

## PHIL 232: Moral Problems of Contemporary Society



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Office Hours: Immediately following class on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays

**DRAFT**  
**Not the official**  
**course outline**

### Course Description

Philosophers are known for making, in the words of William James, "an unusually obstinate effort to think clearly." In this course we will take a philosophical approach to a variety of controversial and sometimes emotionally charged moral issues facing us today. Topics we will address include the treatment of non-human animals, genetic engineering, abortion, our handling of the environment, sex work, and our response to human starvation and suffering. As we approach each of these issues, we will consider what various philosophers have said makes an act right or wrong and see whether their theories help us in solving moral problems. We will make a determined effort to develop well-reasoned positions on these issues, articulating and evaluating arguments on both sides of the debates. In short, we will be thinking in a philosophical way about how we should live our lives.

### Texts

You'll need this book: Daniel DeNicola. **Moral Philosophy: A Contemporary Introduction**. Broadview Press. 2018. You can buy a digital copy direct from Broadview Press [here](#). It's also available as a paperback through the UVic Bookstore.

All of the other readings for this course will be available through the **Brightspace** page. To access the page, go to [bright.uvic.ca](http://bright.uvic.ca) and log in with your regular network ID. Please let me know right away if you have any difficulty accessing the readings.

### Course Requirements

(See schedule below for dates.)

Five Quizzes 6% each  
Panel Discussion 15%

First Paper 25%  
Second Paper 30%

**The papers** will be opportunities for you to develop and defend a position on one of the issues we have been discussing in class. The first paper will be 1300 words maximum. The second will be 1500 words maximum. Due dates for the papers can be found on the schedule below. Detailed instructions for the papers are available on Brightspace.

#### Help with Papers

We will discuss how to approach the paper assignment in class on May 19. Advice about how to write a philosophy paper is available now on the Brightspace page. Prior to the due dates for both papers ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~, the teaching assistant for the course, and I will have additional office hours to help you with your papers. It is wise to start work on your paper early enough to take advantage of this extra help.

#### Late Papers

If you have a legitimate reason for submitting your paper late, please notify me immediately. Unexcused lateness will result in a 5% reduction in the grade for that assignment each day. No essay will be accepted for grading after **June 12** unless academic concession has been granted. For policies concerning academic concession see <https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/future/undergrad/index.php#/policy/HJjAxiGO4?bc=true&bcCurrent=11%20-%20Academic%20Concessions&bcltemType=policies>.

#### Academic Integrity

Please familiarize yourself with the University Policy on Academic Integrity. It will be enforced in this course. You can find it online in the UVIC Calendar at Help with proper citation for your papers is available through the CourseSpaces page. [https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/future/undergrad/index.php#/policy/Sk\\_0xsM\\_V?bc=true&bcCurrent=08%20-%20Policy%20on%20Academic%20Integrity&bcltemType=policies](https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/future/undergrad/index.php#/policy/Sk_0xsM_V?bc=true&bcCurrent=08%20-%20Policy%20on%20Academic%20Integrity&bcltemType=policies)

**Please Note: Anyone who does not write both of the two assigned papers will receive a grade of N for the course.**

**The quizzes** will be online quizzes given on Brightspace. The first quiz will be done as a group project in class. On all the later quiz days class will end early, giving you an opportunity to do the quiz during the scheduled class time. If you prefer, you can do the quiz later that day. You'll have until 8pm to complete each quiz. All of the quizzes other than quiz one are timed, so once you open the quiz a timer will start and you will not be able to reopen the quiz once you close it.

All of the quizzes are open-book and open-notes, but only the first quiz is a group project. All the other quizzes you must complete on your own.

If you miss a quiz due to illness or accident, contact me immediately to schedule a make-up.

**The panel discussions** will be group presentations applying ethical theories to a particular topic and leading class discussion of that topic. You'll sign up for a topic on Wednesday, May 17. Details about the assignment are available on Brightspace.

**Grading**

Grades for the course will be assigned using the UVIC Undergraduate Grading Scale:

Percentage	Grade
90 - 100	A+
85 - 89	A
80 - 84	A-
77 - 79	B+
73 - 76	B
70 - 72	B-
65 - 69	C+
60 - 64	C
50 - 59	D
Below 50	N or F

A+, A, or A- is earned by work which is technically **superior**, shows mastery of the subject matter, and in the case of an A+ offers original insight and/or goes beyond course expectations.

B+, B, or B- is earned by work that indicates **good** comprehension of the course material, good command of the skills needed to work with it, and full engagement with the course requirements and activities. A B+ represents a more complex understanding and/or application.

C+ or C is earned by work that indicates an **adequate** comprehension of the course material and the skills needed to work with the course material and that indicates the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and/or participating in class activities.

D is earned by work that indicates **minimal** command of the course materials and/or minimal participation in class activities that is worthy of course credit toward the degree.

N indicates that the course requirements were not completed.

**Equity**

Uvic is committed to promoting, providing and protecting a positive, supportive and safe learning and working environment for all its members. Information about Uvic policies on human rights, equity, discrimination and harassment are available at <https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/future/undergrad/index.php#/policy/HkQ0pzdAN>. If you have any particular concerns about equity in our course please don't hesitate to contact me.

**Religious Accommodation**

Information regarding accommodation of religious observance can be located in the UVIC Calendar at <https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/future/undergrad/index.php#/policy/r1q0gofdN?bc=true&bcCurrent=10%20-%20Accommodation%20of%20Religious%20Observance&bcGroup=Undergraduate%20Academic%20Regulations&bcItemType=policies>

**Territory Acknowledgement**

The University of Victoria acknowledges with respect the Lekwungen-speaking peoples on whose traditional territory the University of Victoria stands, and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day

**Course Schedule**

Please note that this schedule is tentative.

Any changes to the schedule will be announced in class and posted on Brightspace.

All of the readings not in DeNicola's book can be found through Brightspace.

Also on Brightspace you'll find information about which sections to focus on in some of the longer readings.

M 5/15	Singer <i>All Animals are Equal . . .</i>	
T 5/16	DeNicola Chapter Six: <i>Utilitarianism</i>	
W 5/17	DeNicola Chapter Seven: <i>Kantianism</i> Steinbock <i>Speciesism and the Idea of Equality</i>	SIGN UP FOR A PRESENTATION TOPIC TODAY
TH 5/18	Regan <i>The Case for Animal Rights</i> Varner <i>The Prospects for Consensus and Convergence in the Animal Rights Debate</i>	Quiz 1 In Class
F 5/19	DeNicola Chapter Nine: <i>Virtue Ethics</i> Driver <i>Individual Consumption and Moral Complicity</i>	INITIAL GROUP MEETING in CLASS TODAY

M 5/22	— Victoria Day No Class Meeting —	
T 5/23	The Philosophers' Magazine <i>Would You Eat Your Cat?</i> Nussbaum <i>Discussing Disgust</i>	Quiz 2 open 11:50 am - 8 pm
W 5/24	Sandel <i>The Case Against Perfection: What's Wrong with Designer Children, Bionic Athletes, and Genetic Engineering</i> Kamm <i>What Is and Is Not Wrong with Enhancement</i>	Panel on Genetic Engineering
TH 5/25	Jaggar <i>Contemporary Western Feminist Perspectives on Prostitution</i> Nussbaum <i>Whether from Reason or Prejudice</i> Klepper <i>Sexual Exploitation and the Value of Persons</i>	Panel on Sex Work
F 5/26	—Paper Help Day— No Class Meeting Karen and xxxxx will be available to help you 10:00 am - 11:30 am and 3:00 pm - 4:30 pm	Quiz 3 open 11:50 am - 8 pm

M 5/29	Singer <i>Famine, Affluence and Morality</i> Igneski <i>Defending Limits on the Sacrifices We Ought to Make for Others</i>	Panel on Humanitarian Aid
T 5/30	LaFollette <i>Licensing Parents</i> Thomson <i>A Defense of Abortion</i>	<b>First Paper Due at 8 p.m.</b>
W 5/31	Warren <i>On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion</i> Marquis <i>Why Abortion is Immoral</i>	Panel on Abortion
TH 6/1	Dworkin <i>Life's Dominion</i> Little <i>Abortion, Intimacy, and the Duty to Gestate</i>	
F 6/2	Plato from <b>Republic</b> , Book II Gardiner <i>A Perfect Moral Storm: Climate Change, Intergenerational Ethics and the Problem of Moral Corruption.</i>	<b>Quiz 4 open 11:50 am - 8 pm</b>

M 6/5	DesJardins <i>Biocentric Ethics and the Inherent Value of Life</i> Rogers <i>The Nature of Value and the Value of Nature</i> Ben Bradley <i>The Value of Endangered Species</i>	Panel on Environment
T 6/6	Robert Elliot <i>Faking Nature</i> Nyberg <i>Deception and Moral Decency</i> MacKenzie and Bhatt <i>Opposing the Power of Lies, Bullshit and Fake News</i>	
W 6/7	<p align="center"><b>—Paper Help Day—</b> No Class Meeting Karen and xxxx will be available to help you 10:00 am - 11:30 am and 3:00 pm - 4:30 pm</p> <p align="center"><b>Last Day of the Course</b></p>	<b>Quiz 5 open 11:50 am - 8 pm</b>
TH 6/8		<b>Second Paper Due at 8 p.m.</b>