Phil 232 Moral Problems of Contemporary Society
Fall 2024

Instructor:  Peter Dietsch, PhD
Lectures:  MR 11:30-12:50
Office hours:  tbd
Email:  pdietsch@uvic.ca

Course description
We will discuss ethical issues facing contemporary societies. Specifically, the course will touch on ethical questions regarding education, health, race relations, climate change, borders, natural resources, assisted dying, human enhancement, corporations, tax justice, money, and private debt markets. Students from all faculties are welcome.

Course Website
Online materials will be made available via Uvic Brightspace. Access your customized Brightspace page by signing in to Uvic and clicking on Online Tools. You should see Brightspace as an option.

Texts
Core readings will be available as a course pack for sale at the UVic Bookstore.

Grading System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Grade Point</th>
<th>Grade Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90 – 100</td>
<td>A+</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>An 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. Normally achieved by a minority of students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 – 89</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>A+ or A is earned by work that indicates a good comprehension of the course material, a good command of the skills needed to work with the course material, and the student’s full engagement with the course requirements and activities. A B+ represents a more complex understanding and/or application of the course material. Normally achieved by the largest number of students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 – 84</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>A B+ or B is earned by work that indicates a good comprehension of the course material and the skills needed to work with the course material, and that the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and/or participating in class activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77 – 79</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>A C+ or C is earned by work that indicates an adequate comprehension of the course material and that indicates the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and/or participating in class activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73 – 76</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>A 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 – 72</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>A F is earned by work which after the completion of course requirements, is inadequate and unworthy of course credit towards the degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 – 69</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>A F is earned by work which after the completion of course requirements, is inadequate and unworthy of course credit towards the degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 – 64</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>A F is earned by work which after the completion of course requirements, is inadequate and unworthy of course credit towards the degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 – 59</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>A F is earned by work which after the completion of course requirements, is inadequate and unworthy of course credit towards the degree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 – 49</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>A F is earned by work which after the completion of course requirements, is inadequate and unworthy of course credit towards the degree.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interpretation of these grade definitions is up to the discretion of the instructor. If you receive a grade during the course that you believe is unfair, please begin by discussing the matter with the TA in a respectful, open-minded manner. If you are still not satisfied with your grade, you can ask for a re-correction of the copy by the instructor. The new grade will count, whether it is higher or lower than the original one.
For additional information regarding undergraduate grades, please consult the Grading section of the Uvic Undergraduate Calendar.

All evaluations of tests and assignments will be calculated according to percentage scores. Letter grades and grade point scores are listed purely for reference. Final examinations are the property of Uvic and are not returned. They are available for viewing at the Records Office according to Uvic Examinations procedures and regulations.

Uvic is committed to providing a safe, supportive learning environment for all members. Further information regarding Uvic policies on human rights, equity, discrimination and harassment are located in the Uvic calendar General University Policies, but if you have any particular concerns related to our course please do not hesitate to contact me.

**Graded student activities**
- Mid-term exam* on October 10 (30%)
- 1500-word essay (30%) due on November 14
  [5 percentage points penalty for each 100-word increment over 1500 words, excluding footnotes and bibliography – *everything* else counts; e.g. 1507 words => 5 percentage points penalty; 1623 words => 10 p.p. penalty]
- 2-hour final exam* (30%)
- Weekly summaries of readings (400 words; 10 weeks out of 12; 10%)

* Exams missed for ineligible reasons will not be rescheduled. Deferred exams will have a more limited choice of questions.

**Policy on Late Assignments**
5% per working day will be subtracted from grade unless students are delayed by illness or family emergency.

**Plagiarism**
Review the University Policy on Academic Integrity very carefully, and be aware that anti-plagiarism software may be used in this course. Resources will be provided via Brightspace for students seeking guidance about what constitutes plagiarism and how they can avoid it, but it is the responsibility of each student to be informed about these details.

**Counseling Services**
Many, if not most, students experience some difficulties with their mental health during their years as undergraduate students. Make sure you are familiar with Uvic Counseling Services, which is an excellent resource you have at your disposal on campus. It is hard to shake the stigma associated with problems like depression and anxiety, but if at any point you can benefit from help with mental health issues, please contact Counseling Services. They genuinely want to help, and why not take advantage of this free resource?

**Important Dates**
Please consult the Uvic calendar’s Academic Year Important Dates for information about last possible dates to withdraw from courses without penalty, examinations period start/end dates, etc.
Technology in Classroom
Some students require laptops or voice recognition apps for their learning strategies, so I do not prohibit their use in the classroom. However, studies demonstrate that multi-tasking reduces the performance of other nearby students. Therefore, I strongly discourage the use of computers in the classroom. Anyone caught on social media, internet surfing, etc. will be asked to leave and potentially subject to disciplinary action. Chat GPT is not permitted for this course.

Uvic Sexualized Violence Prevention and Response
Learn more about preventing sexualized violence by visiting www.uvic.ca/svp. If you or someone you know has been impacted by sexualized violence and needs advice, and/or support, please contact the Sexualized Violence Resource Office in EQHR, Sedgewick C119; email: svpcoordinator@uvic.ca.

Territory Acknowledgment
The University of Victoria is committed to acknowledging and respecting the Lekwungen peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands, and the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱ SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day. For information about support for indigenous students and efforts to foster reconciliation, visit the Uvic Office of Indigenous Academic & Community Engagement.

Detailed course plan
Week 1 (Sept 5): introduction
Complementary literature

Week 2 (Sept 9 and 12): Equal opportunity in education
Compulsory reading

Complementary literature

Week 3 (Sept 16 and 19): The allocation of health resources
Compulsory reading
Complementary literature

Week 4 (Sept 23 and 26): Segregation and social inequality
Compulsory reading

Complementary literature

Week 5 (Oct 3 and 7): The ethics of climate change
Compulsory reading

Complementary literature
- Peter A. Victor, Managing Without Growth, 2nd edition, Edward Elgar, 2019, especially chapters 1 and 2.

Oct 10: mid-term exam

Week 6 (Oct 17 and 21): Borders
Compulsory reading

Complementary literature

Week 7 (Oct 24 and 28): Natural resources
Compulsory reading
Complementary literature

Week 8 (Oct 31 and Nov 4): Assisted Dying

Compulsory reading

Complementary literature

Week 9 (Nov 7 and 14): Human enhancement

Compulsory reading

Complementary literature

Week 10 (Nov 18 and 21): Tax justice

Compulsory reading

Complementary literature
Week 11 (Nov 25 and 28): Normative dimensions of money

Compulsory reading
- Robert Hockett and Aaron James, *Money from Nothing. Or, why we should learn to stop worrying about debt and love the Federal Reserve*. Brooklyn/London: Melville House, 2020, chapters 2 and 3.

Complementary literature

Week 12 (Dec 1): The ethics of artificial intelligence

Compulsory reading

Complementary literature
- Martin Gibert, “The case for virtuous robots”, *AI and Ethics* (2022), [https://doi.org/10.1007/s43681-022-00185-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/s43681-022-00185-1).