

PHIL 337 A01
CRN# 22297

January – April 2021
TWF: 1:30pm – 2:20pm

Ethics: Theory and Practice

Instructor: Scott Woodcock
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Office Hours: Wednesdays 10am – 11am

Course Description:

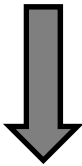
This course is an introduction to normative ethical theory and the respective strengths of competing ethical theories when they are put into practice. We will look at the four most prominent traditions in contemporary analytic philosophy: Utilitarianism, Social Contract Theory, Kantian Ethics and Virtue 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.

Course Website: Online course materials will be available via Uvic *Brightspace*.

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 *Brightspace*

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 *Broadview* editions I have chosen are reasonably-priced.

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

Late Policy: Late assignments will be accepted for five working days after the posted due date; however, late assignments *will not receive written comments*, and after five working days assignments will not be accepted.

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

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 W̱SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

For information about support for indigenous students and efforts to foster reconciliation, please visit the Uvic [Office of Indigenous Academic & Community Engagement](#).

A Note on Diversity:

You might notice that our historical readings are 100% “dead white men”, and you might wonder, “Why we don’t read more women and non-European philosophers?” It’s a fair question, and 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 historical sources) 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

Material should be read before the class in which it is discussed. Contemporary readings are available via *Brightspace*. Access the readings early to avoid technical problems.

Week Readings

Jan. 12	First Meeting
Jan. 13	Robert Nozick: <i>The Experience Machine</i> James Griffin: <i>Utilitarian Accounts: State of Mind or State of the World?</i>
Jan. 15	John Stuart Mill: <i>Utilitarianism</i> [chapter 2; pp. 30 – 41]

Jan. 19	John Stuart Mill: <i>Utilitarianism</i> [chapter 4; pp. 56 – 62]
Jan. 20	Gwen Bradford: <i>Problems for Perfectionism</i>
Jan. 22	John Stuart Mill: <i>Utilitarianism</i> [chapter 2; pp. 41 – 49]
Jan. 26	Andrew Walton: <i>Consequentialism, Indirect Effects and Fair Trade</i>
Jan. 27	Christopher Morgan-Knapp & Charles Goodman: <i>Consequentialism, Climate Harm and Individual Obligations</i>
Jan. 29	Mark T. Nelson: <i>What the Utilitarian Cannot Think</i>
Feb. 2 	John Stuart Mill: <i>Utilitarianism</i> [chapter 5; pp. 62 – 84] *** (Optional) First Writing Assignment Due ***
Feb. 3	Review
Feb. 5	*** Midterm Test ***
Feb. 9	Thomas Hobbes: <i>Leviathan</i> [chapter 13; pp. 123 – 127]
Feb. 10	Thomas Hobbes: <i>Leviathan</i> [chapter 14; pp. 128 – 138]
Feb. 12	Thomas Hobbes: <i>Leviathan</i> [chapter 15; pp. 138 – 150]
Feb 15-19	Reading Break – No Class
Feb. 23	Susan Dimock: <i>Why All Feminists Should Be Contractarians</i>
Feb. 24	Angus Taylor: <i>...The Illiberal Intuition that Animals don't Count</i>
Feb. 26	Gregory S. Kavka: <i>When Two 'Wrongs' Make a Right</i>
Mar. 2	Immanuel Kant: <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> [pp. 55 – 62]
Mar. 3	Immanuel Kant: <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> [pp. 63 – 83]
Mar. 5	Immanuel Kant: <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> [pp. 83 – 93]

Mar. 9	Todd Calder: <i>Kant and Degrees of Wrongness</i>
Mar. 10	Colin Hickey: <i>Biomedical Enhancement and the Kantian Duty to Cultivate Our Talents</i>
Mar. 12	Lucy Allais: <i>Kant's Racism</i>
Mar. 16 	Philippa Foot: <i>The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of the Double Effect</i> *** Last Day to Start Writing Q&C Assignments for Full Marks ***
Mar. 17	Judith Jarvis Thomson: <i>The Trolley Problem</i>
Mar. 19	Christa M. Johnson: <i>How Deontologists Can Be Moderate (and Why...)</i>
Mar. 23	Aristotle: <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> [Book I; pp. 1 – 18]
Mar. 24	Aristotle: <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> [Book II; pp. 18 – 30]
Mar. 26	Aristotle: <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> [Book III; pp. 40 – 45]
Mar. 30	Rosalind Hursthouse: <i>Virtue Theory and Abortion</i> , pp. 223 – 233
Mar. 31 	Rosalind Hursthouse: <i>Virtue Theory and Abortion</i> , pp. 233 – 246 *** Term Paper Writing Assignment Due ***
April 2	Good Friday – No Class
April 6	Julia Driver: <i>Virtue Theory</i>
April 7 	Charles E. Harris Jr.: <i>The Good Engineer: Giving Virtue its Due in Engineering Ethics</i> *** Last Day to Submit Q&C Assignments ***
April 9	Review + “One Theory to Rule Them All” Class Debate

***** Note: There will be an Online Exam in April *****

COVID-19 Online Teaching Information

This will continue to be a strange and challenging year at the University of Victoria, and like most other courses this winter at Uvic, the course will be taught online. Here are some details related to how this will work:

Lecture Format

The lectures will occur in the regular time slot for the course (TWF: 1:30pm – 2:20pm) via Zoom. However, to promote accessibility for students facing challenges like variable wifi availability, living in other time zones, losing access to daytime childcare, etc., I will record the lectures and make them available via *Brightspace*. Students should therefore be aware that their **participation in lecture discussions will be recorded**.

If you can attend the lectures live via Zoom, then I strongly recommend it so you can ask questions as we discuss the material. It will take time to adjust to the online format, but my aim is to facilitate as much collaborative discussion as there would be in an ordinary lecture. We will work out the relevant Zoom conventions for making this happen during the first week of class. However, if at any point you find that you face challenges to fully participating in the course please let me know so that we can try to work out a solution.

Online Testing

The midterm test will be run online during regular class time (1:30pm-2:20pm). If you are unable to write the midterm at that time, please contact me in advance to make other arrangements. The end of term exam will be online at a time TBA after classes are over.

Technical Support

Most technical difficulties are best answered by the Uvic [Computer Help Desk](#), but if you find yourself facing persistent technical difficulties, please get in contact with me so I can help in whatever way I can.

Intellectual Property of Course Materials

Note that all of the assignments, lectures and other materials posted to *Brightspace* are the intellectual property of myself and the University of Victoria. **Do not circulate this material** online without my permission. Posting course materials to secondary sites or otherwise circulating course materials online without the permission of your instructor violates the University of Victoria [Policy on Academic Integrity](#). Evidence of students circulating materials without permission will be referred to the Chair of the Philosophy Department for investigation.

University Policy + Updates

For general Uvic information about how the university is dealing with online teaching during the pandemic see the [COVID-19 information page](#) that they regularly update.