

Introduction to Moral Philosophy

2021W

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Email:

Office Hours:

Overview

In a sense, this course is not so much about moral philosophy as about your lives. Through introducing a number of value and moral theories, this course aims to develop your ethical thinking skills; that is, the ability to identify ethically relevant considerations, to take into account the interests of all stakeholders, and to make ethically-informed decisions in your lives. The topics discussed in this course will also give you opportunities to think critically about issues that concern your lives and to use your own life experiences to critique moral philosophy.

Moreover, this course also aims to prepare you for upper-year philosophy courses by developing your reading and writing skills.

Learning Objectives

At the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- (1) make and defend ethical decisions in their daily life;
- (2) present, object to, and defend arguments;
- (3) think critically about moral and social issues.

Attendance & Participation

Attendance is crucial to success in this course because in-class participation (e.g. discussions) is an essential part of the learning process. **Self-study is important, but you can't learn everything on your own. I therefore strongly encourage you to attend the lectures.**

Although assessment is not based on attendance, it is your responsibility to attend lectures where lots of important information will be given. If you miss any lectures, please ask your classmates for what you have missed. I will give priority to enquiries that have not already been addressed in lectures.

Lecture Policy

Students are expected to respect other participants during the lecture. Please refrain from using computers and other electronic devices for purposes not related to the lectures, e.g. messaging, watching videos, playing games, online shopping, etc. Such behaviours are both disruptive and disrespectful. Students are also expected to take part in in-class learning activities and discussions. Improper use of electronic devices, disruptive and disrespectful behaviour, lack of due participation, and other inappropriate behaviour, if repeated, will result in mark deductions.

Reading

You do not need to buy any textbooks for this course. Most of the reading materials can be found on the library website in electronic form. Other reading materials can be downloaded from Connect or will be distributed in class under the fair use provisions.

Please read the assigned reading before coming to class. Doing the assigned reading and familiarizing yourself with the topic can facilitate the learning process and are essential to your in-class participation.

Reading List:

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP) (1), "Well-being" (Section 4.1 only), by Roger Crisp

Russ Shafer-Landau (1), "Is Happiness All that Matters?"

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP) (2), "Well-being" (Sections 4.2. & 4.3 only), by Roger Crisp

Russ Shafer-Landau (2), "Problems for the Desire Theory"

Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics.

John Sellars, Stoicism, chapter 5.

Susan Wolf, "The Meanings of Lives"

James Rachels (1), "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism"

Steven Cahn, "God and Morality"

Russ Shafer-Landau (3), "Morality and Religion"

Peter Singe (1), "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"

Peter Singer (2), "All Animals are Equal"

Jean Hampton, "Feminist Contractarianism" (section 1 only)

Hilde Lindemann, "Feminist Ethics of Care and Responsibility" (section 6.1 only) [In Hilde Lindemann, An Invitation to Feminist Ethics, Ch 6]

Schedule

Week #	Topic	Reading	Note
Week 1	Introduction: Moral Philosophy and How One Should Live		
	Part 1: Value Theories		
2	Value Theory 1	SEP (1); Russ Shafer-Landau (1)	
3	Value Theory 2	SEP (2); Shafer-Landau (2)	
4	Aristotle and Virtue Ethics	Aristotle	
5	Stoicism	John Sellars	

6	The Meaning of Life	Susan Wolf	
	Part 2: Moral Theories		
7	Relativism	James Rachels	
8	Morality and Religion 1	Steven Cahn; Shafer-Landau (3)	
9	Morality and Religion 2	Shafer-Landau (4)	
10	Consequentialism 1	Peter Singer (1)	
11	Consequentialism 2	Peter Singer (2)	
12	Feminist Moral Philosophy	Jean Hampton (section 1 only); Hilde Lindemann (section 6.1 only)	
13	Summary and Review		

Assessment

- (1) Short Writing Assignments (20% + 20%)
- (2) End-of-term Assignment (30%)
- (3) Final Exam (30%)

(1) Short Writing Assignments

There will be two short assignments, each is worth 20%. The first one is on the topic of value theories and the second one is on the topic of moral theories. On both assignments, you will be asked how you would decide what to do in a given scenario. You will need to explain and defend your decision. Topics and due dates will be announced.

(2) End-of-term Assignment

Same as Short Writing Assignments, except this assignment will be given at the end of the term and will be longer. You will be able to choose one out of two essay topics (one on value theories and the other on moral theories).

(3) Final Exam

Details will be announced later in the term. If possible, the exam will involve group discussion components.

Course Website

Our course website is [Canvas]. You can find the syllabus, lecture slides, and other reading materials there.

Interim Course Evaluation

A short and informal survey will be posted on **[Canvas]** in **Week 5**. This is to let me know your thoughts and comments on the course materials, the lectures, the assignments, etc., and help me to improve the course. I encourage you to do the survey.

Late Submission Policy

If you cannot submit your assignments on time and require academic accommodations, you are welcome to come and talk to me about your situations, but please do so as early as possible. Extensions may be given depending on your circumstances. However, late assignments without legitimate excuse will be subject to penalties (10% per day).

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious academic misconduct. It will not and should not be treated lightly. Please cite properly if you take any text from someone else. For details on UBC's plagiarism policy and tips on avoiding plagiarism, please see <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959> and <http://learningcommons.ubc.ca/resource-guides/avoiding-plagiarism/>

Diversity and Inclusivity

No one is born to be good/bad at philosophy (or anything). You are here to learn new things and improve your thinking and argument skills over the course of 13 weeks. I encourage you to take this opportunity to learn as much as you can and make improvements, and I will do my best to design the course and arrange the lectures in ways that give everyone a fair chance to do so. If you have any thoughts or comments on the course arrangements, you are always welcome to come talk to me in person or send me an email.

The University provides academic accommodations for students with disabilities. You can find more details on academic accommodations by contacting Accessibility Services or go to <http://students.ubc.ca/success/student-supports/academic-accommodations#registerad>.

I understand that institutions may sometimes seem unapproachable. **You are always very welcome to come and talk to me** if you have any concerns, e.g. assignment deadlines, missing classes, etc.