



PHIL*2120 Ethics

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

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

An introduction to moral philosophy through classical and contemporary readings on the subject. Questions addressed will include: What is the nature of morality and why do we need it? What does it mean to lead a good life? What are the foundations of morality? And what makes an act right or wrong? Major ethical schools of thought such as Utilitarianism, Kantianism, Virtue Ethics and the Ethics of Care will be represented in the readings. Major thinkers will include Plato, Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, Kant and Virginia Held.

1.3 Timetable

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

1.4 Final Exam

There is NO final exam for this course.

2 Instructional Support

2.1 Instructional Support Team

Instructor: Peter Eardley
Email: peardley@uoguelph.ca
Telephone: +1-519-824-4120 x53211
Office: MCKN 333

2.2 Teaching Assistants

Teaching Assistant: Gennady McCracken
Email: gmccrack@uoguelph.ca

Teaching Assistant: Vanita Fernandes
Email: vanita@uoguelph.ca

Teaching Assistant: Jacob Fehr
Email: jfehr@uoguelph.ca

2.3 A Note on the Teaching Assistants

The Teaching Assistants for the course are, in alphabetical order, Mr. Jacob Fehr, Ms. Vanita Fernandes and Mr. Gennady McCracken. All three are graduate students in the Philosophy Department at Guelph who are hired by the University as TAs for their expertise. Due to Covid-19, you will not, unfortunately, get to know them face to face, but rather virtually, primarily through the Courselink "Discussion" Forum, which they will monitor and to which they will contribute. They will also be available via email. As with all email communications at the University, correspondence with the TAs is to be carried out in a respectful manner.

Students are asked to familiarize themselves with the University's policy on online behavior, which can be found in the "Statements" section of this syllabus.

3 Learning Resources

3.1 Required Resources

Primary Readings (Readings)

Please Note: There is no textbook for this course. Rather, the relevant content will be uploaded to Courselink.

*Under the 'Content' heading you will notice 4 modules in the *Table of Contents* section:

1. **The Primary Readings:** refer to the original source texts of the main figures we will be reading (e.g., Aristotle, Hobbes, Kant etc).

2. **The Slides:** refer to my notes on the primary readings.
 3. **The Secondary Sources:** are links to videos and secondary readings that will be useful, like the slides, in illuminating the primary readings, which can be challenging.
 4. **Tips for Writing a Philosophy Paper:** is self-explanatory. Students should read this short paper before doing their written assignments, and use it as a helpful guide.
-

4 Learning Outcomes

4.1 Course Learning Outcomes

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

1. *Analyze* and *evaluate* major historical and/or conceptual developments in moral philosophy.
 2. *Identify* and *critically evaluate* the practical significance of major developments in ethics.
 3. *Read* and *comprehend* complex original source materials in the history and problems of philosophy.
 4. *Write clearly and cogently* on advanced problems in philosophy.
 5. Be *skilled* in the use of key tools for sound justification and rational persuasion, including formal and informal logic, the gathering of empirical evidence, and the balanced judgment of conflicting interpretations.
-

5 Teaching and Learning Activities

NB: There will be no synchronous activities for this course. That is, there will be no real-time lectures, seminars nor any other meetings or communications via Zoom, Teams, etc. Rather, the "Discussions" tool on Courselink will be available for students to interact with their peers on content related to the course. The hope is that students will take advantage of these virtual discussion groups in order to bounce ideas off of one another and engage in peer learning by posting questions and replies. The threads will be actively monitored by the TAs and by the instructor on a regular basis throughout each week. As a general rule, the TAs and I will only intervene when a discussion seems to be going in a direction that could be seriously misleading with respect to content. Otherwise, students are encouraged to explore their reasoned opinions with the widest possible freedom as a method of gaining a deeper insight into the material.

Students are asked to familiarize themselves with the University's policy on online behavior, which can be found in the "Statements" section of this syllabus.

5.1 Lecture

Topics:

Week 1 (January 11): What is Ethics? Louis Pojman, "Introduction: What is Ethics?" from Pojman, *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong*.

Week 2 (January 18): What Does it Mean to be a Good Person? Aristotle, Bk 2, *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Week 3 (January 25): Is Morality Just a Matter of Duty? Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*.

Week 4 (February 01): Are Moral Values Relative? Pojman, "Who's to Judge What's .

Week 5 (February 08): Do Women Think of Morality Differently from Men? Jean Grimshaw; "The Ideal of a Female Ethic" in Peter Singer Ed. *A Companion to Ethics*

Week 6 (February 15): Winter Break – No Readings

Week 7 (February 22): Is Morality Grounded in God's Will? Plato, *Euthyphro*.

Week 8 (March 01): Is Morality a Matter of Feeling or Attitude? David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*.

Week 9 (March 08): What is God? Louis Pojman, "Value," from *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong*.

Week 10 (March 15): Is Morality Rooted in Human Nature? St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologica*.

Week 11 (March 22): Is Morality Just a Matter of Convention or Agreement? Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*.

Week 12 (March 29): No new readings this week so that students can focus on their final take-home assignment.

6 Assessments

6.1 Assessment Details

February Take-Home Assignment (30%)

Date: Mon, Feb 1, 11:00 AM - Thu, Feb 4, 5:00 PM

This take-home assignment will take the form of a 1200-word compare and contrast question on two of the course readings covered to that point. The question, along with more specific instructions, will be posted to Courselink on the morning of Monday, February 01 and is due, via Dropbox, on Thursday, February 04 at 5 PM.

Comparative Essay (40%)

Date: Fri, Feb 26, 11:00 AM - Fri, Mar 12, 5:00 PM

The topic for this assignment will be posted on Courselink on the morning of Friday, February 26. The assignment will involve reading two seminal pieces in moral philosophy that you have not seen before (and will therefore have to grapple with on your own) that take opposing sides on a specific debate. Students will be required to write an essay in which they contribute to the debate. The essay is intended to be relatively short (about 1800-1900 words) and analytical in nature. Papers are to be submitted, via Dropbox, by 5 PM on Friday, March 12th.

Final Take-Home Assignment (30%)

Date: Mon, Mar 29, 11:00 AM - Thu, Apr 1, 5:00 PM

In structure and purpose this assignment will be identical to the February take-home assignment. That is, it will take the form of a 1200-word compare and contrast question on two of the readings covered in the course. The question will be posted on the morning of Monday, March 29, at 11 AM and is due, via Dropbox, on Thursday, April 01 at 5 PM.

7 Course Statements

7.1 Important Dates

Monday, February 01: Take-Home Assignment posted to Courselink

Thursday, February 04: Take-Home Assignment Due via Dropbox (5 PM).

Friday, February 26: Essay Topic Posted to Courselink

Friday, March 12: Essay due via Dropbox (5 PM).

Monday, March 29: Final Take-Home Assignment posted to Courselink

Thursday, April 01: Final Take-Home Assignment due via Dropbox (5 PM).

7.2 Student Rights and Responsibilities

Each student at the University of Guelph has rights which carry commensurate responsibilities that involve, broadly, being a civil and respectful member of the University community. The Rights and Responsibilities are detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar.

7.3 Policy on Online Behaviour

Inappropriate online behaviour will not be tolerated. Examples of inappropriate online behavior include:

- Posting inflammatory messages about your instructor or fellow students
- Using obscene or offensive language online
- Copying or presenting someone else's work as your own
- Adapting information from the Internet without using proper citations or references
- Buying or selling term papers or assignments
- Posting or selling course materials to course notes websites
- Having someone else complete your quiz or completing a quiz for/with another student
- Stating false claims about lost quiz answers or other assignment submissions and Threatening or harassing a student or instructor online.

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.
