Introduction to Ethics PHIL 230

UBC’s Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəy̓əm (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.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Title, Time and Location</th>
<th>Course Code Number</th>
<th>Credit Value</th>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction to Ethics</td>
<td>PHIL 230A 002</td>
<td>3 credits</td>
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<td>Monday and Wednesday 7-10 pm</td>
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<td>Online</td>
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<tr>
<th>Course Instructor</th>
<th>Contact Details</th>
<th>Office Location</th>
<th>Office Hours</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Willow Verkerk</td>
<td><a href="mailto:willow.verkerk@ubc.ca">willow.verkerk@ubc.ca</a></td>
<td>BUCH E 158</td>
<td>4-5 pm, Tuesday and Thursday, online by appointment or in person</td>
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OTHER INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF

TBA

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 are also included to illustrate recent developments in ethical theory. Topics include the places of reason, emotion, culture, happiness, and care in ethics, friendship, and whether morality is relative 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 discussion. The schedule includes all of the readings which can be found online through the links provided and in the Library Online Course Reserves (LOCR).

ASSESSMENTS OF LEARNING

Take Home Exam 1 (500-600 words) 20% posted July 17; Due July 21
Take Home Exam 2 (750 words) 20% posted July 26; Due July 31
Final Essay (2000 words) 50% posted July 24, Due August 16
Participation 10%: There are three ways to receive participation marks. 1. Speak in class; 2. Come to see me during my office hours with a question or comment; 3. Submit a response to
one of the discussion questions in the Discussion section on Canvas. For each participation, you receive 2 marks so participate 5 times to receive 10/10. All assignments are submitted on Canvas.

SCHEDULE: MON, WED 1-4 PM

Wednesday July 5: Introducing the Three Traditions

Monday July 10: 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
AND
Simon Blackburn on Moral Relativism

Wednesday 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:
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/

Monday July 17: Mill on Utilitarianism
READ: John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism, pp. B-51 (first three chapters)
*Take Home Exam 1 posted July 17; Due July 21

Wednesday July 19: Utilitarianism and Arguments for Vegetarianism

Monday July 24: Kant and Deontological Ethics
Listen to following podcast:
BBC In Our Time: Kant’s Categorical Imperative
https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b0952zl3
*Final Essay topics posted July 24

**Wednesday July 26: Kant and Personhood in Black Radical Thought**


*Take Home Exam 2 posted July 26; Due July 31*

**Monday July 31: Aristotle’s Ethics and Aristotle on Virtue and Vice**

Listen to the following podcast on Aristotle:

Terrance Irwin
http://philosophybites.libsyn.com/terence_irwin_on_aristotle_s_ethics

AND


Optional further listening:

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/

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

*Final Essay Topics and Essay Writing Guidelines posted July 31*

**Wednesday August 2: Aristotle on Friendship, Pleasure and Happiness**

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

*Final Essay due August 16*

**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.

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

The use of Chat GPT and similar online resources may fall under “cheating” in the UBC policy if students make unauthorized use of this tool in the creation of assignments or on exams (“use…of unauthorized means to complete an examination or coursework…including, but not limited to, …accessing websites or other online resources not specifically permitted by the instructor or examiner”).

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