



PHIL*2120 Ethics

Winter 2019

Section(s): C01

Department of Philosophy

Credit Weight: 0.50

Version 1.00 - January 04, 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-Requisite(s): 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: 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:

1. 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.

1.3 Timetable

Please see Schedule of Readings and Assignments on Courselink.

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:	John Hacker-Wright (PhD)
Email:	jhackerw@uoguelph.ca
Telephone:	+1-519-824-4120 x56765
Office:	MCKN 330
Office Hours:	11:00-12:00 Wednesdays

3 Learning Resources

3.1 Required Resource(s)

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

This 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.

4 Learning Outcomes

4.1 Course Learning Outcomes

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

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 **productively discuss** moral issues (such as abortion and the treatment of animals) from the standpoint of different philosophical frameworks.
 4. **possess** a richer sense of your own philosophical commitments about morality and moral issues.
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5 Teaching and Learning Activities

Please see Schedule of Readings and Assignments on the Courselink Page.

6 Assessments

Please see Schedule of Readings and Assignments on Courselink for Due Dates.

6.1 Assessment Details

2 Papers (25%)

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%. 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.

Experiential Learning Project (20%)

In the second half of the course, you will work in groups in your seminar section to develop an op-ed for the Guelph student newspaper, *The Ontario*. We will employ argumentative skills and knowledge developed in the course to develop a reflection on the topic: What are our obligations to those in need? The class as a whole will pick the best op-ed for publication in the print version of the Ontario. Those not selected will appear in the on-line edition. This assignment will prepare the student for public communication of normative reflection about ethical issues.

Along with the completed paper, you will submit a statement of your contribution to the completed group paper. The mark you receive will be based on the quality of the writing and argumentation in final product and your contribution to it.

To complete this component of the course, you will have to attend your seminar section, meet with other students in that section, and contribute to a group project. This is your responsibility, and there is no alternative course to the fulfillment of this component of your mark.

Reading Quizzes (25%)

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.

Final Exam (30%)

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.

7 Course Statements

7.1 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

7.2 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. 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.

7.3 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.

8 University Statements

8.1 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.

8.2 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>

8.3 Drop Date

Courses that are one semester long must be dropped by the end of the fortieth class day; two-semester courses must be dropped by the last day of the add period in the second semester. The regulations and procedures for course registration are available in the Undergraduate and Graduate 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>

8.4 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.

8.5 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.

More information can be found on the SAS website

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

8.6 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>

8.7 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.

8.8 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>
