

# PHIL 235: Ethics of Violence, War, and Terrorism

Instructor: Dr. Audrey Yap ([ayap@uvic.ca](mailto:ayap@uvic.ca))

Course Website: Through Brightspace. <http://bright.uvic.ca>

Required readings will be posted on Brightspace. (I find the "Content" tab to be the easiest way to navigate, so try that for our course site.)

Course videos will be captioned, and I will try to fix any errors in the automatic transcriptions, but please feel free to email me if you notice any remaining mistakes. If you notice any additional accessibility issues with respect to this class, please let me know and I will do my best to solve them. I would also encourage any students who might benefit from their services to register with the Centre for Accessible Learning (<https://www.uvic.ca/services/cal/>). If you notice any accessibility issues with respect to this class, please let me know and I will do my best to solve them.

## Course Description

Whether or not violence, war, and terrorism have had a direct impact on your life, they have certainly shaped the society in which we live. This course will consider several philosophical questions related to violence, and the people and institutions that are licensed (or not!) to kill and injure others. The arguments we consider will come from a variety of different philosophical and intellectual traditions, as well as different historical and cultural contexts. I expect that you will disagree with some of the things we read, and you might have emotional reactions to some of the readings as well. Both of those are natural philosophical responses to the fact that we will be reading difficult material that can have extremely personal consequences. Nevertheless, it can still be extremely important to understand and critically engage with arguments about which you may have strong feelings or disagreements. I will do my best to provide a basic idea of the issues that the different readings will deal with so that you can be prepared to engage with the content when you read it on your own. But I can't anticipate everything, so if you have any suggestions for me, or notice things that I have missed, please don't hesitate to let me know, so we can all learn better from each other.

## Course Logistics

This will be an *asynchronous* online course. This means that there are no particular times of day when you need to watch course videos, post in discussion forums, or complete your assigned work. There are still regular deadlines for completing that work, though, so I will still run the course with the expectation that you are keeping up from week to week. Lecture videos will be uploaded to Brightspace before the start of the week when the material is being covered.

## **Academic Integrity**

Everything you will be evaluated on in this course will be fully open book and untimed. You are welcome to talk about the course material as much as you like with anyone you like, but all answers to assignments have to be your own written work. This means that you are not allowed to provide answers for someone else, or vice versa. If you are ever unsure about what constitutes a violation of academic integrity, more information is provided on the University Calendar: <http://web.uvic.ca/calendar/undergrad/info/regulations/academic-integrity.html>.

## **Communication and Office Hours**

Email is my preferred method of communication, as opposed to Brightspace messages or forum posts, especially for any official requests. If you ask me a question over email, you can expect a reply within about 1 working day. If you don't hear back from me within that time frame, feel free to try again in case your message went astray. When you do address me (over email or otherwise), please do so as either Professor (Prof.) Yap, Dr. Yap, or just as Audrey. Please don't use any of Mrs/Miss/Ms/Mr, for a variety of reasons. If you are ever nervous about sending me an email, or asking a question, feel free to include a picture of a puppy with your request. This will not affect whether or not I will be able to help you with your request, but will give you an excuse to look for pictures of puppies. Finally, my pronouns are she/hers. If you think I am unlikely to know the name you would prefer to be called, or the pronouns I ought to use for you, through the entry that I will see for you through your Brightspace/UVic registration, please don't hesitate to make me aware. I will also set up a Discord server for this course, which is completely optional for you, but they tend to provide a venue for less formal conversations, which you might find beneficial. You can join using this invite link: <https://discord.gg/fEs8gSF7Q3>

My default platform for office hours will be Zoom, Tuesdays and Fridays 10:30-11:20 am, but if that does not work for you, please feel free to email me in advance to suggest an alternative time and/or platform. Tuesday office hours will require pre-booking using this link: <https://calendly.com/ayap/office> and are good for any more individual requests or conversations you want to have. Friday office hours will be informal drop-in sessions, and you're welcome just to stop in to say hi. All relevant links will be posted on Brightspace.

## **Evaluation**

There are two main skills that we will be practicing in this course:

- Understanding and explaining philosophical arguments.
- Contributing to philosophical discussion.

Everything you will be evaluated on will be related to one or both of these skills. There will be two types of work that will contribute directly towards a grade. First, you will contribute to structured class discussion each week in the Brightspace forums. There will

be guidelines for each short post and the best 10 out of 12 will be counted, for a total of 20%. That means each post will be worth 2% of your final grade. However, since these are discussion-based contributions, there will be no late posts or extensions, since the point of the exercise is to engage with others who are also working through the material.

Every other week, there will be a short writing assignment, worth 16% of your grade, for a total of 5 assignments (80% total). Each assignment will consist of prompts about the recent course material, and will ask you to explain or assess an idea or argument that was covered in the readings and lectures. It might also ask you about example philosophical discussions. You are welcome to two days' worth of extensions during the course. This means you can take two extra days to complete a single assignment, or have one extra day on two different assignments. Please let me know before the due date if you are using an extension. You do not need to tell me why you need the extension or provide me with any documentation for it. Please note that, in accordance with our current university regulations, you do not need to provide a medical note anyway if you are sick. However, if you do find yourself needing more than two days worth of extensions, you will need to have a brief discussion with me about how we might best plan for your completing the work. Conditional on that, your work will be accepted with no penalty.

All of your work—both discussion contributions and questions on your writing assignments—will be graded out of 4 marks, in accordance with the following rubric. Specific expectations will be provided for each assignment, but what this rubric means is that if you do all of the required work such that it meets the expectations set out in the assignment criteria, then you can expect to get a B (75%) in the class overall, which corresponds to a good performance by the UVic grading scales.

- E Exceeds expectations (4 points—100%). Work that exceeds expectations demonstrates mastery of the course material and meets or exceeds the assignment requirements. It has no non-trivial mistakes, and is both clear and thorough. It could be used as an example for teaching purposes.
- M Meets expectations (3 points—75%). Work that meets expectations demonstrates a basically correct understanding of the course material and assignment requirements. There might be some revision, clarification, or expansion required, but no additional review of the ideas would be needed.
- R Requires Rethinking (2 points—50%). Work that requires rethinking demonstrates a partial understanding of the course material and assignment requirements. It might fail to properly satisfy the assignment requirements, or make some important mistakes in terms of substance.
- N Not assessable (1 point—25%). Work that is not assessable might be too fragmentary, not provide enough substance to be evaluated, or might contain extremely significant mistakes or omissions.

**Numerical and Letter Grades:** Grades will be given as percentile marks. The percentile mark for the course will be converted to a letter grade in the following manner:

A+ = 90 - 100, A = 85 - 89, A- = 80 - 84, B+ = 77 - 79, B = 73 - 76, B- = 70 - 72, C+ = 65 - 69, C = 60 - 64, D = 50 - 59, F = 0 - 49. The A range means exceptional,

outstanding and excellent performance. A grade in the B range means a very good, good and solid performance. A grade in the C+ or C range means satisfactory, or minimally satisfactory, performance. A grade of D indicates merely passable or marginal performance. An F indicates unsatisfactory performance.

### **Schedule:**

- Week One: Jan 11-17  
Topic: Introduction.  
Class norms. Philosophical Discussion and Discussion Moves.
- Week Two: Jan 18-24  
Topic: Atrocity and Evil  
Read: Excerpt from the introduction to *The Atrocity Paradigm*, Claudia Card (8-22)  
Excerpt from *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Hannah Arendt (3 pages of Eichmann's sentencing and execution)
- Week Three: Jan 25-31  
Topic: Speech and Genocide  
Read: Excerpt from Lynne Tirrell, "Genocidal Language Games"  
Visit from Lynne Tirrell
- Week Four: Feb 1-7  
Topic: Racist Speech in North America  
Read: Excerpt from Jennifer Saul, "What is Happening to Our Norms Against Racist Speech"  
Visit from Jennifer Saul  
Assignment One due Feb 7
- Week Five: Feb 8-14  
Topic: Is Violence Ever Justified?  
Read: Alison Jaggar, "What is Terrorism, Why is It Wrong, and Could It Ever Be Morally Permissible?"
- Reading Break Feb 15-21
- Week Six: Feb 22-28  
Topic: Violence or Non-Violence?  
Read: Malcolm X, "The Black Revolution"  
Excerpt from Martin Luther King, "The Sword that Heals"  
Visit from Meena Krishnamurthy  
Assignment Two due Feb 28
- Week Seven: Mar 1-7  
Topic: Colonialism and Empire  
Read: Excerpt from Juan Ginés De Sepulveda, "Just Causes for War Against the

Indians”

Excerpt from Bartolomé de las Casas, “In Defense of the Indians”

Visit from Jorge Sanchez Perez

- Week Eight: Mar 8-14

Topic: Colonialism, Gender, and Genocide

Read: Excerpt from Report on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

Assignment Three due Mar 14

- Week Nine: Mar 15-21

Topic: Soldiers in War

Read: Michael Robillard, “Risk, War, and the Dangers of Soldier Identity”

Visit from Michael Robillard

- Week Ten: Mar 22-28

Topic: Moral Dilemmas in Wartime

Read: Excerpts from Lisa Tessman, *When Doing the Right Thing is Impossible*

Assignment Four due Mar 28

- Week Eleven: Mar 29-Apr 4

Topic: Punishment and Incarceration

Read: Reginald Dwayne Betts, “Kamala Harris, Mass Incarceration and Me”

- Week Twelve: Apr 5-11

Topic: Repair and Restorative Justice

Read: Excerpt from Elizabeth Spelman, *Repair*, Chap 4

Visit from Barrett Emerick

Assignment Five due Apr 11