

**Phil 230, Introduction to Moral Theory**  
**Term 1 2025-26**  
**M, W, 11-noon + F discussion section**

Instructor	TA
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**Required Learning Materials**

The Fundamentals of Ethics, 6<sup>th</sup> edition, Russ Shafer-Landau (required, at the bookstore)  
A few required articles (listed in the schedule below) will also be available through LOCR.

**Course Description and Aims**

This is a survey course in moral theory. We will consider what things are valuable and worth desiring, which actions are right and which ones wrong, what it is to live a good life, and related questions about what to do, what to value, and who to be. The dominant ethical theories offer very diverse answers to these questions, ranging from the claim that you should do whatever your culture's norms tell you to do, to the claim that there are universal moral norms that you would be irrational to violate.

The aim in this course is not only to familiarize you with some of the most profound questions one can ask, and the most thoughtful attempts to answer those questions, but also to hone your thinking and writing skills. I want you to think clearly, avoid confusion, pick apart bad arguments, and build good arguments.

**Learning Outcomes**

After completing this course, students will

- have a broad appreciation of the questions and concerns surrounding ethics, including what make life good and worth living, and how we should treat one another.
- be able to explain philosophical texts and positions accurately, to identify and apply philosophical research methods consistently, to articulate and defend precise philosophical positions, and to anticipate and rebut objections to those positions.
- Acquire the content, synthesize it, summarize it, analyze it, criticize it, and communicate it.

**Learning Expectations**

Students are expected to do the readings in advance, attend class, stay focused and undistracted during the lecture portions of the class, and to actively participate in classroom discussions. Students are also required to submit all assignments on time.

**Piazza**

This term we will be using Piazza for class discussion. The system is highly catered to getting you

help fast and efficiently from classmates, the TA, and the instructor. Rather than emailing questions to the teaching staff, I encourage you to post your questions on Piazza. If you have any problems or feedback for the developers, email [team@piazza.com](mailto:team@piazza.com).

Find our class signup link at:

### Assessments of Learning

Your final mark will be determined by

- 1) Four multiple choice quizzes (15%)
  - 2) Miss no more than one discussion section meeting (10%); in the alternative, miss no more than two discussion section meetings (5%).
  - 3) Midterm exam (30%)
  - 4) Final exam (45%)
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- 1) Four multiple choice quizzes. You will be given four multiple-choice quizzes throughout the term to ensure that you are keeping up with the lectures and the reading. The quizzes will be administered via Canvas on the specific dates, and may be taken at home within a 24 hour window. The quizzes are open-book. However, they are timed, so you will not have time to look up much material while you are taking the quiz.
  - 2) Discussion section attendance. You are expected to attend lectures and discussion sections. Excused absences do not count as attendance. Instead, there is a makeup assignment if you wish to recover at least some of these points. The makeup assignment is to take a one hour oral exam on the course material at the end of the term. Details to be discussed with the instructor.
  - 3) Midterm exam. This will be a closed-note, in-class exam, requiring short-essay style answers. I will distribute practice questions ahead of time.
  - 4) Final exam. This will be a closed-note, in-class exam, requiring short-essay style answers. I will distribute practice questions ahead of time.

I will not accept late work except with a valid excuse from Arts Advising. Any request to re-grade work must be submitted in writing, detailing reasons for awarding a higher grade and indicating the new grade being requested.

Relationship between percentages and letter grades:

90-100% A+	85-89% A	80-84% A-
76-79% B+	72-75% B	68-71% B-
64-67% C+	60-63% C	55-59% C-
50-54% D	0-49% F	

A Range: Exceptional Performance. Mastery of the subject matter; strong evidence of original thinking; good organization in written work; impressive capacity to analyze; insightful

critical evaluations.

B Range: Competent Performance. Evidence of grasp of subject matter; some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues.

C Range: Adequate Performance. Understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material; acceptable but uninspired work; not seriously faulty but lacking style and vigour.

D Range: Problematic Performance. Some incomplete understanding of the subject matter; limited evidence of critical and analytical skills; lack of original thinking.

F Range: Inadequate Performance. Little or no evidence of understanding of the subject matter; little or no evidence of critical and analytical skills; limited or irrelevant use of the literature.

### **Electronic Devices in the Class**

I allow the use of computers and electronic devices but only to take notes and access class-related material. Above all, do not use your electronic devices in ways that might disturb other students. If you, as a student, are disturbed by another's use of electronic devices, please let me know. Violation of this policy can lead me to revise it.

### **University Policies**

#### **Academic Concession**

[UBC's academic concession policy](#) "articulates the University's commitment to support students in their academic pursuits through the application of academic concessions in the event that students experience unanticipated events or circumstances that interfere with their ability to accomplish academic work." An academic concession may be granted for a student when an unexpected situation or circumstance prevents them from completing graded work or exams.

Students may request an academic concession for the following three reasons:

- Unanticipated changes in personal responsibilities that create a conflict
- Medical circumstances
- Compassionate grounds

If students have a disability or ongoing medical condition that affects their studies for more than one term, they may request an [academic accommodation](#).

Requests should be made as early as reasonably possible. Normally, the academic advising office will manage student's request.

#### **Academic Integrity**

The academic enterprise is founded on honesty, civility, and integrity. As members of this enterprise, all students are expected to know, understand, and follow the codes of conduct regarding academic integrity. At the most basic level, this means submitting only original work done by you and acknowledging all sources of information or ideas and attributing them to others as required. This also means you should not cheat, copy, or mislead others about what is your work. Violations of academic integrity (i.e., misconduct) lead to the breakdown of the academic enterprise, and therefore serious consequences arise and harsh sanctions are imposed. For

example, incidences of plagiarism or cheating may result in a mark of zero on the assignment or exam and more serious consequences may apply if the matter is referred to the President's Advisory Committee on Student Discipline. Careful records are kept in order to monitor and prevent recurrences. A more detailed description of academic integrity, including the University's policies and procedures, may be found under [Discipline for Academic Misconduct](#) in the Academic Calendar.

### Resources to Support Student Success

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: <https://senate.ubc.ca/policies-resources-support-student-success>

### Learning Resources

Some learning resources are available on the Canvas website, such as links to helpful information about writing philosophy papers. I also want to bring your attention to the Philosophy Essay Clinic: <https://philosophy.ubc.ca/undergraduate/philosophy-essay-clinic/>

### Copyright

All materials of this course (any handouts, lecture slides, assessments, course readings, etc.) are the intellectual property of the Course Instructor or licensed to be used in this course by the copyright owner. Redistribution of these materials by any means without permission of the copyright holder(s) constitutes a breach of copyright and may lead to academic discipline. Note: recording of the course is not permitted.

### Reading Schedule

Please do the assigned readings before class and come prepared to discuss them. **The schedule is subject to change.**

Week	Week day	Date	Topic	Readings/Assignments
1	Wednesday	03-Sep-25	Intro to Course	
	Friday	05-Sep-25	No Discussion section	
2	Monday	08-	The Good	S-L, Ch. 1

	ay	Sep-25	Life	
	Wednesday	10-Sep-25	The Good Life	Parfit, "What Makes Someone's Life Go Best", in <u>Reasons and Persons (1984)</u> , Appendix I, pp. 493-501
	Friday	12-Sep-25	Hedonism	Discussion: Nozick, "The Experience Machine", in <u>The Examined Life: Philosophical Meditations</u> (Simon & Schuster 1989) pp. 99-117.
3	Monday	15-Sep-25	Hedonism	S-L, Ch. 2; Mill, "Hedonism", In Russ Shafer-Landau (ed.), <u>The Ethical Life: Fundamental Readings in Ethics and Moral Problems</u> . Oxford University Press. pp. 17-26 (2014)
	Wednesday	17-Sep-25	Desire Satisfaction Theory	S-L, Ch. 3
	Friday	19-Sep-25	Desire Satisfaction Theory	Discussion: Heathwood, "Fairing Well and Getting What You Want", In Russ Shafer-Landau (ed.), <u>The Ethical Life: Fundamental Readings in Ethics and Moral Problems</u> . Oxford University Press. pp. 31-42 (2014)
4	Monday	22-Sep-25	Objective List Theory	S-L, Ch. 4
	Wednesday	24-Sep-25	Objective List Theory	Wolf, "Happiness and Meaning: Two Aspects of the Good Life", <u>Social Philosophy and Policy</u> . 1997; 14(1): 207-225. doi:10.1017/S0265052500001734
<b>Multiple Choice Canvas Quiz</b>				
	Friday	26-Sep-25	Relativism and Objectivity	Discussion: moral relativism vs moral objectivism

5	Monday	29-Sep-25	Relativism and Objectivity	S-L, Ch. 19; Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism", In Steven M. Cahn (ed.), Exploring ethics: an introductory anthology. Oxford University Press (2009)
	Wednesday	01-Oct-25	Relativism and Objectivity	S-L, Ch. 21
	Friday	03-Oct-25	Relativism and Objectivity	Discussion
6	Monday	06-Oct-25	Morality and Religion	S-L, Ch. 5
	Wednesday	08-Oct-25	Egoism	S-L, Ch. 7, S-L, Ch. 8
	Friday	10-Oct-25	Egoism	Discussion: Egoism
<b>Multiple Choice Canvas Quiz</b>				
7	Monday	13-Oct-25	<b>No class, Thanksgiving</b>	
	Wednesday	15-Oct-25	<b>In Class midterm exam</b>	

	Friday	17-Oct-25	<b>No class</b>	
8	Monday	20-Oct-25	Consequentialism	S-L Ch. 9
	Wednesday	22-Oct-25	Consequentialism	S-L Ch. 10
	Friday	24-Oct-25	Consequentialism	Discussion: Williams, "Consequentialism and Integrity", Consequentialism and Its Critics (1988): 20-50.
9	Monday	27-Oct-25	Consequentialism	Hooker, "Rule-Consequentialism", in The Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory (ed. Hugh LaFollette, Ingman Persson (2013): 238-260
	Wednesday	29-Oct-25	Consequentialism	Singer, "Famine, Affluence and Morality", Applied Ethics. Routledge, 2017. 132-142.
	Friday	31-Oct-25	Consequentialism	Discussion
<b>Multiple Choice Canvas Quiz</b>				
10	Monday	03-Nov-25	Natural Law Theory	S-L, Ch. 6
	Wednesday	05-Nov-25	Deontology/Pluralism	S-L, Ch. 15
	Friday	07-Nov-25	Deontology/Pluralism	Discussion: Thomson, "The Trolley Problem", <a href="https://openyls.law.yale.edu/bitstream/handle/20.500.13051/16338/56_94YaleLJ1395_1984_1985_.pdf?sequence=2">https://openyls.law.yale.edu/bitstream/handle/20.500.13051/16338/56_94YaleLJ1395_1984_1985_.pdf?sequence=2</a>
11	Monday	10-Nov-25	<b>Midterm Break, no class</b>	
	Wednesday	12-Nov-25	<b>Midterm Break, no class</b>	
	Friday	14-Nov-25	<b>No class</b>	
12	Monday	17-Nov-25	Deontology/Pluralism	Quinn, "Actions, Intentions, and Consequences: The Doctrine of Double Effect", Philosophy & Public Affairs (1989): 334-351.

	Wedn esday	19- Nov- 25	Kantian Ethical Theory	S-L, Ch. 11
	Frida y	21- Nov- 25	Kantian Ethical Theory	Discussion
13	Mond ay	24- Nov- 25	Kantian Ethical Theory	S-L, Ch. 12
	Wedn esday	26- Nov- 25	Kantian Ethical Theory	Kant, "The Good Will and the Categorical Imperative", In Russ Shafer-Landau (ed.), The Ethical Life: Fundamental Readings in Ethics and Moral Problems. Oxford University Press. pp. 102-114 (2014)
	Frida y	28- Nov- 25	The Social Contract Tradition	S-L, Ch. 13; S-L, Ch. 14
14	Mond ay	01- Dec- 25	The Social Contract Tradition	Gauthier, "Morality and Advantage", The Philosophical Review, vol. 76, no. 4, 1967, pp. 460–75. JSTOR, <a href="https://doi.org/10.2307/2183283">https://doi.org/10.2307/2183283</a> .
	Wedn esday	03- Dec- 25	Virtue Ethics	S-L, Ch. 17
	Frida y	05- Dec- 25	Virtue Ethics	Aristotle, selection from Nichomachean Ethics, In Russ Shafer-Landau (ed.), The Ethical Life: Fundamental Readings in Ethics and Moral Problems. Oxford University Press. pp. 138-49 (2014)
	<b>Multiple Choice Canvas Quiz</b>			
		TBD	<b>Final Exam</b>	