

UBC's Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam) people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on in their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.

Course Title, Time and Location	Course Code Number	Credit Value
Introduction to Ethics Mon Wed Fri 14:00-15:00 Web Based Course	PHIL 230 001	3 credits

Course Instructor	Contact Details	Office Location	Office Hours
Dr. Willow Verkerk	wverkerk@mail.ubc.ca	Online	By appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course surveys some of the main roots and thinkers of the Western ethical tradition, focusing on virtue ethics, deontology, and consequentialism. Texts include Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, and Mill's *Utilitarianism*. A selection of contemporary readings will also be covered to illustrate more recent developments of these theories. Topics include the places of reason, emotion, culture, happiness, and care in ethics, friendship, and whether ethics is subjective or objective.

This is a lecture style course with class discussion. There are no prerequisites.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Students are expected to read the materials before class and come prepared to take part in online class discussion. Class time on Mondays is reserved for students to complete the readings, listen to podcasts, and respond to online discussion questions. Each Wednesday and Friday, there will be real time lectures on Collaborate Ultra with discussion encouraged.

The schedule includes all of the readings which can be found on LOCR, online, or under Modules on the Canvas course page.

ASSESSMENTS OF LEARNING

Take Home Exam 1 (500 words) 20% due October 7

Take Home Exam 2 (500 words) 20% due November 4

Final Essay (2000 words) 50% due December 6.

Participation 10%: based on attendance and participation in class discussion on Wednesdays and Fridays and on activity in the Discussion forum on Canvas.

All assignments are submitted on Canvas.

SCHEDULE: MON, WED, FRI 14:00-15:00

September 9: Introducing the Three Traditions**September 11: Moral Relativism****READ:** Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry on Moral Relativism<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-relativism/>**September 14-18: Moral Relativism and Absolutism****MON:** Listen to the following podcasts:

Paul Boghossian on Moral Relativism

<https://philosophybites.com/2011/10/paul-boghossian-on-moral-relativism.html>

AND

Simon Blackburn on Moral Relativism

<https://philosophybites.com/2007/08/simon-blackburn.html>

AND

READ: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry on Moral Relativism<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-relativism/>**WED and FRI:** Lectures and discussion on moral relativism and absolutism**September 21-25: Utilitarianism and Consequentialism****MON:** Listen to the following podcasts:

BBC In Our Time: Utilitarianism

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b05xhwqf>

AND

Roger Crisp on Utilitarianism:

<http://philosophybites.com/2007/07/roger-crisp-on-.html>

AND

READ: Stanford Encyclopedia on the History of Utilitarianism, s. 2 The Classical Approach (2.1 Bentham and 2.2 Mill)<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/utilitarianism-history/>**WED and FRI:** Lectures and discussion on Utilitarianism: Bentham and Mill**September 28-October 2: Mill on Utilitarianism****MON: READ:** John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, selections from sections I-V**WED and FRI:** Lectures and discussion on Mill*Take Home Exam 1 posted Friday October 2***Take Home Exam 1 due October 7****October 5-9: Utilitarianism and Arguments for Vegetarianism****MON: READ:** Mill, *Utilitarianism*, selections from sections I-V

AND

Peter Singer, "Utilitarianism and Vegetarianism," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* (Summer, 1980), pp. 325-337.

WED and FRI: Lectures and discussion on Mill and Singer

October 12-15: Kant and Deontological Ethics

MON: Listen to the following podcast:

BBC In Our Time: Kant's Categorical Imperative

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b0952zl3>

Prepare for WED and FRI lectures

READ: Kant, First section in *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor, revised edition, Cambridge Press, 2012, hereafter GMM.

WED and FRI: Lectures and discussion on s. 1 of the GMM

October 19-23: Kant and the Metaphysics of Morals

MON: Prepare for WED and FRI lectures

READ: Second section of GMM.

WED and FRI: Lecture and discussion on s. II of GMM

October 26-30: Kant and Personhood in Black Radical Thought

MON: Prepare for WED and FRI lectures

READ: s. 4.1 (The Ethical) in Charles W. Mills, "Black Radical Kantianism" *Res Philosophica*, January 2018 (95.1), pp. 13-24.

WED and FRI: Lectures and discussion on Kant and Mills

Take Home Exam 2 posted October 30

* Take Home Exam 2 due November 4*

November 2-6: Aristotle's Ethics

MON: Prepare for WED and FRI lectures

Listen to the following podcast on Aristotle:

Julia Annas <https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/elucidations/2014/03/26/episode-57-julia-annas-discusses-virtue-ethics/>

Optional further listening:

Terrance Irwin

http://philosophybites.libsyn.com/terence_irwin_on_aristotle_s_ethics

Peter Adamson <http://historyofphilosophy.net/aristotle-ethics>

READ: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin, 2nd ed., Hackett, 1999 (hereafter NE), Books I and II.

Further reading: Stanford Encyclopedia on Aristotle's Ethics

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/>

WED and FRI: Lecture and discussion on Aristotle Books I and II

Final Essay Questions posted November 6

November 9-13: Aristotle on Virtue and Vice

MON: Prepare for WED and FRI lectures

READ: NE Book III, sections 5-7, 9-12 and Book IV, sections 1, 3, 5-9.

WED and FRI: Lectures and discussion on Books III and IV

November 16-20: Aristotle on Friendship, Pleasure and Happiness

MON: Prepare for WED and FRI Lectures

READ: NE Book VIII, Book IX and Book X sections 1-8.

WED and FRI: Lectures and discussion on Books VII, IX and X

November 23-27: The Ethics of Care

MON: Prepare for WED and FRI Lectures

READ: Steven Steyl, "The Virtue of Care," *Hypatia* 34. 3 (Summer 2019).

AND Kyle Powys Whyte and Chris Cuomo, "Ethics of Caring in Environmental Ethics: Indigenous and Feminist Philosophies," in eds. Gardiner and Thompson, *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Ethics*, 2017.

WED and FRI: Lecture and discussion on virtue ethics and the ethics of care

November 30-December 2: Which Kind of Ethical Theory Do You Support?

MON: Prepare for WED lecture by reflecting on the course and thinking about which kind of ethical theory you support.

WED: Concluding discussion

December 6 Final Essay due

LEARNING OUTCOMES

During the course, students will learn concepts central to ethical theory. They will practice talking and thinking critically about the arguments and ideas. The take home exams provide the opportunity to demonstrate understanding of the key concepts studied to date. The final paper is an exercise in critical thinking to explore and deepen understanding of one or more of the thinkers or traditions studied during the course. By the end of the semester, students will be familiar with consequentialist and deontological ethical theories, as well as virtue ethics, in both historical and contemporary formulations.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND SUPPORT

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available on [the UBC Senate website](#).

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<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959>

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