

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 19:00-22:00 Web Based Course	PHIL 230A-901	3 credits

Course Instructor	Contact Details	Office Location	Office Hours
Dr. Willow Verkerk	willow.verkerk@ub.ca	Online	By appointment

#### OTHER INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF

To be announced

#### 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. Online lectures on Zoom are scheduled on Mon/Wed from 19:00-20:45. The remaining time from 20:45-22:00 will include asynchronous activities.

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 July 19

Take Home Exam 2 (750 words) 20% due August 2

Final Essay (2000-2500 words) 50% due August 18

Participation 10%: based on participation in class discussion and on activity in the Discussion forum on Canvas. Students who are unable to attend lectures can gain these marks through weekly activity in the Discussions forum on Canvas.

All assignments are submitted on Canvas.

SCHEDULE: MON, WED 19:00-20:45

---

**Monday July 5 : Introducing the Three Traditions**

**Wednesday July 7: Moral Relativism and Objectivism**

**READ:** Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry on Moral Relativism

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-relativism/>

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/>

**Mon, July 12: Utilitarianism and Consequentialism: Bentham and Mill**

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, July 14: Mill on Utilitarianism**

**READ:** John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, pp. B-51 (first three chapters)

*Take Home Exam 1 posted July 14*

**Mon, July 19: Utilitarianism and Arguments for Vegetarianism**

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

*\*Take Home Exam 1 due July 19\**

**Wed, July 21: Kant and Deontological Ethics**

Listen to to following podcast:

BBC In Our Time: Kant's Categorical Imperative

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

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

**Mon, July 26: Kant and the Metaphysics of Morals**

**READ:** First and second sections of GMM.

**Wed, July 28: Kant and Personhood in Black Radical Thought**

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

*Take Home Exam 2 posted July 28*

**Mon, August 2: Aristotle's Ethics**

Listen to the following podcast on Aristotle:

Terrance Irwin

[http://philosophybytes.libsyn.com/terence\\_irwin\\_on\\_aristotle\\_s\\_ethics](http://philosophybytes.libsyn.com/terence_irwin_on_aristotle_s_ethics)

AND

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

Optional further listening:

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

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

Further reading: Stanford Encyclopedia on Aristotle's Ethics

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

*\* Take Home Exam 2 due August 2\**

**Wed, August 4: : Aristotle on Virtue and Vice**

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

*Final Essay Topics and Essay Writing Guidelines posted August 4*

**Mon, August 9: Aristotle on Friendship, Pleasure and Happiness**

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

**August 11: The Ethics of Care**

**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.

*\*August 18 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](#).

### International Students:

During this pandemic, the shift to online learning has greatly altered teaching and studying at UBC, including changes to health and safety considerations. Keep in mind that some UBC courses might cover topics that are censored or considered illegal by non-Canadian governments. This may include, but is not limited to, human rights, representative government, 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> for an articulation of the values of the University conveyed in the Senate Statement on Academic Freedom). Thus, we recognize that students will have legitimate reason to exercise caution in studying certain subjects. If you have concerns regarding 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>

### Plagiarism:

Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, 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. A link about Academic misconduct is below

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

---

#### COPYRIGHT

---

All materials of this course (course handouts, lecture slides, assessments, course readings, etc.) are the intellectual property of the Course Instructor or licensed to be used in this course by the copyright owner. Redistribution of these materials by any means without permission of the copyright holder(s) constitutes a breach of copyright and may lead to academic discipline. Audio recordings of the class are allowed (video recordings and photos are not permitted).