



PHIL*2120 Ethics

Fall 2020

Section(s): C01

Department of Philosophy

Credit Weight: 0.50

Version 1.00 - September 11, 2020

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

This course will introduce you to the field of moral philosophy. Moral philosophy is generally divided into three subfields: (1) Metaethics, which asks question about what morality is, where it comes from, and whether it varies between persons and cultures, (2) normative ethics, which asks questions about which principle(s) are the basis for judging acts, persons, or outcomes as right or wrong and (3) applied ethics which asks questions about controversial moral issues such as abortion, gun control, drugs, universal basic income, eating meat, among many others.

Given the circumstances surrounding COVID-19, this course will not meet face to face. Most

of the material for this class will be asynchronous and self-paced (i.e. traditional-style lectures will not always take place “live,” at the scheduled class time). However, there will be some completely optional “live” components to the course during your scheduled Seminar periods, which will be recorded and made available for everyone. These recordings, videos, readings, notes, and assignments will be posted on CourseLink. To be perfectly clear: Any “live” component is not required, and there will be no penalty for not attending. The course “meeting time” will remain on the schedule so that it will be easier for you to socialize with your classmates, schedule meetings to work on group projects for the class, and also to meet with the instructor.

1.3 Timetable

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

1.4 Final Exam

The final assessment for this course is a research paper due during Finals week

2 Instructional Support

2.1 Instructional Support Team

Instructor:	Joshua Skorburg
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2.2 Teaching Assistants

Teaching Assistant:	Clair Baleshta
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Teaching Assistant:	Austin Blackwell
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Teaching Assistant:	Justin Vriend
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3 Learning Resources

3.1 Required Resources

Shafer-Landau, Russ. The Ethical Life: Fundamental Readings in Ethics and Moral Problems, Fifth Edition. Oxford University Press. ISBN: 9780190058241 (Textbook)

4 Learning Outcomes

4.1 Course Learning Outcomes

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

1.
 - To provide you with time and space to step back from your everyday practices to reflect on what it means to live a good human life.
 - To develop familiarity with classic and contemporary ethical theories.
 - To provide you with examples of, and practice in, sustained analytical reflection on contemporary ethical problems.
 - To develop the presentation skills (both written and spoken) necessary to meaningfully engage with ethical issues throughout your careers.
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5 Teaching and Learning Activities

5.1 Lecture

Topics:

*always check CourseLink for most up-to-date information

"EL" = *The Ethical Life: Fundamental Readings in Ethics and Moral Problems*, Fifth Edition. Oxford University Press. ISBN: 9780190058241

Pre-class assignment: "Intro" Flipgrid due Friday, September 11

Week 1: Monday, September 14 & Wednesday, September 16 – Value Theory

Seminar: Thursday, September 17

Readings

- EL: Introduction
- EL: Chapter 1 – "John Stuart Mill and hedonism"
- EL: Chapter 2 - Robert Nozick's "Experience machine"

Presentations:

- None

Assignments:

- "Intro" Flipgrid Response 1 due Friday, September 11
- "Social" Weekly Response 1 Due Thursday, Sept. 16

Week 2: Monday, September 21 & Wednesday, September 23 – Value Theory

Seminar: Thursday, September 24

Readings:

- EL : Chapter 3: Chris Heathwood's "Faring well and getting what you want"
- EL: Chapter 4: Brad Hooker's "Elements of well-being"
- EL: Chapter 5: Susan Wolf's "Happiness and meaning"

Presentations:

- Group 1

Assignments:

- Weekly Response 2 Due Monday, September 21 **by 10 AM**
- Flipgrid Response 2 Due Wednesday, September 23 **by 6pm**

Week 3: Monday, September 28 & Wednesday, September 30 – Feminism

Seminar: Thursday, October 1

Readings:

- EL Chapter 10: Thomas Hobbes' "Leviathan"
- EL Chapter 13: Hilde Lindemann's "What is feminist ethics?"

Presentations:

- Group 2

Assignments:

- Weekly Response 3 due Monday, September 28 **by 10 AM**
- Flipgrid Response 3 due Wednesday, September 30 **by 6pm**

Week 4: Monday, October 5 & Wednesday, October 7 – Utilitarianism

Seminar: Thursday, October 8

Readings:

- EL Chapter 8: John Stuart Mill's "Utilitarianism"
- "Shafer-Landau - Difficulties of consequentialism" (.pdf on CourseLink)

Presentations:

- Group 3

Assignments:

- Weekly Response 4 Due Monday, October 5 **by 10 AM**
- Flipgrid Response 4 due Wednesday October 7 **by 6pm**

**Week 5: NO CLASS Monday, October 12 (Fall Break);
Wednesday, October 14 – Deontology**

Seminar: Thursday, October 15

Readings:

- EL Chapter 9: Immanuel Kant's "The good will and the categorical imperative"
- "Shafer-Landau - The Kantian perspective on fairness and justice" (.pdf on CourseLink)

Presentations: NONE

Assignments: NONE

**Week 6: Monday, October 19 & Wednesday, October 21 –
Virtue Theory & MIDTERM EXAM**

Seminar: Thursday, October 22

Readings:

- EL Chapter 12: Aristotle's "Nicomachean Ethics"
- "Shafer-Landau – Virtue ethics" (.pdf on CourseLink)

Presentations:

- Group 4

Assignments:

- Weekly Response 5 due Monday, October 19 **by 10 AM**
- Flipgrid Response 5 due Wednesday, October 21 **by 6pm**
- **MIDTERM DISTRIBUTED Wednesday October 21, DUE Friday, October 23**

Week 7: Monday, October 26 & Wednesday, October 28 – Poverty & Famine

Seminar: Thursday, October 29

Readings:

- EL Chapter 20: Kwame Anthony Appiah's "What will future generations condemn us for?"
- EL Chapter 21: Peter Singer's "Solution to world poverty"
- EL Chapter 22: Onora O'Neill's "Kantian approach to famine relief"

Presentations:

- Group 5

Assignments:

- Weekly Response 6 due Monday, October 26 **by 10**

AM

- Flipgrid Response 6 due Wednesday, October 28 **by 6pm**

**Week 8: Monday, November 2 & Wednesday, November 4
– Animals**

Seminar: Thursday, November 5

Readings:

- EL Chapter 27: Peter Carruthers' "Against moral standing of animals"
- EL Chapter 28: Alastair Norcross' "Puppies, pigs, and people"

Presentations:

- Group 6

Assignments:

- Weekly Response 7 due Monday, November 2 **by 10 AM**
- Flipgrid Response 7 due Wednesday, November 4 **by 6pm**

**Week 9: Monday, November 9 & Wednesday, November 11
– Environment**

Seminar: Thursday, November 12

Readings:

- EL Chapter 29: John Broome's "Public and private morality of climate change"
- EL Chapter 30: Thomas Hill, Jr.'s "Ideals of human excellence and natural environments"

Presentations:

- Group 7

Assignments:

- Weekly Response 8 due Monday, November 9 **by 10 AM**
- Flipgrid Response 8 due Wednesday, November 11 **by 6pm**

Week 10: Monday, November 16 & Wednesday, November 18 - Racism

Seminar: Thursday, November 19

Readings:

- EL Chapter 38: Martin Luther King's "Letter from a Birmingham jail"
- EL Chapter 40: Elizabeth Anderson's "Future of racial integration"

Presentations:

- Group 8

Assignments:

- Weekly Response 9 due Monday, November 16 **by 10 AM**
- Flipgrid Response 9 due Wednesday, November 18 **by 6pm**

Week 11: Monday, November 23 & Wednesday, November 25 – Meta-ethics

Seminar: Thursday, November 26

Readings:

- EL Chapter 15: JL Mackie's "Subjectivity of values"
- EL Chapter 16: Gilbert Harman's "Ethics and observation"

Presentations:

- Group 9

Assignments:

- Weekly Response 10 due Monday, November 23 **by 10 AM**
- Flipgrid Response 10 due Wednesday, November 25 **by 6pm**

Week 12: Monday, November 30 & Wednesday, December 2 – Meta-ethics

Seminar: Thursday, December 3

Readings:

- EL Chapter 17: Mary Midgley's "Trying out one's new sword"
- EL Chapter 18: David Enoch's "Why I am an objectivist about ethics"

Presentations:

- Group 10

Assignments:

- Weekly Response 11 due Monday, November 30 **by 10 AM**
- Flipgrid Response 11 due Wednesday, December 2 **by 6pm**

6 Assessments

6.1 Marking Schemes & Distributions

- 1. Weekly Responses (20% of final grade)**
- 2. Group Presentation (20% of final grade)**
- 3. Flipgrid Responses (10% of final grade)**
- 4. Mid-term Essay Exam (20% of final grade)**

5. Final Research paper (30% of final grade)

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>

7.9 Disclaimer

Please note that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic may necessitate a revision of the format of course offerings and academic schedules. Any such changes will be announced via CourseLink and/or class email. All University-wide decisions will be posted on the COVID-19 website (<https://news.uoguelph.ca/2019-novel-coronavirus-information/>) and circulated by email.

7.10 Illness

The University will not normally require verification of illness (doctor's notes) for fall 2020 or winter 2021 semester courses. However, requests for Academic Consideration may still require medical documentation as appropriate.
