

PHIL 335

Contemporary Moral Philosophy



Instructor: Karen Brown
E-mail: klbrown@uvic.ca
Office: Clearihue B314
Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:30–3:00 and by appointment

Course Description

In this course we will attempt to develop a solid understanding of four of the competing normative ethical theories in Western philosophy: contractarianism, Kantian ethics, consequentialism and contractualism. We will begin with the classic texts in each tradition and move through contemporary attempts to explain, develop and critique these different conceptions of ethics. We will try to understand the intuitions and problems that motivate these accounts, the reasoning that supports them and some of the issues they have yet to resolve. Throughout, we will be asking whether any of these theories help us to understand what makes an action right or wrong or help us to answer the pressing questions of what kind of people we should be and how we ought to live our lives.

Texts

All of the readings for the course will be available on-line through CourseSpaces.

To access the readings and other course information on CourseSpaces go to coursespaces.uvic.ca and log in with your regular network ID. If you have difficulty accessing CourseSpaces or if a link to a particular reading is malfunctioning, please let me know by email right away so that I can take care of the problem.

Course Work

Five Quote and Comment Assignments 5% each

These will be very short written responses to the reading assigned for the day they are due. Details are available on the CourseSpaces page. **Be sure to read that more detailed statement of the assignment.** Dates on which quote and comment assignments are due are marked with a **Q/C** on the schedule below. Where there is more than one reading for that day the reading in **green** is the one you should use for your quote and comment.

Missed Quote and Comments

If you miss a quote and comment assignment due to illness or accident, let me know right away and I will give you an *alternate assignment*.

Two Exams Exam One 30% and Exam Two 15%

The exams will be in-class exams covering material from the readings and class discussion. They will be a combination of short answer questions and essay questions. Review questions for the exams will be posted on the CourseSpaces page.

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Missed Exams

If you miss an exam you should contact me as soon as possible and we will schedule a make up exam.

One Essay 30%

The essay will be a maximum of 2500 words. I will give you a list of suggested essay topics, but you are very welcome to propose your own topic. If you intend to write on a topic of your own devising you need to submit your idea *for approval*. You must get your proposed topic to me in writing (email is fine) by the last day of classes. Further details about the essay assignment are available on the CourseSpaces page along with advice on how to write a philosophical essay.

Late Essays

After the Initial Cutoff (see the schedule below) you will have four additional days to get your essay in. Essays submitted after the initial cutoff and before the final cutoff will receive full credit but they will not receive any comments. After this grace period unexcused late essays will not be accepted without a successful application for academic concession. If you find that you cannot get your essay in by the final cutoff, you can find information about your options here: <https://www.uvic.ca/registrar/students/appeals/academic-concession/index.php>

Academic Integrity

The University Policy on Academic Integrity (covering plagiarism, multiple submission, unauthorized use of an editor, falsifying materials, cheating and aiding others to cheat) will be enforced in this course. You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with the policy. You can find it online in the UVIC Calendar at <https://web.uvic.ca/calendar2018-09/undergrad/info/regulations/academic-integrity.html#>

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.

Course Schedule

Please note that this schedule is tentative.

Any changes will be announced in class and posted on the CourseSpaces page.

All readings can be found through the CourseSpaces page.

W 9/5 Introduction

Contractarianism

F 9/7 Hobbes *Leviathan*, Part One, Chapter XIII

T 9/11 Hobbes *Leviathan*, Part One, Chapters XIV and XV

W 9/12,
F 9/14 Gauthier Why Contractarianism?

Q / C T 9/18 Held Feminist Transformations of Moral Theory

W 9/19 Baier Demoralization, Trust, and the Virtues

Kantian Ethics

F 9/21 Kant *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Preface

T 9/25 Kant *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, First Section

W 9/26 Baron Acting from Duty

F 9/28 Kant *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Second Section

Q / C T 10/2 Foot Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives

W 10/3 Herman Mutual Aid and Respect for Persons

F 10/5,
T 10/9 Korsgaard The Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing with Evil

W 10/10 Slote The Problem We All Have with Deontology

F 10/12 Kagan Kantianism for Consequentialists

That at which all things aim

Q / C T 10/16 Bentham from *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*
Kagan What's Wrong with Speciesism?
Singer Why Speciesism is Wrong: A Response to Kagan

W 10/17 Nussbaum Mill between Aristotle and Bentham
Nozick The Experience Machine

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F 10/19 Griffin Utilitarian Accounts: State of Mind or State of the World?
T 10/23,
W 10/24 MacIntyre The Nature of the Virtues

F 10/26 Exam One

Consequentialism

T 10/30,
W 10/31 Sidgwick from *The Methods of Ethics*

Q/C F 11/2 Parfit The Non-Identity Problem

T 11/6 Williams Consequentialism and Integrity

W 11/7 Railton Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality

F 11/9 Rawls Classical Utilitarianism

T 11/13,
W 11/14 **Reading Break** (no classes)

F 11/16 Budolfson The Inefficacy Objection to Consequentialism and the Problem with the Expected Consequences Response

Q/C T 11/20 Nefsky How You Can Help, without Making a Difference

W 11/21 Hooker Rule-Consequentialism

Contractualism

F 11/23 Rawls from *A Theory of Justice*

T 11/27 Scanlon Contractualism and Utilitarianism

W 11/28 Hampton Feminist Contractarianism

F 11/30 Radzik Justice in the Family: A Defence of Feminist Contractarianism

T 12/4 Conclusion

W 12/5 Exam Two

M 12/10 Essay Initial Cutoff – 5 p.m.

F 12/14 Essay Final Cutoff – 5 p.m.