

PHIL 230A: Introduction to Ethics
2020-21 Summer Term: May 11 - June 17, 2021
Tuesdays 10am - 1pm
Thursdays 10am - 1pm

Provisional Syllabus, April 2021 (subject to minor revision)

Instructor

Prof. Kimberley Brownlee

Email: Kimberley.brownlee@ubc.ca

Office hours:

Dedicated office hour: Thurs. 1pm – 2pm

Open office hour Wed. 1pm - 2pm

Course Content and Aims

This course will explore a range of key questions and debates in ethics and moral philosophy including:

- What is a good life?
- How should we treat each other?
- What makes an action good or the right thing to do?
- What does it mean to be a good person?
- What does it mean to *blame* someone?
- Is abortion morally permissible? Is it protected by a moral right?
- Do animals, ecosystems, and future generations have rights?

Through the examination of contemporary texts and classic texts, students will consider different moral theories including deontology, consequentialism, virtue ethics, moral pluralism, and moral particularism. Students will also examine how key concepts such as *ought*, *reason*, *duty*, *good*, *value*, *justice*, and *virtue* figure in these theories. Students will additionally explore various practical ethical issues including the ethics of abortion, environmental ethics, and the relation between happiness and goodness.

By the end of the course, students will be familiar with a range of debates, concepts, and arguments about ethics. Students will be expected to become familiar with the relevant literatures on these themes, to read the required readings prior to the lectures, and to be prepared to analyze competing philosophical accounts both in discussions and in pieces of assessment.

COVID-19 notice: The course will include two 3-hour, synchronous Zoom meetings per week (on Tuesdays and Thursdays) as well as directed reading, in-class essay writing, and dedicated office hours. Detailed notes will be provided to accompany each lecture. The lectures will not be recorded. Where possible, the teaching format will be adjusted in response to students' circumstances and needs.

Details of the Course

Schedule for each three-hour meeting

10am - 10.50am: lecture by the instructor

11am - 11.45am: directed writing session of a four-sentence paper

11.45am - 12.15pm: peer sharing of four-sentence papers in small groups

12.20pm - 1.00pm: general discussion and sum up by the instructor

Expectations

- Complete the required reading before each meeting.
- Attend each meeting and complete **each in-class writing assignment**.
- Contribute to the course discussions and the peer-feedback sessions.
- Dedicated office hours in live Zoom chats will immediately follow the Thursday meeting.

Controversial Content Notice

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the shift to online learning has greatly altered teaching and studying at UBC, including changes to health and safety considerations.

- Please keep in mind that this course will cover topics that are censored or considered illegal by some non-Canadian governments; such topics include but are not limited to human rights, justice, freedom, expression, defamation, obscenity, gender or sexuality, and historical or current geopolitical controversies.
- If you are a student living abroad, you will be subject to the laws of your local jurisdiction, and your local authorities might limit your access to course material or take punitive action against you.
- UBC is strongly committed to academic freedom, but has no control over foreign authorities (please visit <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,33,86,0>Links to an external site. for an articulation of the values of the University conveyed in the Senate Statement on Academic Freedom).
- Thus, students abroad have legitimate reason to exercise caution in studying certain subjects. If you have concerns about your personal situation, consider postponing taking a course with manifest risks, until you are back on campus or reach out to your academic advisor to find substitute courses.
- For further information and support, please visit: <http://academic.ubc.ca/support-resources/freedom-expression>.

The course will include in-class directed-writing sessions. Instructions for these sessions:

Reflect on the assigned reading (beforehand) and on the lecture given that day. Write a four-sentence paper with the following structure:

- (1) [Name of philosopher] says _____, because _____.
- (2) I say _____, because _____.
- (3) One might object that _____.
- (4) I reply that _____, because _____.

For guidance on writing a four-sentence paper, see Dennis Earl (2014) 'The Four-Sentence Paper' in *Teaching Philosophy* 38: 1: <https://philpapers.org/archive/EARTFP.pdf>

Marks

In-class essays: 25 points

- You will write 12 four-sentence essays in class during the course (one essay per class).
- **Five of those essays will be submitted for assessment.**
- Each submitted essay is worth five points.
- Each submitted essay will be marked according to the following criteria:
 1. Correct understanding and representation of what 'they' say and *why* they say it.
 2. Clarity and thoughtfulness in the statement of what you say and *why* you say it.
 3. Thoughtful appreciation of a possible objection to what you say.
 4. Originality and innovation in your response to that objection.
 5. Quality of writing (i.e. clean and clear prose, referencing, bibliography, spelling, grammar and presentation).
- **Two** four-sentence essays will be due on **Monday May 31 2021** (on topics discussed in the first half of the course). All students may have an automatic extension until Friday June 4 2021. After that, 5 points will be deducted per day for lateness. **Submit the two essays in a single Word document.**
- **Three** four-sentence essays will be due on **Monday June 21 2021** (on topics discussed in the second half of the course). All students may have an automatic extension until Friday June 25 2021. After that, 5 points will be deducted per day for lateness. **Submit the three essays in a single Word document.**
- The essays should be in clean prose, Times New Roman, 12 point font.
- The submitted versions should include footnotes and references as appropriate.

Short essay: 25 points

- Write a **1,000 word essay** in response to an assigned question. The questions will relate to the material covered in the first half of the course.
- The word limit does **not** include the footnotes or bibliography.
- You may exceed the word-limit by 10% without penalty. Beyond that, points will be deducted.
- Essays should be typed in a clear professional font, e.g. **Times New Roman, 12 point font.**
- Please follow a **recognised reference style.**
- The essays will be marked according to **four criteria**:
 - 1. Argument and analysis
 - 2. Understanding and interpretation of the literature
 - 3. Structure and organisation
 - 4. Quality of writing (i.e. prose, referencing, bibliography, spelling, grammar and presentation).
- **The short essay is due on Monday May 31 2021.** Students may have an automatic extension until midnight on Friday April 4 2021. After that, five points will be deducted each day for lateness. If you have a personal reason (e.g. illness, family concern) to request an extension, please contact me **before the deadline** to arrange an alternative submission date.
- **Non-submission will result in 0 points.**
- Advice on essays can be found in the **Appendix** below.

Long essay: 50 points

- Write a **2,000 word essay** in response to an assigned question. The questions will relate to the material covered in the second half of the course.
- The word limit does **not** include the footnotes or bibliography.
- You may exceed the word-limit by 10% without penalty. Beyond that, points will be deducted.
- Essays should be typed in a clear professional font, e.g. **Times New Roman, 12 point font**.
- Please follow a **recognised referencing style**.
- The essays will be marked according to the **four criteria** noted above, i.e. 1. Argument and analysis; 2. Understanding and interpretation of the literature; 3. Structure and organisation; and 4. Quality of writing (i.e. prose, referencing, bibliography, spelling, grammar and presentation).
- **The long essay is due on Monday June 21 2021**. Students may have an automatic extension until midnight on Friday June 25 2021. After that, five points will be deducted each day for lateness. If you have a personal reason (e.g. illness, family concern) to request an extension, please contact me **before the deadline** to arrange an alternative submission date.
- **Non-submission will result in 0 points.**

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious form of academic misconduct involving intellectual theft. Plagiarism occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the **author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation**. Where direct quotations are made, they must be clearly delineated (for example, within quotation marks or separately indented). Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else's work as one's own. Plagiarism should not occur in submitted drafts or final works. A student who seeks assistance from a tutor or other scholastic aids must ensure that the work submitted is the student's own. Students are responsible for ensuring that any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. Students who are in any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult their instructor before handing in any assignments. Please see: <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959>. **Please ensure that you are familiar with the standards for good academic practice and the university's norms and regulations:** <https://artsonline.arts.ubc.ca/about-arts-one/ubc-policies/ubc-plagiarism-policy/>

Background Readings

- A range of further readings have been provided at the end of this course guide.
- An online resource that provides useful background material on a range of topics is *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<http://plato.stanford.edu/>). **This resource does not replace original texts. Do not cite this source when you could and should read and cite the original work.**

- **NB:** Beware of relying on Wikipedia or other non-specialist internet encyclopaedias. They are not peer-reviewed and may contain inaccuracies and misinterpretations. **Do not regard them as reliable academic sources.**

Readings

Tuesday May 11

Introduction to the course; Overview of key moral theories and concepts

There is no required reading for this meeting. Here is a suggested reading:
Simon Blackburn (2003), *Ethics: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.

Thursday May 13

What is the right thing to do?

Required Reading: J. J. Thomson (1976), 'Killing, Letting Die, and the Trolley Problem', *The Monist*, Vol. 59, No. 2, Philosophical Problems of Death (APRIL, 1976), 204-217.

Tuesday May 18

What does it mean to be happy? In ethics, is overall happiness all that matters?

Required Reading: John Stuart Mill [1861], *Utilitarianism*, chs I and II.

Thursday May 20

Should we aim to bring about as much good as we can?

Required Reading: Amartya Sen (2000), 'Consequential Evaluation and Practical Reason', in *The Journal of Philosophy*, 97:9, 477-502.

Tuesday May 25

What's wrong with deontology and consequentialism?

Required Reading: G.E.M. Anscombe (1958), 'Modern Moral Philosophy', *Philosophy* 33: 124, 1-19.

Thursday May 27

Are (some) ethical theories schizophrenic?

Required Reading: Michael Stocker (1976), 'The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theory', *Journal of Philosophy* 73, 453-66.

Tuesday June 1

What makes someone a moral saint? Would anyone want to be a moral saint?

Required Reading: Susan Wolf. (1982), 'Moral Saints', *Journal of Philosophy*, 79, 419-439.

Thursday June 3

Is there such a thing as moral luck? Should *luck* play a role in how we are morally judged?

Required Readings: Bernard Williams & Thomas Nagel (1976) 'Moral Luck' symposium papers in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume*, 50.

Tuesday June 8

Is abortion always morally acceptable? Should access to abortion be guaranteed by a comprehensive legal right, even if it's not always morally innocuous?

Required Reading: Judith Jarvis Thomson (1971), 'A Defense of Abortion', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 1(1): 47-66.

Thursday June 10

How should virtue ethics approach the question of abortion?

Required Reading: Rosalind Hursthouse (1991), 'Virtue Theory and Abortion', in *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 223-46.

Tuesday June 15

What does it mean to blame someone? What is the point of blaming someone?

Required Reading: Miranda Fricker (2016), 'What's the Point of Blame? A Paradigm Based Explanation', *Nous*. 50: 1, 165-183.

Thursday June 17

Do animals, ecosystems, and future generations have rights?

Required Reading: Joel Feinberg (1974), "The Rights of Animals and Unborn Generations," in William Blackstone, ed., *Philosophy and Environmental Crisis* (University of Georgia Press).

Further Readings

Some Readings on Normativity and Moral Reasons

- Brownlee, K. (2012), 'Reasons and Ideals', *Philosophical Studies*, 151, 433–444.
- Gardner, J. (2002). Reasons for teamwork. *Legal Theory*, 8(4), 495–509.
- Gardner, J. (2004). The wrongdoing that gets results. *Philosophical Perspectives*, 18(1) (Ethics), 53–88.
- Heuer, U. (2008). Reasons and impossibility. *Philosophical Studies*. doi:10.1007/s11098-008-9285-2.
- Hume, D. *A Treatise on Human Nature*, Book 2, Part 3, Section 3; Book 3, Part 1, Section 1; Book 3, Part 1, Section 2.
- Parfit, D. (1984). *Reasons and persons*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Raz, J. (2005). The myth of instrumental rationality. *The Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy*, 1(1), 4.
- Raz, J. (1999), *Practical Reason and Norms*, Oxford University Press, Chapter 1, especially Section 1.2.
- Scanlon, T. (1998), *What We Owe to Each Other*, Harvard University Press, Chapter 1.
- Streumer, B. (2007). Reasons and impossibility. *Philosophical Studies*, 136, 351–384.
- Streumer, B. (2009). Reasons, impossibility and efficient steps: Reply to Heuer. *Philosophical Studies*. doi:10.1007/s11098-009-9422-6.

Some Readings on Deontology / Non-Consequentialism

- Kant, Immanuel, *Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals*. Mary J. Gregor (1998), (electronic resource), Preface and Sections I & II.
- Thomson, J.J. (1985), 'The Trolley Problem,' *Yale Law Journal*, 94: 1395–1415.
- Foot, P. (1967) 'The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect,' *Oxford Review*, 5: 5–15.
- O'Neill, O. (1991), 'Kantian ethics', in *A Companion to Ethics*, edited by Peter Singer, Blackwell, 175–85.
- Herman, B. (1995), *The Practice of Moral Judgement*.
- Darwall, S. (1998), *Philosophical Ethics*.
- Korsgaard, C. (1996), *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*, especially chs 1, 2.
- Kamm, F. M. (1993), *Morality, Morality: Volume I: Death and Whom to Save From It*, New York: Oxford University Press

Some Readings on Consequentialism

- Philip P., 'The Consequentialist Can Recognise Rights', *Philosophical Quarterly* 38 (1988)
- Bentham, J. (1781), *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (available online).
- Foot, P. (1985), 'Utilitarianism and the Virtues', *Mind*, vol 94 pp 196-209.
- Mill, J.S. (1861), *Utilitarianism* (various editions).
- Rawls, J. (1955), 'Two Concepts of Rules', *Philosophical Review*, (1955), vol 64, pp 3-32.
- Smart, J.J.C. and Williams, B. (1973), *Utilitarianism: For and Against*, Cambridge University Press.

- Brink, D. O. (2006), 'Some Forms and Limits of Consequentialism', in D. Copp (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory*. Oxford University Press.
- Griffin, J. (1992), 'The Human Good and the Ambitions of Consequentialism', *Social Philosophy and Policy* 9.
- Nagel, T. (1986), *The View from Nowhere*, Oxford University Press, ch. 9
- Scheffler, S. (1988), (ed.), *Consequentialism and Its Critics*, Oxford University Press, especially chapters by Williams, Scanlon, Railton,
- Stocker, M. (1976), 'The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theory', *Journal of Philosophy*, vol 73 pp 453-466.

Some Readings on Virtue Ethics and Moral Saints

- Annas, J. (2011), *Intelligent Virtue*. Oxford, chs 1-3, 8-9
- Annas, J. (2006), 'Virtue Ethics', in David Copp (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory*, Oxford University Press, 515–36.
- Crisp, R. (1996), 'Modern Moral Philosophy and the Virtues', intro. to his (ed.), *How Should One Live?* Oxford University Press,
- Crisp, R. & M. Slote (ed.), *Virtue Ethics* (OUP, 1997), especially:
 - Foot, P. 'Virtues and Vices'
 - McDowell, J. 'Virtue and Reason'
 - Anscombe, E. 'Modern Moral Philosophy'
 (These articles are all reprints; you can find the original versions online.)
- Hurka, T. (2001), 'Against Virtue Ethics', in *Virtue, Vice, and Value*. Oxford University Press, ch. 8.
- Triantosky, G. (1990), 'What is Virtue Ethics All About?', *American Philosophical Quarterly*.
- Audi, R. (1995), 'Acting from Virtue', *Mind*.
- Swanton, C. (2003), *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View*, Oxford University Press, ch. 11
- Johnson, R. (2003), 'Virtue and Right', *Ethics*.

Some Readings on Moral Pluralism, Moral Particularism, and Care Ethics

- Held, V. (2015), 'Care and Human Rights' in *Philosophical Foundations of Human Rights*. Rowan Cruft, et al (eds). Oxford University Press, Ch 35. See also Susan Mendus's response chapter in the same collection: 'Care and Human Rights', Chapter 36.
- Berlin, I. (1969), *Four Essays on Liberty*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Berlin, I. (1991), *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, New York: Random House.
- Held, V. (2006), *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global*. OUP, chs 3, 5.
- Engster, D. (2007), *The Heart of Justice: Care Ethics and Political Theory*. OUP, chs, 1, 3, 5.
- Noddings, N. (1988), 'An Ethic of Caring and Its Implications for Instructional Arrangements', *American Journal of Education*, 96, 215-30.
- Dancy, J. (2004), *Ethics without Principles*. OUP.
- Cottingham, J. (1998), 'The Ethical Credentials of Partiality' Presidential Address, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, New Series, 98, 1-21
- Thomson, J.J. (1997), 'The Right and the Good', *Journal of Philosophy*, 94: 273-298.

Some Readings on Abortion, Reproduction, and Family

- Foot, Philippa (2002), *Moral Dilemmas*. Oxford University Press.
- Finnis, John (1973), 'The Rights and Wrongs of Abortion: A Reply to Judith Thomson', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 2:2, 117-145.
- Thomson, J.J. (1973), 'Rights and Death', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 2:2, 146-159. [a reply to Finnis]
- Kaveny, Cathleen (2012), *Law's Virtues*, especially chs. 3, 9.
- Tooley, Michael (1972), 'Abortion and Infanticide', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 2(1): 37–65.
- Hochschild, Arlie (1989), *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home*, Viking.
- Kittay, Eva (1999), *Love's Labor*, Routledge.
- MacKinnon, Catherine (1989), *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*, Harvard University Press.
- Noddings, Nel (1986), *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, University of California Press.
- Nussbaum, Martha (2000), *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*, Cambridge University Press.
- Okin, Susan (1989), *Justice, Gender and the Family*, New York: Basic Books.
- Pateman, Carole (1983), 'Defending prostitution: charges against Ericson', *Ethics*, 93: 561–565.
- Phillips, Anne (2013), *Our Bodies, Whose Property?*, Princeton University Press.

Some Readings on Rights

- Waldron, Jeremy (ed.) (1990), *Theories of Rights*. Oxford University Press.
- Thomson, J. J. (1986), *Rights Restitution and Risk*. Harvard University Press.
- Thomson, J. J. (1990), *The Realm of Rights*. Harvard University Press.
- Finnis, John *Natural Law and Natural Rights*. Oxford University Press.
- Sumner, L. W., *The Moral Foundation of Rights*. Oxford University Press.
- Ingram, Attracta, *A Political Theory of Rights*.
- Raz, Joseph (1986), *The Morality of Freedom*. Oxford University Press, part III.
- Steiner, Hillel (1994), *An Essay on Rights*. Blackwell.

Appendix: Advice on Writing an Essay in Philosophy

Guides on Writing in Philosophy

- Joel Feinberg, *Doing Philosophy*
- Jim Pryor: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>
- Harvard Writing Centre:
https://philosophy.fas.harvard.edu/files/phildept/files/brief_guide_to_writing_philosophy_paper.pdf

Guides on Writing Clearly and Elegantly

- Williams, *Style: Toward Clarity and Grace*.
- Evans, *Do I Make Myself Clear*.

Basic Tips for Writing in Philosophy

- A Philosophy essay is not a murder mystery. It's a reasoned defence of a claim. [SEP]
- Announce your thesis (i.e. your central claim) at the beginning.
- Spend the rest of the essay defending that claim.
- Narrow your focus. Take charge of the question. Tell your reader at the outset what you will do and why you will do it (and also what you won't do and why).
- Have a clear structure. Signpost. After you've defended your first main point, briefly summarise what you've done and tell your reader what you will do next. [L] [SEP]
- Situate your view in relation to the literature, if appropriate. [L] [SEP]

Features of a good essay:

- A clear statement of the central claim that will be defended.
- A conceptual specification of the key terms necessary to defend that claim. (For instance, if your essay is about privacy, specify what you mean by *privacy*.)
- A clear, well-structured defence of the claim (i.e. the reasons for advancing it),
- Effective engagement with possible objections against the claim.
- Ensure your paper has been checked thoroughly for spelling and grammar.
- Adhere strictly to an accepted referencing style.
- Be willing to write several drafts. Figure out what you think while writing the bad first draft. First drafts are always bad. They are supposed to be bad! Then refine your ideas in the good second draft and refine them again in the excellent third draft.
- Read professional philosophy articles as (good and bad) models of style and structure. Think about the articles you've most enjoyed reading. Dissect them to understand how they are built.

Suggested structure:

- In the first few sentences, set the scene and explain why the topic matters.
- Next, introduce the thesis, e.g. 'In this essay, I shall argue that X.' [L] [SEP]
- Specify or refine that thesis. 'By X, I mean...'
- Finish the introductory section by listing the (2-5) steps that you will take to defend your claim.

- Then: go through those steps. Consider objections. Defend your view against those objections. (If you find an objection forceful and devastating for your view, then it's time to go back to the drawing board and change your thesis.) Engage with the literature as appropriate. [L]
[SEP]
- Conclude briefly by highlighting what you've achieved in the essay.
- Once you've followed these 'rules' for many years, and you understand why they are the rules, then you may begin to break them.