

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, Fri 4-5 pm TBA	PHIL 230 003 2025W2	3 credits

Course Instructor	Contact Details	Office Location	Office Hours
Dr. Willow Verkerk	willow.verkerk@ubc.ca	BUCH E 158	Mon, Wed 1-2 PM

#### 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 is 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 online 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) posted Jan 30; due Feb 2 before class at 4 pm.  
 Take Home Exam 2 (750 words) 20% posted March 6; due March 9 before class at 4 pm.  
 Final Essay (2000 words) 50% posted March 13; due April 10.  
 Participation self-assessment 10%: posted April 8; due April 12. Based on participation in class, online discussion, and/or office hours.  
 All assignments are submitted on Canvas.

#### SCHEDULE: MON, WED, FRI 4-5 PM

##### Jan 5: Introducing the Three Traditions

**Jan 7-9: Moral Relativism**

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

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

**Jan 12-16: Moral Relativism and Objectivism**

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/>

**Jan 19-23: Utilitarianism and Consequentialism**

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/>

**Jan 26-30: Mill on Utilitarianism**

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

*\*Take Home Exam 1 posted Jan 30; due Feb 2 before class at 4 pm\**

**Feb 2-6: Utilitarianism and Arguments for Vegetarianism**

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

**Feb 9-13: Kant and Deontological Ethics**

Listen to the 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.

**February 16-20: Family Day and Midterm Break**

**Feb 23-27: Kant and the Metaphysics of Morals**

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

**March 2-6: 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.

*\*March 6: Take Home Exam posted; Due March 9 before class at 4 pm\**

**March 9-13: Aristotle's Ethics**

Listen to the following podcast on Aristotle:

Terrance Irwin

[http://philosophybites.libsyn.com/terence\\_irwin\\_on\\_aristotle\\_s\\_ethics](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, 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/>

*March 13: \*Final Essay Topics, Essay Checklist, and Essay Writing Guidelines Posted (see Modules)\**

**March 16-20- Aristotle on Virtue and Vice and Friendship**

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

AND NE Book VIII, Book IX and Book X sections 1-8.

**March 30: Aristotle and Nietzsche on Friendship**

**READ:** NE Book VIII, Book IX, and Book X sections 1-8 AND Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* s. 14 and "On the Friend" in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

**April 1: Discussion and Essay Preparation Day****April 3 and 6: Holidays- Good Friday and Easter Monday****April 8: The Ethics of Care**

**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.

**April 10: Closing Discussion:** Which kind of ethical theory do you support?

*\*April 10: Final Essay due\**

#### LEARNING OUTCOMES

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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, and writings on moral relativism and moral objectivism, in both historical and contemporary formulations.

#### UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND SUPPORT

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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 is considered “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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