

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 Monday and Wednesday 7-10 pm Online	PHIL 230A 002	3 credits

Course Instructor	Contact Details	Office Location	Office Hours
Dr. Willow Verkerk	willow.verkerk@ubc.ca	BUCH E 158	4-5 pm, Tuesday and Thursday, online by appointment or in person

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

<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>

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:

<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/>

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

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

Monday July 24: 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 and second sections in *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor, revised edition, Cambridge Press, 2012, hereafter GMM.

**Final Essay topics posted July 24*

Wednesday July 26: 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 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

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, 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.

Monday, August 7: BC Day- Holiday, no classes

Wed, August 9: The Ethics of Care and Closing Discussion

READ: 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.

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](#).

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

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