it may be plagiarism (when in doubt ask). Listing your sources in a bibliography isn't enough since it doesn't show where you make use of them. I don't care what reference format you use as long as it's clear what you mean. References should first list the author (or at least the individual title if the author is unknown) that you're citing.

- Sample philosophy essays are available on Courselink.

7 University Statements

7.1 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.

7.2 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 grounds for Academic Consideration are detailed in the Undergraduate and Graduate Calendars.

Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Consideration and Appeals

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

Graduate Calendar - Grounds for Academic Consideration

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/index.shtml>

Associate Diploma Calendar - Academic Consideration, Appeals and Petitions

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/diploma/current/index.shtml>

7.3 Drop Date

Students will have until the last day of classes to drop courses without academic penalty. The deadline to drop two-semester courses will be the last day of classes in the second semester. This applies to all students (undergraduate, graduate and diploma) except for Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and Associate Diploma in Veterinary Technology (conventional and alternative delivery) students. The regulations and procedures for course registration are available in their respective Academic Calendars.

Undergraduate Calendar - Dropping Courses

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

Graduate Calendar - Registration Changes

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/genreg-reg-regchg.shtml>

Associate Diploma Calendar - Dropping Courses

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/diploma/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

7.4 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.

7.5 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.

For Guelph students, information can be found on the SAS website

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/sas>

For Ridgetown students, information can be found on the Ridgetown SAS website

<https://www.ridgetownc.com/services/accessibilityservices.cfm>

7.6 Academic Integrity

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 encourages academic integrity. 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.

Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct

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

Graduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/index.shtml>

7.7 Recording of Materials

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

7.8 Resources

The Academic Calendars are the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies, and regulations that apply to undergraduate, graduate, and diploma programs.

Academic Calendars

<https://www.uoguelph.ca/academics/calendars>
