University of Guelph tagline

PHIL\*2120 - ETHICS

Term: Fall 2023

Section(s): LEC: 01

Department of Philosophy

Credit Weight: 0.50

# Course Details

## 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?

**Prerequisite(s):**2.00 credits or (1 of [PHIL\*1000](https://calendar.uoguelph.ca/search/?P=PHIL*1000), [PHIL\*1010](https://calendar.uoguelph.ca/search/?P=PHIL*1010), [PHIL\*1050](https://calendar.uoguelph.ca/search/?P=PHIL*1050))

## Detailed Course Description

This course will pursue the study of ethics with a focus on the need for the development of new critical tools, to interpret existing social and political problems vis-à-vis individual and collective behaviour and action. The course will cover some of the major ethical theories, including virtue ethics, utilitarianism, deontological ethics, existential ethics, feminist ethics, environmental ethics, and decolonial ethics. We will contend with recurrent ethical dilemmas that keep arising in the contemporary world and reflect on ways to theorize ethical problems from within the lived experience of particular situations. This course will consider how philosophical ethics can help us to pose important and urgent questions concerning the kinds of actions that can be taken to address unequal and oppressive social structures. Throughout the course, we will read texts that address the multiple convergent ethical dilemmas we face, with attention paid to the disconcerting eruptions of societal instability in the present world.

The course will begin with a short section on the ethical problems related to health and healthcare. This section will introduce students to critiques and analyses useful for understanding the pandemic response in relation to pre-existing health disparities. We will consider how the pandemic has elicited the exacerbation of mental and physiological health burdens and the normalization of mass death and disability.

Next, we will study some of the major ethical theorists within the western tradition, such as Aristotle, Mill, and Kant. This work will help us to crystallize possible approaches for the study of character, behaviour, and action. This section will then be extended to include existentialist, feminist, and decolonial ethics. We will end this course by considering the convergence of numerous predicaments, and the need to formulate ethical views, which traverse the intersections of emergent crises, such as climate change, colonialism and globalization, and Indigenous land rights. This final section will address the need for contemporary philosophical ethics to be applied to ongoing social, political, and environmental problems, with the aim of deepening our abilities to critically reflect on and respond to adversity.

## Timetable

Lecture: Monday from 9:30 AM to 10:20 AM (virtual nonsynchronous) & Wednesday from 9:30 AM to 10:20 AM (in person)

Tutorial 1: Thursday from 11:30 am-12:20 pm (Amber Spence)

Tutorial 2: Thursday from 1:30-2:20 pm (Amber Spence)

Tutorial 3: Friday from 1:30-2:20 pm (Jeannette Hicks)

Tutorial 4: Friday from 3:30-4:20 pm (Jeannette Hicks)

Tutorial 5: Friday from 11:30 am – 12:20 pm (Josh Grant-Young)

Tutorial 6: Friday from 9:30-10:20 am (Josh Grant-Young)

Please consult Courselink for the classroom locations.

**METHOD OF DELIVERY**

This course is *blended*.

**We will meet in person on Wednesdays ONLY.** Monday classes will be held virtually and will be **ASYNCHRONOUS**. For students who cannot attend Wednesday classes in-person for any reason, Wednesday lectures will be held in a **HYBRID** format, **ALLOWING FOR VIRTUAL ATTENDANCE**. All recorded lectures will also be available on CourseLink. All readings, notes, and assignments will be posted on CourseLink. To be clear, any “in person” attendance of lectures is not required, but **tutorials** will be held as in-person meetings and attendance is required.

**Format of Delivery**

* - **Audio Podcasts:** *Monday lectures are recorded and posted in the form of ZOOM video/audio recordings (which can be downloaded).* On the whole I recommend that you *listen* to the podcasts while being off internet and even off-screen. The point is to give you a break from Zoom and video, and to allow you to focus on the ideas. Listen while taking notes, or while taking a walk. The recordings will vary in length depending on the subject-matter. However, the audio recordings will come with a transcript, to accommodate those who require written notes. Any other accommodations can be made, if requested.
* - **One weekly in-person class (non-mandatory attendance)**: Wednesday lectures will be in-person but Zoom attendance will be an option for Wednesday classes. All audio/video recordings will be posted on the course site. Attendance in person is not mandatory.
* - **One weekly (in-person) seminar with your TA (mandatory attendance): TUTORIAL ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED AND WILL BE GRADED.** You will be assigned to a tutorial and are expected to participate in the tutorial session, organized and taught by the teaching assistant. Please ensure that your participation in tutorials is *thoughtful, respectful, and responsive* to your fellow students and TA, as well as active and engaged.
* - Please check the announcements on *CourseLink* regularly, as this will be our primary mode of communication outside class.

# Instructional Support

Instructor: See WebAdvisor for instructor information.

Email: See WebAdvisor for instructor information.

Office Hours: Wednesday 10:30 – 11:30 am

Teaching Assistants:

Name: Amber Spence

Email: Amber Spence <aspenc04@uoguelph.ca>

Office Hours: To be determined, see Courselink

Name: Jeannette Hicks

Email: Jeannette Hicks <jhicks01@uoguelph.ca>

Office Hours: To be determined, see Courselink

Name: Josh Grant-Young

Email: Joshua Grant-Young <jgrantyo@uoguelph.ca>

Office Hours: To be determined, see Courselink

# Resources

All readings are listed and appended (link or pdf) on CourseLink.

# 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 ethical philosophy, including perspectives on the nature of moral judgments and different normative frameworks for making moral decisions, and apply them to issues in application to current public ethical issues.

2. *Identify* and *critically evaluate* the practical significance of some central issues in ethical philosophy.

3. *Read* and *comprehend* original source materials in the history and problems of philosophy.

4. *Write* clearly and cogently on basic problems in ethical philosophy.

## Seminars

Weekly tutorials are discussions based on weekly lecture material.

# Assessments

**Course Evaluation:  
Note: assignments require that you engage with all the material from the course (readings and lecture).**

1. **Mid-term test (25%) on October 18 at 11 am** [LO 2,3,4].Test questions will be posted to Courselink by 8 a.m., and test should be completed outside of class and uploaded to our Dropbox by 11 am (i.e., you have 3 hours to complete it). NO IN PERSON CLASS on OCTOBER 18. NO IN-PERSON TUTORIAL IN WEEK SIX.
2. **Short essay (25%)**, **due November 17 by 6 pm** [LO 1,2,3,4]. This short but formal paper (1200 words – about 4 pages double-spaced) will be a response to an essay question (topics distributed in early November).
3. **Final Take-Home Assignment (30%)** [LO 1,2,3,4]**. I will upload the assignment questions (combination of short answer and long/essay questions) on Monday, December 4 at 9 a.m.** You will have until **9 am on Thursday, December 7** to complete it. The take-home will be based on the entirety of the course’s material.

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4. **Tutorial participation and tutorial papers (20% -- 10 x 1-page reflections + tutorial participation)** [LO 1,2,3,4]**.** For most tutorial sessions, you will write a one-page paper responding to a prompt/question assigned to you by your TA or by me. At the first tutorial session you will learn how to write a short philosophy paper. The assigned topic/question will be based on one of the readings for the week of that tutorial. Papers should be a maximum of 1 typed page (250 words max, typed).

**Your TA will choose one of two methods for grading your tutorial papers and participation:**

1. You will receive **1 mark** (1%) for submitting a tutorial paper that responds to the question prompt and attending the seminar. These should be handed in before or at the start of your tutorial (your TA will give you instructions). This a pass/fail assignment. To receive 1 mark, you need to have attempted to answer the question and also attended the tutorial. You will earn **a 2nd mark** (1%) if you participate in the tutorial session by making a comment(s). Your TA will make a note of participation. If you don’t attend the tutorial, you cannot earn marks for that session.
2. Cumulative tutorial participation grade, tabulated by your TA. You will receive a mark for each tutorial paper you submit (provided you attend tutorial) – 1 x 10= 10%. Tutorial papers must respond to the question/prompt and be handed in by the start of seminar. *To earn the other 10% of the tutorial grade, you will need to participate regularly in your seminar. Your TA will assess this and assign a participation grade at the end of the course.* They may send around a sign-in page in tutorials, ask students to keep a log/diary of their participation in the tutorials, etc.

Your TA *may* also require you to upload your weekly tutorial response to a Dropbox (they will tell you at the first tutorial).

# Late Policy

Late work  
For fairness reasons, there is a penalty for late work. A deduction of 2% per day, starting and including the day it is due, will normally be applied. There is no limit to the % that can be deducted. The date stamp on the Dropbox indicates the time the assignment was submitted, and you must submit your assignment in the correct format (\*.doc or .docx) by this time.

You will have one grace period of 3 hours that you may use either for the essay due on November 17, or the final take-home exam. (This grace period is not to be used for the mid-term test.) Your TA will make a note of whether that is used.

Tutorial papers must be handed in to your TA (or uploaded to Dropbox – ask your TA about this) either before or at the start the tutorial session (lateness on these is subject to the TA’s discretion).

Missed test or exam  
Make-up tests will require a note from your Program Counsellor (your TA or I can also give permission).

Students who are unable to write the final take-home exam within the designated time, eg. for medical reasons, must follow the guidelines set out in Undergraduate calendar.

I reserve the right to require you to submit rough notes and rough drafts as part of your grade on any written piece of work.

# University Standard Statements

## Email 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.

Please read the Email Charter (<https://www.emailcharter.info>) – a manifesto for digital humanity. Your emails (to the professor or TA) should be clear and concise. Your instructors receive numerous emails. Give your name and id# in each email you send.

## 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.

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>

## Drop Date

Courses that are one semester long must be dropped by the end of the last day of classes; two-semester courses must be dropped by the last day of classes in the second semester. 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](https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-%20drop.shtml)

Graduate Calendar - Registration Changes [https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/genreg-reg- regchg.shtml](https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/genreg-reg-%20regchg.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.

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.

Use of the SAS Exam Centre requires students to make a booking at least 14 days in advance, and no later than November 1 (fall), March 1 (winter) or July 1 (summer).

Similarly, new or changed accommodations for online quizzes, tests and exams must be approved at least a week ahead of time.

More information: [www.uoguelph.ca/sas](http://www.uoguelph.ca/sas)

## 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.

Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct [https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08- amisconduct.shtml](https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-%20amisconduct.shtml)

Graduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct <https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/index.shtml>

## Statement on the Use of AI

The use of AI is **not authorized** for the completion of assignments. Turnitin may be used in the evaluation process for all assignments.

Please read the University statement on the use of AI in classrooms: <https://news.uoguelph.ca/2023/03/university-of-guelph-statement-on-artificial-intelligence-systems-chatgpt-academic-integrity/>

## 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.

## Disclaimer

Please note that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic may necessitate a revision of the format of course offerings, changes in classroom protocols, and academic schedules. Any such changes will be announced via Courselink and/or class email.

This includes on-campus scheduling during the semester, mid-terms, and final examination schedules. All University-wide decisions will be posted on the COVID-19 website (https://news.uoguelph.ca/2019-novel-coronavirus-information/) and circulated by email.

## Illness

Medical notes will not normally be required for singular instances of academic consideration, although students may be required to provide supporting documentation for multiple missed assessments or when involving a large part of a course (e.g., final exam or major assignment).

## COVID-19 Safety Protocols

For information on current safety protocols, follow these links:

* [https://news.uoguelph.ca/return-to-campuses/how-u-of-g-is-preparing-for-your- safe-return/](https://news.uoguelph.ca/return-to-campuses/how-u-of-g-is-preparing-for-your-%20safe-return/)
* <https://news.uoguelph.ca/return-to-campuses/spaces/#ClassroomSpaces>

Please note, that these guidelines may be updated as required in response to evolving University, Public Health, or government directives.