PHIL 230A: Introduction to Ethics
2022 Summer Term: Tuesday May 17 – Tuesday June 21 2022
Tuesdays 10am - 1pm Buchanan A203
Thursdays 10am - 1pm Buchanan A203

Provisional Syllabus, April 2022 (subject to minor revision)

Instructor
Prof. Kimberley Brownlee
Email: Kimberley.brownlee@ubc.ca
Dedicated office hour (Zoom): Tuesday 1.15pm – 2.15pm and by appointment.
https://ubc.zoom.us/j/67861982885?pwd=ekNITXZxTFlNbGxjOU1JWWIUTc5dz09
Meeting ID: 678 6198 2885
Passcode: 95771

Course Content and Aims

This course will explore a range of concepts, theories, and debates in ethics and moral philosophy including:

- What is a good life?
- What does it mean to be a good person?
- How should we treat each other?
- What makes an action good or the right thing to do?
- What does it mean to blame someone?
- How should we think about practical ethical issues such as abortion? Is abortion morally permissible? Is it protected by a moral right? Is it a matter of virtue and vice?
- Which beings have rights? Do animals, ecosystems, and future generations have rights?

Through the examination of classic and contemporary texts, students will consider different moral theories including deontology, consequentialism, virtue ethics, and moral pluralism. 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 and the relation between being happy and being good.

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 class meetings, and to be prepared to analyse competing philosophical accounts both in discussions and in pieces of assessment.

COVID-19 notice: The course will meet in-person only. The lectures will not be recorded, but detailed notes will be provided to accompany each lecture. Students who are unable for health reasons to attend in person in a given week should contact the course convenor to arrange – for that week only – to attend via Zoom.
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-sharing sessions.

Instructions for the in-class directed-writing sessions
Reflect on the assigned reading (beforehand) and on the lecture given that day. During the 45 minute writing session, 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 __________.


Marks
- Ten in-class essays (5 points each) 50 points
- Attendance and participation in discussions 5 points
- Essay 40 points
- Self-assessment of essay 5 points

Assignment Instructions

In-class essays: 50 points
- You will write 10 four-sentence essays in class.
- Each essay is worth five points.
- Each essay should follow these criteria:
  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. clear prose, referencing, bibliography, spelling, grammar).
• The first five four-sentence essays will be due as a batch on **Monday June 6 2022** (on the topics discussed between May 19 - June 2). All students may have an automatic extension until Thursday June 9 2022. After that, 2 points will be deducted per day for lateness. **Submit the five essays in a single Word document.**

• The second five four-sentence essays will be due as a batch on **Thursday June 23 2022** (on topics covered between June 7-21). All students may have an automatic extension until Monday June 27. After that, 2 points will be deducted per day for lateness. **Submit the essays in a single Word document.**

• The essays should be in clean prose, Times New Roman, 12-point font.

• The submitted essays should include footnotes and references as appropriate.

**Attendance and Participation: 5 points**

• Each class includes a directed writing session, breakout group discussion, and class discussion.

• Make a personal commitment to attend each class and to participate in all components.

• Read the assigned readings before each meeting. Come prepared with questions and comments to contribute to the discussion.

**Essay: 40 points**

• Write a **2,000 word essay** in response to an assigned question.

• The word limit does **not** include the footnotes or bibliography.

• You may exceed the word-limit by 10% without penalty.

• Essays should be typed in a clear professional font, e.g. Times New Roman, 12 point font.

• Please follow a **recognised reference style**. Check here for guidance: [https://guides.library.ubc.ca/c.php?g=707463&p=5035495](https://guides.library.ubc.ca/c.php?g=707463&p=5035495)

• 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 essay is due on Thursday June 23 2022.** Students may have an automatic extension until Monday June 27 2022. After that, two 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.

**Self-assessment of the essay: 5 points**

• See the essay checklist at the end of this syllabus. Use the editable version of the checklist on Canvas to write a brief self-assessment of your essay.

• Give your short essay a Yes or No on each of the checklist requirements. Write a brief 150-word comment on whether you are satisfied with how you have met each of the criteria in your essay, and which areas you believe you may need to improve.
• The self-assessment is due on **Thursday June 23 2022**. Students may have an automatic extension until Monday June 27. After that, two points will be deducted per day for lateness.

**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](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://artsone.arts.ubc.ca/about-arts-one/ubc-policies/ubc-plagiarism-policy/](https://artsone.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.**

Required Background Reading:

• Thomas Nagel’s article ‘What is Rude?’ in the *London Review of Books* [https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v44/n03/thomas-nagel/what-is-rude](https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v44/n03/thomas-nagel/what-is-rude)

• Read throughout the term: Benjamin Lipscomb (2021), *The Women are Up to Something*. Oxford University Press.
Readings

Week 1:

Tuesday May 17
Overview of the course; Introduction to moral philosophy

There is no required reading for this meeting. Here is a suggested reading:

Thursday May 19
The challenges of doing ethics


Week 2:

Tuesday May 24
What is the good life?

Required Reading: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I.

Thursday May 26
What does it mean to be happy? In ethics, is overall happiness all that matters?

Required Reading: J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*. chs I and II

Week 3:

Tuesday May 31
What does it mean to be happy? In ethics, is overall happiness all that matters?

Required Reading: J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*. chs III, IV, V.

Thursday June 2
What’s wrong with utilitarianism?


Week 4:

First 5 in-class papers due: Monday June 6 (on topics covered between May 19 - June 2.)
Tuesday June 7
What’s wrong with deontology and consequentialism?


Thursday June 9
What is the right thing to do?


Week 5:

Tuesday June 14
What is the right thing to do?


Thursday June 16
Is access to abortion a moral right?


Week 6:

Tuesday June 21
Do animals, ecosystems, and future generations have rights?


Second batch of five four-sentence papers due: Thursday June 23 (on topics covered between June 7 – June 21).

Essay due Thursday June 23.

Self-assessment due Thursday June 23.
Further Readings

Some Readings on Normativity and Moral Reasons
- 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.
- 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.

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.
- Korsgaard, C. (1996), Creating the Kingdom of Ends, especially chs 1, 2.

Some Readings on Consequentialism
- Bentham, J. (1781), An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation (available online).
- Mill, J.S. (1861), Utilitarianism (various editions).
- Smart, J.J.C. and Williams, B. (1973), Utilitarianism: For and Against, Cambridge University Press.
• Nagel, T. (1986), The View from Nowhere, Oxford University Press, ch. 9.

Some Readings on Virtue Ethics and Moral Saints
• Crisp, R. & M. Slote (ed.), Virtue Ethics (OUP, 1997), especially:
  o Foot, P. ‘Virtues and Vices’
  o McDowell, J. ‘Virtue and Reason’
  o Anscombe, E. ‘Modern Moral Philosophy’
  (These articles are all reprints; you can find the original versions online.)
• Trianosky, G. (1990), ‘What is Virtue Ethics All About?’, American Philosophical Quarterly.
• Swanton, C. (2003), Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View, Oxford University Press, ch. 11

Some Readings on Moral Pluralism, Moral Particularism, and Care Ethics
• Dancy, J. (2004), Ethics without Principles. OUP.
Some Readings on Abortion, Reproduction, and Family


Some Readings on Rights

- Ingram, Attracta, A Political Theory of Rights.
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

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.
- 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.
- Situate your view in relation to the literature, if appropriate.

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.’
- 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.
• 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.
Essay Checklist / Self-assessment (due Thursday June 23)

The following are necessary but not sufficient conditions for an A-. In the editable version of this self-assessment, accessible on Canvas, write Yes or No next to each of these questions and answer the sub-questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Answer Yes or No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Does my paper have a thesis? (Do I have a central claim that I defend in my paper)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do I announce my thesis in my introduction (i.e. in the first couple of paragraphs)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do I outline in my introduction the steps I will take in my paper to defend my thesis?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. In my paper, do I consider possible objections to my thesis or my line of argument for it, e.g. “A critic of my view might say…”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Do I consider the strongest possible objections to my view that I can think of?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Do I answer these possible objections?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Can my own voice be heard? Is it clear where the thinkers I’m discussing stop and where my own views and arguments begin? Does my voice take centre stage as it should?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Have I consistently and accurately followed a standard referencing style, such as Chicago, Harvard, APA, etc.?</td>
<td>Name the style used:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Have I included a bibliography that follows a standard style and includes all and only the works I cite in my paper? Do I include an appropriate number of scholarly sources, e.g. 5-10 sources?</td>
<td>Name the style used:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Have I checked my grammar, spelling, quality of prose, structure, etc.? Is my prose clean, professional, and engaging?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Have I accurately summarized the readings I’m discussing?</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Write here a brief 150-word comment on whether you are satisfied with how you have met each of the criteria in your essay, and which areas you believe you may need to improve.

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1 The test is whether you can complete the sentence: "In this essay, I shall argue that…”