



PHIL*1050 Ethics, Knowledge, and Reality

Winter 2021

Section(s): C01

Department of Philosophy

Credit Weight: 0.50

Version 1.00 - January 06, 2021

1 Course Details

1.1 Calendar Description

This course introduces students to philosophy through the exploration of basic perennial philosophical problems and questions, such as whether there is free will, a God, objective right and wrong, genuine knowledge of the world, and other topics. The readings for the course will consist primarily of 20th century philosophical writing.

1.2 Course Description

This course introduces students to some of the questions that arise within moral philosophy, and to some of the basic questions of epistemology, metaphysics and the philosophy of religion. The selected materials and class activities are designed to introduce students to the discipline of philosophy: the types of questions asked, the habits of mind, and the necessary skills of close reading, and the careful treatment of the material through thoughtful dialogue and writing.

The first part of the term will be devoted to Ethics. In the first few sessions, students will be introduced to moral reasoning and the appeal (and limitations) of hedonism as a way of leading a good life. We then turn our attention to issues and theories in normative ethics, including natural law, ethical egoism, consequentialism, Kantian ethics, virtue ethics and feminist ethics of care. Students will learn some of the basic ideas central to each of these approaches and be encouraged to compare and evaluate them as we move through the material and to use what they are learning in discussing particular cases and scenarios. During the second half of the course, we turn our attention to metaethics, larger questions about what we can know and whether moral objectivity is possible, and then to other areas in philosophy, questioned related to the nature of reality and the search for truth. In the final weeks, we will look at some questions raised within philosophy of religion, including some

proofs for the existence of God and whether faith requires such proof.

1.3 Timetable

Lectures are held on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9:30 - 10:20 am, meeting virtually using Zoom. Students are expected to be present and ready to participate in the synchronous lecture sessions. Timetable is subject to change. Please see WebAdvisor for the latest information.

1.4 Final Exam

There is no final exam scheduled for this course this term. In lieu of an exam, a final paper will be due at the end of classes.

2 Instructional Support

2.1 Instructional Support Team

Instructor: Hannah Schell
Email: hschell@uoguelph.ca
Office: n/a

I will set aside some hours every week to meet with students via Zoom. Please email me if you would like to set up an appointment.

2.2 Teaching Assistants

Teaching Assistant: Orsolya Csaszar
Email: ocsaszar@uoguelph.ca
Office Hours: TBA

Section 03 TH 4:30-5:20 (Synchronous)

Section 04 TH 7-7:50 pm (Synchronous)

Teaching Assistant: Andrew Freundlich
Email: afreundl@uoguelph.ca
Office Hours: TBA

Section 05 FRIDAY 1:30 - 2:20 pm (Synchronous)

Section 06 FRIDAY 2:30 - 3:20 (Synchronous)

Teaching Assistant: Jahangir Moazzenzadeh
Email: jmoazzen@uoguelph.ca
Office Hours: TBA

SEC 01 THURS 1:30 - 2:20 (Synchronous)

SEC 02 THURS 2:30 - 3:20 (Synchronous)

3 Learning Resources

3.1 Required Resources

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF ETHICS, 5th ed. (Textbook)

Author: Russ Shafer-Landau. Oxford University Press, 2021. ISBN: 9780190058319 (paperback)

Selected readings to be distributed electronically. (Article)

See CourseLink for pdfs.

4 Learning Outcomes

4.1 Course Learning Outcomes

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

1. Comprehend and articulate the major theoretical approaches in ethics, including utilitarianism, Kantian ethics, virtue ethics, etc. and apply those theories to a particular subject that raises ethical concerns.
 2. Comprehend and articulate some of the basic questions in epistemology and metaphysics.
 3. Comprehend and articulate some of the traditional proofs for the existence of God.
 4. Prepare a short, written statement that engages a philosophical question, shows facility with the relevant concepts and terms, and is well-reasoned.
 5. Engage in thoughtful discussion with others, listening attentively, offering clear and well-reasoned arguments, and posing relevant questions.
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5 Teaching and Learning Activities

OVERVIEW:

Week 1 Getting Started; Week 2 The Good Life (Hedonism); Weeks 3-6 Normative Ethics

Week 7 Metaethics; Week 8 The Nature of Reality; Week 9 The Search for Truth; Week 10 TBA

Weeks 11-12 Philosophy of Religion

5.1 Lecture

Week 1

Topics: Introduction to the Course, Morality and Moral Reasoning

M (Jan 11th): Introduction to Course - overview of expectations and assignments. Initial discussion about where and how we learn ethical lessons.

W (Jan 13th) Getting Started: What is Morality? What does Moral Reasoning look like? How do we begin? Required reading for Wednesday: Chapter 1 from *The Fundamentals of Ethics*.

Week 2

Topics: Hedonism and the Good Life

M (Jan 19th): Hedonism and the Good Life

Required reading for Monday: Ch 1 and 2 from *The Fundamentals of Ethics* (23-42).

W (Jan 20th): Getting What You Want (and the problems for Desire Theory)

Required reading: Ch 3 and 4 of *The Fundamentals of Ethics* (43-62)

Week 3

Topics: Normative Ethics (Doing the Right Thing)

M (Jan 25th): Morality, Religion, and Natural Law

Required reading: Chapter 5 and 6 (65-92)

W (Jan 27th): Psychological and Ethical Egoism

Required reading: Ch 7 and 8 (93-123)

Week 4

Topics: Normative Ethics Continued (Consequentialism)

M (Feb 1st): Consequentialism I

Required reading: Ch 9 (124-142)

W (Feb 3rd): Consequentialism II

Reading reading: Ch 10 (143-166)

Week 5

Topics: Normative Ethics Continued (Kantian Ethics)

M (Feb 8th): The Kantian Perspective (Fairness and Justice)

Required reading: Ch 11 (167-181)

W (Feb 10th): The Kantian Perspective (Autonomy, Free Will, and Respect)

Topics: **READING WEEK/BREAK**

No lecture or seminar meetings this week.

Week 6

Topics: Normative Ethics Continued (Virtue Ethics and Feminist Ethics)

M (Feb 22nd): Virtue Ethics

Required reading: Ch 17 (272-294)

W (Feb 24th): Feminist Ethics

Required reading: Ch 18 (295-312)

Week 7

Topics: Metaethics (the Status of Morality)

M (March 1st): Ethical Relativism and Moral Nihilism

Required reading: Chapters 19 and 20 (315-345)

W (March 3rd): Arguments Against Moral Objectivity

Required reading: Chapters 21 and 22 (346-375)

Week 8

Topics: The Nature of Reality

M (March 8th): The Nature of Reality I (Reality and Appearances; early western metaphysics)

Required reading: Solomon/Higgins, *The Big Questions*, Chapter 4 (102-117); additional readings TBA

W (March 10th): The Nature of Reality II (Mind and Metaphysics, Idealism)

Required reading: Solomon/Higgins, *The Big Questions*, Chapter 4 (117-135); additional readings TBA

Week 9

Topics: The Search for Truth

M (March 15th): The Search for Truth I

Empirical truth, necessary truth, rationalism and empiricism

Required reading: Solomon/Higgins, *The Big Questions*, Chapter 5 (pages TBA); additional readings TBA.

W (March 17th): The Search for Truth II

Skepticism, modern theories of truth

Required reading: Solomon/Higgins, *The Big Questions*, Chapter 5 (pages TBA); additional readings TBA.

Week 10

Topics: Topic and readings TBA (based on class interest)

Week 11

Topics: The Philosophy of Religion I

Proofs for the Existence of God

M (March 29th): The Ontological Argument

Required reading: Ch 2 from Kellenberger's *Introduction to Philosophy of Religion* (pages 32-40); additional reading TBA.

W (March 29th): The Cosmological Argument & the Teleological Argument

Required reading: Ch 2 from Kellenberger's *Introduction to Philosophy of Religion* (pages 40-55); additional reading TBA.

Week 12

Topics: The Philosophy of Religion II

God's Existence and the Question of Relevance

M (April 5th): Does religious faith require proof?

Required reading: Ch 3 from Kellenberger's *Introduction to Philosophy of Religion*.

W (April 7th): Final Session/Wrap-up

Required reading: TBA

5.2 Seminar

Weekly discussion sections

Topics:

Seminars will take place every week beginning in Week 1. Consult WebAdvisor for the time and virtual place of your seminar. These opportunities for discussion are a central feature of this class and you are expected to attend the weekly sessions, having completed the reading and ready to actively contribute to the discussion.

6 Assessments

Students will be evaluated based on their performance on the following assignments and tasks.

6.1 Marking Schemes & Distributions

Details regarding all assignments will be distributed through CourseLink.

6.2 Assessment Details

SEMINAR PARTICIPATION (30%)

Date: Ongoing, in seminar

You are expected to participate in the weekly seminars, having completed the required reading for the week and ready to contribute to the discussion. Your participation will be regularly assessed by your Teaching Assistant and assigned a grade out of 15 points at midterm and another 15 points at the end of the term. Unexcused absence from the seminar will negatively effect your participation grade. Merely being present but not participating can also negatively affect your participation grade. Your informed, thoughtful participation in discussion during the Monday and Wednesday lectures can positively influence the participation grades.

PAPER 1 (10%)

Date: Week 3

The first paper will be a short essay (3-4 pages in length; 750-1000 words) in which you will engage the previous week's material about morality and hedonism. More specific guidelines and suggestions for how to approach the assignment will be distributed at least two weeks before the deadline. **The essay is due by noon on Saturday, January 30th**

submitted through Courselink. *It is worth 10% of your final grade.*

PAPER 2 (20%)

Date: Week 6

The second paper will be a short essay (4-5 pages in length; 1000-1500 words) in which you will apply some of the theories we have learned in class to a moral problem. More specific guidelines and suggestions for how to approach the assignment will be distributed at least two weeks before the deadline. **The essay is due by noon on Saturday, February 27th** submitted through Courselink. *It is worth 20% of your final grade.*

PAPER 3 (25%)

Date: Week 12

The third paper will be a short essay (6-8 pages in length; 2500-3000 words) in which you will choose among the topics from the last part of the course (the nature of reality, the search for truth, proofs for the existence of God) and write an essay that carefully engages the material. More specific guidelines and suggestions for how to approach the assignment will be distributed at least two weeks before the deadline. **The essay is due by 5 pm on Monday, April 12th**, submitted through Courselink. *It is worth 25% of your final grade.*

Course Reflections (15%)

Date: Weeks 1, 5, and 12

You will write three short reflections, at the beginning, middle, and end of the term. These will be an opportunity for you to reflect upon your interests in the course material, articulate your goals for the semester through this course, and apply what you are learning to your own interests. More details to be distributed on the first day of class. Each is worth 5 points for a total of 15% of your final grade.

7 Course Statements

7.1 Use of Courselink

For this course, we will use CourseLink for all information, updates, some of the required readings (beyond the textbook), minor announcements, submitting assignments, etc. It is your responsibility to check CourseLink regularly. If you have a question, please check there first or review the course outline. Important announcements will be made in lecture and/or via email. It is your responsibility to know what is going on in the course.

7.2 How to submit written work

All papers must be submitted through the dropbox function of CourseLink. No paper copy is required. *Please do not submit any work via email, at any time, for any reason.* Your paper will not be considered submitted until it appears in CourseLink.

All electronic submissions must be in one of the following file formats in order to be processed through CourseLink and Tunitin: Microsoft Office (docx, doc - this is the preferred file format); Portable Document Format (pdf); or Rich Text Format (rtf).

Please note that gdoc, pages or ott, odt file formats do not work; do not submit work using those file types because they will not be readable. Corrupted or empty files will not be accepted - they will be considered the equivalent of not having submitted a paper at all.

7.3 Regarding late penalties and extensions

Pay careful attention to the time and date of the deadlines for papers and note that the dropbox in CourseLink puts a date stamp on your paper when it is submitted. It will indicate if the paper is late. Papers will still be accepted up to 24 hours after the stated deadline but will incur a 5% penalty. Any paper submitted after that will receive a zero on the assignment.

Extensions will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and are generally made only for medical or other emergencies. I may request official documentation for any extension. You should contact me as soon as you are aware of circumstances which could compromise your ability to submit work on time.

7.4 Use of Turnitin (plagiarism detection)

The university has adopted Turnitin to detect possible plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, or copying as part of the ongoing efforts to maintain academic integrity at the university. Submitted assignments may be checked against the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Please refer to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site for more information.

7.5 Technology Policies

You may not record lectures.

Policy for seminars: Your Teaching Assistant has the authority to adopt whatever policy s/he deems necessary to ensure a productive learning environment in the seminar. Unless specified otherwise, you should assume that the seminar is following the same policy as the lectures (stated above).

7.6 Office Hours

The Teaching Assistants and I will hold weekly office hours (see CourseLink for the designated times and places). You are strongly encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to talk to us in more depth about the course material and to use them if you have any questions about the course.

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>

Associate Diploma Calendar - Academic Consideration, Appeals and Petitions

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

8.3 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>

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.

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>

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>

8.9 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.

8.10 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.
