# Course Outline

# PHIL 3290-01 Advanced Ethics (0.5 credits)

# Fall 2023

# University of Guelph

# Department of Philosophy

# Lectures:

T/TH 2:30 – 3:50 PM  
All classes are in person.

Please consult Courselink for the classroom location.

# Instructor:

Please see Web Advisor for instructor information.

Office: 330 Mackinnon

Office Hours: 1:00–2:20 T/TH or by appointment

# Course Information and Policies

## Calendar Description

This course focuses on the theoretical foundations of morality. Ethical theory comprises metaethics, which is primarily concerned with the objectivity of moral judgments; normative ethics, which is concerned with the principles of sound moral judgment, and moral psychology, which is concerned with moral motivation and moral reasoning.

Prerequisite(s): 1.50 credits in Philosophy or 7.50 credits

## Course Description

One intuitive way of thinking about ethics is in terms of exemplars, people we want to imitate because we admire them. We can get motivation and guidance from thinking about people we admire: what would they do in my situation? We aspire to be like them. In this course, we will examine ethical theories that focus on the roles of exemplars in our practical reasoning and psychology.

There will be two parts to the course. In the first part, we will learn about Buddhist ethics. Though there are many different strands of Buddhism, all Buddhists aspire to be like the Buddha in some fashion. Hence, this part of the course will show us in some detail a group of people and a system of thinking organized around an exemplary figure. Then we will study two recent books that go in-depth into our themes of exemplars and aspiration.

## Learning Goals

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

1. identify, comprehend, analyze and evaluate sophisticated arguments about theoretical issues in ethics (literacy).
2. better understand and articulate your ethical commitments (professional and ethical behavior).
3. arrive at your own reasoned evaluation of the views that we will be discussing (creative and critical thinking).
4. communicate your philosophical views on these issues to others clearly and concisely (communication).
5. thoroughly understand key issues in ethics (depth and breadth of understanding).

## Required Texts

There are three required texts for this course, and they must be accessed through Perusall, which is an online social annotation platform. Your graded reading assignments will be completed through Perusall, so it is necessary that you acquire the text through Perusall to complete the assignments.

*Seeing Clearly: A Buddhist Guide to Life*, Nic Bommarito, Oxford University Press

*Exemplarist Moral Theory*, Linda Zagzebski, Oxford University Press

*Aspiration: The Agency of Becoming*, Agnes Callard, Oxford University Press

To access Perusall, navigate to: app.perusall.com, create an account, and enter code HACKER-WRIGHT-7VUXH to enroll in the course.

## Assignments and Evaluation

### Reading Engagement (30%)

Complete the readings according to the Schedule of Readings and Due Dates (below). Reading assignments are due before the class for which they are assigned, with a cut-off at 2:30 PM (see late policy below). For each reading, you may get full credit only if you complete the reading and make at least two comments on the reading. The responses will be marked qualitatively. You will receive full credit only for high-quality responses. Those comments may be questions, but they should engage thoughtfully with philosophically important issues in the text. Each reading assignment will be assessed out 10 points on the following standard. A machine-learning algorithm will assist with the marking under the instructor's supervision according to the following criteria:

**Meets expectations** (7.5–10 points out of 10): Annotations reveal a working interpretation of the text, a provisional attempt to understand what it means and what is at stake in the text. It demonstrates an understanding of concepts. Responses to others’ work are thoughtful, with explanations, substantiated claims, and/or concrete examples. Questions reflect the issues at stake in the text.

**Improvement needed** (5–7 points out of 10): There is some failure to elaborate on one’s thoughts about the text. The comment demonstrates superficial reading without a working interpretation. Responses to others demonstrate some thought but do not address the question.

**Deficient** (Below 5 points out of 10): Annotations have no real substance and do not demonstrate any thoughtful reading or interpretation of the text. Questions do not explicitly identify points of confusion. Moreover, annotations are not backed up by any reasoning or working interpretation.

The reading assignments further learning goals 1–5 above.

### Take-Home Exams (40%)

There will be two take-home exams. See Schedule of Readings and Due Dates. They will be essay exams submitted through Courselink’s Dropbox. You are allowed and encouraged to use the texts and notes, but plagiarism, including the use of ChatGPT, is not allowed.

Note the following due dates for the exams:

**October 12, Take-home Exam 1**

**November 14, Take-home Exam 2**

The exams further learning goals 1 and 5.

**Reflection Paper (30%), Due December 11**

The final assignment will be a reflection paper that requires you to integrate material from the texts and lectures to discuss your aspiration to be like some exemplar. I will ask you to describe the dynamics of that aspiration in terms drawn from the course material. You will be assessed based on your success in deploying the theories described in Zagzebski and Callard to carefully articulate the dynamics of admiration and aspiration concerning your exemplar. If you do not have an exemplar of your own, I will ask you to talk about taking the Buddha or a bodhisattva as an exemplar. A detailed assignment and rubric will be distributed separately.

This assignment furthers learning goals 1–5.

## Late Policy

Exams and papers must be completed by the due date unless there are grounds for academic consideration.

I will drop the two lowest reading assignment grades, but they must be done by the due date unless there are grounds for academic consideration.

## Academic Misconduct

All work submitted must be your own: your own words and your own thoughts. Thoughts derived from ChatGPT do not count as your own. When referring to or quoting the thoughts of others, you must acknowledge this fact, and ensure that I can find your source by including the name of the author, the work, and relevant publication information. Failure to do so will result in a charge of academic misconduct, which has consequences for your outcome in this course.

For further information on the University’s Academic Misconduct policies see:

https://calendar.uoguelph.ca/undergraduate-calendar/undergraduate-degree-regulations-procedures/

## Standard Statements

See here for policies that apply to all courses taught at the University of Guelph:

https://www.uoguelph.ca/ada-cbs/instructors/resources/course-and-university-policy-statements

# Schedule of Readings and Due Dates

# PHIL 3290, Fall 2023 Hacker-Wright

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Date | Topic/Reading | Assignments due |
| Week 0  Class 1  Sept 7 | Unit I: Buddhism and  Buddhist Ethics  Course Introduction: Review Course Outline / What is moral philosophy? |  |
| Week 1  Class 2  Sept 12 | Buddhism: *Seeing Clearly*, Chapters 1–4 | Reading Assignment 1 on Perusall |
| Class 3  Sept 14 | Buddhism: *Seeing Clearly*, Chapters 5–8 | Reading Assignment 2 on Perusall |
| Week 2  Class 4  Sept 19 | Buddhism: *Seeing Clearly*, Chapters 9–12 | Reading Assignment 3 on Perusall |
| Class 5  Sept 21 | Buddhism: *Seeing Clearly*, Chapters 13–16 | Reading Assignment 4 on Perusall |
| Week 3  Class 6  Sept 26 | Buddhism: *Seeing Clearly*, Chapters 17–21 | Reading Assignment 5 on Perusall |
| Sept 28 | No class meeting (instructor attending a professional conference) |  |
| Week 4  Class 7  Oct 3 | Buddhism: *Seeing Cleary,* Chapters22–25 | Reading Assignment 6 on Perusall |
| Class 8  Oct 5 | Buddhism: *Seeing Clearly*, Chapters 26–30 | Reading Assignment 7 on Perusall  **Take home exam released** |
| Week 5  Oct 10 | Fall Break: no class meeting |  |
| Class 9  Oct 12 | No class meeting | **Take home exam 1 due** |
| Week 6  Class 10  Oct. 17 | Unit II: Exemplarism  Zagzebski: *Exemplarist Moral Theory,* Chapter 1, Introduction | Reading Assignment 8 on Perusall |
| Class 11  Oct 19 | Zagzebski: *Exemplarist Moral Theory,* Chapter 2, Admiration | Reading Assignment 9 on Perusall |
| Week 7  Oct 24 | Zagzebski, *Exemplarist Moral Theory,* Chapter 3, Exemplars, Part 1 | Reading Assignment 10 on  Perusall |
| Oct 26 | Zagzebski, *Exemplarist Moral Theory,* Chapter 3, Exemplars, Part 2 | Reading Assignment 11 on Perusall |
| Week 8  Oct 31 | Zagzebski, *Exemplarist Moral Theory*, Chapter 4, Virtue, Part 1 | Reading Assingment 12 on Perusall |
| Nov 2 | Zagzebski, *Exemplarist Moral Theory*, Chapter 4, Virtue, Part 2 | Reading Assignment 13 on Perusall |
| Week 9  Nov 7 | Zagzebski, *Exemplarist Moral Theory*, Chapter 5, Emulation | Reading Assignment 14 on Perusall  **Take Home Exam 2 Released** |
| Nov 9 | Callard, *Aspiration*, Introduction | Reading Assignment 15 on Perusall |
| Week 10  Nov 14 | No Class | **Take Home Exam 2 Due** |
| Nov 16 | Callard, *Aspiration*, Chapter 1, Part 1 | Reading Assignment 16 on Perusall |
| Week 11  Nov 21 | Callard, *Aspiration*, Chapter 1, Part 2 | Reading Assignment 17 on Perusall |
| Nov 23 | Callard, *Aspiration*, Chapter 1, Part 1 | Reading Assignment 18 on Perusal |
| Week 12  Nov 28 | Callard, *Aspiration,* Chapter 2, Part 1 | Reading Assignment 19 on Perusall |
| Nov 30 | Callard, *Aspiration*, Chapter 2, Part 2 | Reading Assignment 20 on Perusall |

**Reflection Paper Due December 11, 9:00AM**