

PHIL 337 A01
CRN# 22338

January – April 2018
TWF: 12:30pm – 1:20pm

Ethics: Theory and Practice

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Office Hours: Wednesday 2pm – 4pm

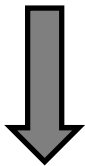
Course Description:

This course is an introduction to normative ethical theory and the respective strengths of competing ethical theories when they are put into practice. We will look at the four most prominent traditions in contemporary analytic philosophy: Utilitarianism, Social Contract Theory, Kantian Ethics and Virtue Ethics. In each case, we will study a major historical source of the tradition (i.e. J.S. Mill, Hobbes, Kant and Aristotle). We will then examine current articulations of the tradition as it is represented in the contemporary literature. By comparing the traditions and their practical applications to modern ethical issues, students should be able to develop a detailed understanding of how each of these traditions applies to difficult cases in practical ethics.

Texts: *Utilitarianism* by J.S. Mill
Leviathan by Thomas Hobbes
Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals by Immanuel Kant
Nicomachean Ethics by Aristotle
Selected Readings available via *CourseSpaces*

Note: If you can find used copies of alternate editions of the textbooks, you may do so in order to save money. However, this may not be worth the effort given that the editions I have chosen are reasonably-priced.

Requirements: (Optional) First Paper (10%)
Midterm Test (10% or 20%)
Term Paper (30%)
Quote & Comment Assignments (10%)
Final Exam (40%)



Note: Writing assignment due dates and midterm test dates are posted below in the weekly schedule. *You are responsible for knowing these dates.* Plan ahead, and manage your overall personal workload accordingly.

Grading System

| Percentage | Letter Grade | Grade Point | Grade Definition |
|------------|--------------|-------------|---|
| 90 – 100 | A+ | 9 | 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. |
| 85 – 89 | A | 8 | |
| 80 – 84 | A- | 7 | |
| 77 – 79 | B+ | 6 | A B+, B, or B- 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. |
| 73 – 76 | B | 5 | |
| 70 – 72 | B- | 4 | |
| 65 – 69 | C+ | 3 | A 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. |
| 60 – 64 | C | 2 | |
| 50 – 59 | D | 1 | 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. |
| 0 – 49 | F | 0 | F is earned by work, which after the completion of course requirements, is inadequate and unworthy of course credit towards the degree. |

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 instructor (or TA) in a respectful, open-minded manner. Rest assured that if you still believe the grade you received is unfair you can appeal the matter to the chair of the department.

For additional information regarding undergraduate grades, please consult pp. 49-52 of the *Uvic Undergraduate Calendar* (January 2018 Edition).

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 procedures and regulations (pp. 47-49 of the calendar).

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 (p. 13), but if you have any particular concerns in our course please do not hesitate to contact me.

Policy on Late Assignments: Late assignments will be accepted for five working days after the posted due date; however, late assignments *will not receive written comments*. After five working days documentation is required demonstrating sustained illness or family emergency.

Plagiarism: Review the *University Policy on Academic Integrity* (pp. 42-45) *carefully*, and be aware that anti-plagiarism software may be used in this course.

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, 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*, so anyone caught on social media, internet surfing, etc. will be asked to leave and potentially subject to disciplinary action.

Territory Acknowledgment

The University of Victoria is committed to acknowledging and respecting the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

A Note on Diversity:

You might notice that in this course our historical readings are 100% “dead white men”, and might wonder why we don’t read more women and non-European philosophers? It’s a fair question. Here are some initial answers:

1. This course introduces students to a thread of ethical theory that is grounded in work from Ancient Greece and European enlightenment thinking, but it should not be taken to be the *only* valuable thread in the history of philosophy. It is a thread best studied comprehensively as a linked narrative, but it is one among many.

2. I obviously believe this thread of philosophical thought is worth studying, but I also encourage students to take courses at Uvic that explore alternative perspectives. For example, courses in *Indigenous Studies* (IS 200A; Indigenous Studies Foundations) and *Gender Studies* (GNDR 330; Feminist Thought, Past and Present) would nicely complement our study of normative ethics in Western philosophy.
3. The fact that there are so few women and persons of colour on our reading list is *not* because they are less philosophically sophisticated than men! It is because Western civilization has a long history of gender discrimination, racism, and colonialism that excluded women and persons of colour from the formal study of philosophy.
4. There is still much work to be done to make philosophy fully inclusive for members of disadvantaged groups, but remember that (despite our reading list) there are many distinguished philosophers today who are women, persons of colour, members of the LGBTQ community and disabled persons. Students who identify with these groups can take inspiration from the fact that these contemporary role models exist.


If you have further concerns about diversity in our course or suggestions for how it may be more effectively promoted, please do not hesitate to contact me.


Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Note: *Dates listed are subject to change!* Regular class attendance is essential in order to stay informed about scheduling changes. Material is meant to be read *before* the class in which it is discussed. Contemporary readings listed by author are available online via *Coursespaces*. Be sure to access the online readings well in advance to avoid last-minute technical problems. Let me know if such problems arise.

Week Readings

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| Jan. 2 | No Class |
| Jan. 3 | First Meeting |
| Jan. 5 | James Griffin: <i>Utilitarian Accounts: State of Mind or State of the World?</i> |
| Jan. 9 | John Stuart Mill: <i>Utilitarianism</i> [chapter 2; pp. 30 – 41] |
| Jan. 10 | John Stuart Mill: <i>Utilitarianism</i> [chapter 4; pp. 56 – 62] |
| Jan. 12 | John Stuart Mill: <i>Utilitarianism</i> [chapter 2; pp. 41 – 49] |

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| Jan. 16 | Andrew Walton: <i>Consequentialism, Indirect Effects and Fair Trade</i> |
| Jan. 17 | Kevin Smith: <i>Against Homeopathy – A Utilitarian Perspective</i> |
| Jan. 19 | Mark T. Nelson: <i>What the Utilitarian Cannot Think</i> |
| Jan. 23 | John Stuart Mill: <i>Utilitarianism</i> [chapter 5; pp. 62 – 74] |
| Jan. 24 | John Stuart Mill: <i>Utilitarianism</i> [chapter 5; pp. 75 – 84] |
| Jan. 26  | Alastair Norcross: <i>Great Harms from Small Benefits Grow</i> *** (Optional) First Paper Due *** |
| Jan. 30 | Bernard Williams: <i>Utilitarianism: For and Against</i> |
| Jan. 31 | Review |
| Feb. 2 | *** Midterm Test *** |
| Feb. 6 | Thomas Hobbes: <i>Leviathan</i> [chapter 13; pp. 123 – 127] |
| Feb. 7 | Thomas Hobbes: <i>Leviathan</i> [chapter 14; pp. 128 – 138] |
| Feb. 9 | Thomas Hobbes: <i>Leviathan</i> [chapter 15; pp. 138 – 150] |
| Feb 12-16 | Reading Break – No Class |
| Feb. 20 | Susan Dimock: <i>Why All Feminists Should Be Contractarians</i> |
| Feb. 21 | Angus Taylor: <i>...The Illiberal Intuition that Animals don't Count</i> |
| Feb. 23 | Gregory S. Kavka: <i>When Two 'Wrongs' Make a Right</i> |
| Feb. 27 | Immanuel Kant: <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> [pp. 55 – 62] |
| Feb. 28 | Immanuel Kant: <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> [pp. 63 – 83] |
| Mar. 2 | Immanuel Kant: <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> [pp. 83 – 93] |

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| Mar. 6 | Todd Calder: <i>Kant and Degrees of Wrongness</i> |
| Mar. 7 | J. Skidmore: <i>Duties to Animals: The Failure of Kant's Moral Theory</i> |
| Mar. 9 | Sarah Carter: <i>A Kantian Ethics Approach to Moral Bioenhancement</i> |
| Mar. 13 | Philippa Foot: <i>The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of the Double Effect</i> |
| Mar. 14 | Judith Jarvis Thomson: <i>The Trolley Problem</i> |
| Mar. 16 | R. L. Albin: <i>Sham Surgery Controls are Mitigated Trolleys</i> |
| Mar. 20 | Aristotle: <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> [Book I; pp. 1 – 18] |
| Mar. 21 | Aristotle: <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> [Book II; pp. 18 – 30] |
| Mar. 23 | Aristotle: <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> [Book III; pp. 40 – 45] |
|  | *** Term Paper Due *** |
| Mar. 27 | Rosalind Hursthouse: <i>Virtue Theory and Abortion</i> , pp. 223 – 233 |
| Mar. 28 | Rosalind Hursthouse: <i>Virtue Theory and Abortion</i> , pp. 233 – 246 |
| Mar. 30 | Good Friday – No Class |
| April 3 | Charles E. Harris Jr.: <i>The Good Engineer: Giving Virtue its Due in Engineering Ethics</i> |
| April 4 | Julia Driver: <i>Virtue Theory</i> |
| April 6 | Review + “One Theory to Rule Them All” Class Debate |

Note: There will be a **Registrar Scheduled Exam in April**

WARNING: I do not control the date of this exam, and I do not have the power to change this date once it is scheduled by the Uvic Office of the Registrar. Therefore, *do not book travel during the exam schedule* until you know the dates of your exams.