

Moral Problems of Contemporary Society

Ph 232 A01 Spring 2022

This course outline is © Thomas Heyd

Instructor: Thomas Heyd, Ph.D.
Lectures: TWF 11:30 – 12:20am
Classroom: MAC D207
Office: CLE B309
Office hrs: TBA
e-mail: heydt@uvic.ca



Provisional outline: Given changing circumstances in relation to Covid-19, there may be some changes to this outline throughout the course.

Territory acknowledgment

We acknowledge with respect the Lekwungen peoples, on whose traditional territory the university stands, and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples, whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day. This acknowledgment entails a commitment to ongoing dialogue and reconciliation with the peoples of these lands. For information about support for indigenous students and efforts to foster reconciliation, please visit the UVic Office of Indigenous Academic & Community Engagement.

Course description

In this course we discuss ethically significant issues of our societies from a philosophical perspective. We begin with a discussion of how applied ethics works, the role of arguments in ethics, and the relation of ethics to religion and to law. Throughout the remainder of the course key ethical principles and theories are introduced and applied to contemporary issues such as euthanasia, abortion, poverty, uranium mining and sexual relations. Students from all faculties are welcome.

Course objectives

- To learn about ethical theories and their application to the complexities of issues of our contemporary world.
- To carefully examine the philosophical arguments that arise surrounding the controversial issues discussed in the course.
- To sharpen our ability for critical analysis of assumptions and arguments, and how to assess their strength and weaknesses, supported by consideration of realistic cases.

Texts

All texts will be found on *the Brightspace website*. To access the website, log in with your regular network ID. Please let me know if you have any difficulty accessing the readings. This website will also be used to post announcements, to give you online access to lecture notes, handouts and assignment sheets and to collect short answer assignments. Recommended optional: Anthony Weston, *A Rulebook for Arguments* (Hackett).

Course organisation and student engagement

To facilitate comprehension and class discussion, assigned weekly readings are to be read *ahead of lectures*. Constructive participation and tolerance of the views of others are expected. Everyone is encouraged to be self-reflective about his or her own beliefs, and to constructively contribute to class discussion. Throughout the course, work will be assessed on the basis of A) care in the explanation of key points, B) quality of development of points presented, C) effective and correct use of the English language and clarity, neatness, and organisation of points.

Tips for best performances

- Do readings *ahead of class periods*, read material attentively (by asking questions about the material), and do weekly assignments.
- *Participate* in class discussion with constructive contributions.
- *Contact the instructor* if failing to understand the material.

Graded student activities

1. Final take-home exam	40%
2. Mid-term test	30%
3. Experiential project	20%
4. Participation, including weekly assignments	10%

1. **The final exam** will be a comprehensive take-home exam with short answer and long answer questions. Questions will be handed out on the last day of classes, and the completed exam must be submitted **to Brightspace and as hardcopy by NOON, no later than 5 days after the last day of classes**. Late exams will **NOT** be accepted (**they will receive 0%**). Understanding of material covered and reflective analysis will be expected. Answers to questions will be assessed on the basis of the following three criteria: (1) accurate presentation of the views discussed and explanation of key points, (2) well-developed discussion of points presented, (3) effective and correct use of the English language and clarity, neatness, and organisation of points.

2. **The mid-term in-class sit-down test** will cover both readings and additional points raised in lectures. Both understanding and reflective analysis will be expected. Test questions will likely consist of a combination of shorter and longer answer, as well as some true-false and multiple choice, questions. The assessment criteria are the same as for the Final Exam.

3. **Group work experiential project.** This project is to provide an *experiential* context for students to develop skills in reflecting on ethical issues by viewing them through real world settings. (This project does *not* involve human subjects.) We will establish groups of 4-6 students (depending on class size) that will choose a particular topic and associated sites from a list of options. Groups will engage with these topics and sites on the basis of course content. In all cases, choices of topics and sites need to be approved by the instructor. All health precautions regarding Covid-19 in place are to be applied in a strict manner.

To receive a grade for the project group, members have to comply with ALL four of the following steps: a) form a group, select a topic, and have it approved by the instructor by Week 4, b) submit a one-page plan of action by Week 5, c) submit a short report by Week 9, d) give a group presentation on the assigned day in the last two weeks of classes. Further information will be forthcoming after the start of the semester. For further information, see the handout that will be placed on Brightspace.

4. **Participation.** Assessed on the basis of a) *regular attendance*, b) *constructive participation in class discussion*, c) *weekly assignments* based on the course readings and analysis of the issues under discussion. *Class attendance will be taken*, and is particularly expected in the case of guest speakers (justified absences on guest speaker days should be discussed with the instructor ahead of time).

Weekly response assignments. You are expected to write up a brief response to each week's readings, to help you engage with the material and concepts before the lecture. Answers to questions posed should be in your own words and not copied from the textbook or other sources, be about a paragraph long, and submitted on the first day of classes weekly.

IMPORTANT: when submitting your assignments, at the head of the page please state, in this order, a) LAST NAME, First name your last and first name (e.g., JONES, Peter), b) course name (Phil 232), c) the date assignment is due (e.g., 9 September 2021), d) the particular readings discussed (e.g. Singer and Taylor).

Feedback will be given on the first sets of assignments, and occasionally thereafter. At the end of the semester the total of the assignments minus two will be graded on a *pass or fail* basis. *Both quantity and quality of assignments will be taken into account in grading. All assignments that pass will be assigned 85%. No late assignments will be accepted.*

Participation grade: a grade in the A range will be given if all required assignments were handed in, done at the level that deserves a pass, combined with regular attendance, and class participation was constructive; a grade in the B range will be given if most of the assignments are handed in and done at a pass deserving level, and most

lectures have been attended and class participation was constructive; a grade in the C range will be given if less than 2/3 of assignments have been handed in and attendance has been less than 2/3 of the time; a grade in the D range will be given if half the required assignments and half the lectures were attended while class participation was constructive; a grade in the F range will be given if fewer assignments than 2/3 were handed in or if less than half of the lectures were attended or participation was non-constructive.

Grading scale and interpretation

Percentages will convert to a letter grade according to the standard University scheme:

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

What the Grading Scale Means:

- A+, A, or A-** 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.
- B+, B, or B-** 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. Grades in the B range are normally achieved by the largest number of students. B+ represents a more complex understanding and/or application of the course material.
- C+ or C** Earned by work that indicates an adequate comprehension of the course material, adequate skills to work with the course material are displayed, and the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and/or participating in class activities.
- D** 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.
- F** Work that is not worthy of course credit toward the degree.
- N** An N grade indicates that the student did not complete one or more of the course's essential requirements. In this course that means that a student has not completed the Final take-home exam or the Mid-term test or the Experiential project. N is a failing grade and factors into the student's GPA as "0".

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, after discussing the matter with the instructor, you still believe that the grade that you received is unfair you can appeal the matter to the Chair of the Department of Philosophy. For additional information regarding grades, including N and DEF status, please see the most recent edition of the *UVic Undergraduate Calendar*. Final examinations are the property of UVic and will not be returned. They are available for viewing at the Records Office according to UVic procedures and regulations.

All evaluations of tests and assignments will be calculated according to *percentage scores*. Letter grades and grade point scores are listed purely for reference. The final course grade will be calculated according to the percentages indicated above. However, this will not be done automatically on Brightspace, so please ignore the 'Grades' section on Brightspace.

Other matters

Late assignment and extensions

Late weekly assignments will *not* be accepted and tests will *not* normally be rescheduled (no make-up exams). If a test is missed for serious, *documented*, reasons, the final exam may be weighted so as to incorporate the weighting

of the missed exam. Documented evidence for legitimately having missed a test and an explanatory statement in writing have to be received *no more than ten days after the deadline or test missed*, and preferably before the test.

Academic integrity and University academic regulations

The University Calendar states that “Academic integrity requires commitment to the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. ... Any action that contravenes this standard, including misrepresentation, falsification or deception, undermines the intention and worth of scholarly work and violates the fundamental academic rights of members of our community.”

All students in this course should complete the Integrity Matters module that is available in Brightspace ([here](#)) before you hand in *any* coursework for evaluation. Students need to self-enrol in this module by searching for it under the Discovery tab (drop-down menu) on the Brightspace homepage.

Violations of academic integrity include plagiarism, multiple submissions, falsifying materials subject to academic evaluation, cheating on work, tests and examinations, unauthorized use of an editor, and aiding others to cheat. To avoid plagiarism and cheating please view the UVic Libraries plagiarism guide <https://www.uvic.ca/library/research/citation/plagiarism/>. I reserve the right to use plagiarism detection software or other platforms to assess the integrity of student work.

Penalties for violations vary, with first violations generally resulting in a failing grade on the work. Please view https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/undergrad/index.php#/policy/Sk_0xsM_V?bc=true&bcCurrent=08%20-%20Policy%20on%20Academic%20Integrity&bcGroup=Undergraduate%20Academic%20Regulations&bcItem=polices. Also, please familiarise yourselves with Undergraduate Academic regulations here: <https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/future/undergrad/index.php#/polices>.

Copyright Statement

All course content and materials are made available by the instructor for educational purposes and for the exclusive use of students registered in their class. This includes all lecture notes, exams and quizzes that I make available to you. The material is protected under copyright law, even if not marked with ©. Any further use or distribution of materials to others requires the written permission of the instructor, except under fair dealing or another exception in the Copyright Act. Violations may result in disciplinary action under the Resolution of Non-Academic Misconduct Allegations policy (AC1300). Any evidence that you are circulating materials without permission will be referred to the Chair of the Philosophy Department for investigation.

Technology in the classroom

Some students require laptops or voice recognition apps for their learning strategies. For this reason, they are not prohibited in the classroom. However, studies demonstrate that multi-tasking reduces the performance of other nearby students. Therefore, anyone caught on social media, internet surfing, etc. during lecture periods may be asked to leave and potentially subject to disciplinary action.

Inclusivity/diversity

The Philosophy Department is committed to providing a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for all students, staff, and faculty. We affirm the diverse identities of persons and that the rights all individuals have to be treated with dignity and respect irrespective of their gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, class, or national origin. This basic commitment entails, among other things, specific recognition and support for trans, queer, two-spirited, and non-binary people, and we respect the rights of individuals to self-determination and self-description. Information about UVic policies on human rights, equity, discrimination and harassment are available at www.uvic.ca/calendar/undergrad/index.php#/policy/HkQ0pzdAN. If you have any particular concerns about these matters in our course, please don't hesitate to contact me. Information regarding accommodation of religious observance can be located in the UVic Calendar at <https://www.uvic.ca/equity/education/religious/index.php>.

Transition and New Student Connect Program

Students who are new to the University and would like assistance may contact the Transition Office, www.uvic.ca/transition, and you may also participate in New Student Connect. Participating students in New Student Connect will be assigned in small groups by Faculty and/or interest groups to upper year peer mentors who

will provide insights about student life, the UVic student community, available support services, and ways that students can get connected as needed. For further information see:

<https://www.uvic.ca/services/studentlife/initiatives/new-student-connect/index.php>

Student Mental Health Supports / UVic Support Connect

Many, if not most, students experience some difficulties with their mental health at some point in time as undergraduate students. This may especially be the case during the present Covid-19 pandemic. It is hard to shake the stigma associated with problems like depression and anxiety, however, if at any point you believe that you could benefit from help with mental health issues, please contact the new UVic Student Wellness Centre / UVic Support Connect. In addition to providing face to face help, they offer a 24 x 7 phone & online mental health counselling and support program, no matter where you are located, at any time. This is an excellent resource at your disposal on campus. They genuinely want to help, so do consider taking advantage of this free resource.

Health Services and Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL)

A note to remind you to take care of yourself, especially in the present times. Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle by eating well, exercising, getting enough sleep and taking some time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress. All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone. The sooner you let any of these on-campus services know your needs the quicker they can assist you in achieving your learning goals. Resources include

- Mental health counselling Services, already mentioned above. See <https://www.uvic.ca/services/counselling/>.
- University Health Services (UHS), which provides a full-service primary health clinic for students and coordinates healthy student and campus initiatives. <http://www.uvic.ca/services/health/>

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the Center for Accessible Learning (CAL) as soon as possible. CAL staff members are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals, and arrange appropriate accommodations, see: <https://www.uvic.ca/services/cal/>. Please note that instructors cannot provide CAL-type accommodations without CAL documentation.

Food bank and Community Cabbage

Sometimes students run out of money for food. Health restrictions permitting, the Food bank and Community Cabbage are available at the Students' Union. These are their statements: "The UVSS Food Bank & Free Store is run by a team of dedicated staff and volunteers and offers all UVic students access to food essentials and free household items", see <https://uvss.ca/foodbank/>. "The Community Cabbage is a student organization at the University of Victoria. We serve a free weekly hot meal to the campus community prepared from reclaimed food – edible but unsellable food donated by grocery stores. A crew of volunteers turn these ingredients into a healthy and delightful vegetarian meal at a community kitchen. Anyone is welcome to come cook with us and/or eat with us!" See <https://uviccommunitycabbage.wordpress.com/about/>.

Important dates and academic advising

Important dates for the 2021-2022 Academic Year are found here: <https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/dates/>. Please consult the Important Dates for information about last possible dates to withdraw from courses without penalty, examinations period start/end dates, etc. For information about declaring a program, academic concessions or interpreting your UVic CAPP report, please visit Undergraduate Advising or make an appointment with an advisor.

Schedule of lectures and tests

Please note that this schedule is tentative and will adjusted as we proceed through the semester. Any changes to the schedule will be announced in class. *Informed* participation in class discussion will be expected, so *please read the assigned texts in advance*. Readings are on the Brightspace website, unless otherwise indicated.

Week 1	<u>Introduction and situating ethics</u>
10-16 Jan	Rachels, James, "Utilitarianism" Optional: Mill, J.S., "Utilitarianism"

Optional recommended: Silberbauer, George, "Ethics in small-scale societies"

Monday 10 Jan: first day of classes

****Assignments are due from Tuesday 16 Feb onwards****

Week 2

17-23 Jan

Ethics: preventing suffering and the case of non-human animals

Introduction to animals and ethics

Singer, Peter, "Animal Liberation"

Crisp, Roger, "Utilitarianism and Vegetarianism"

Regan, Tom, "The Case for Animal Rights"

****Tuesday 18 Jan: assignment about these readings is DUE (ahead of lectures!)****

****Exploration of groups and topics****

Week 3

24-30 Jan

Ethics: treating others with respect for their autonomy

****Film, 21 Jan: *The Business of Hunger*****

Introduction to the problem of hunger

Hardin, Garret, "Living on a Lifeboat"

Singer, Peter "Rich and Poor"

26 Jan: last day for adding courses

****Friday 28 Jan: Final date for groups to form and select topics and sites****

Week 4

31 Jan-6 Feb

O'Neill, Onora, "Kant's Formula of the End in Itself and World Hunger"

Ecological feminist ethics and patriarchal development

Shiva, Vandana, "Development, Ecology and Women"

Dasgupta, Partha "Population, Poverty and the Local Environment"

Mies, Maria, "The Myth of catching up development"

Extract from "International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights"

Week 5

7-13 Feb

The value of life and the right to die: euthanasia and abortion

Introduction to euthanasia and assisted suicide

Rachels, James, "Active and Passive Euthanasia"

Krutzen, Rudy, "The Case of Robert and Tracy Latimer"

****Friday 11 Feb: Plan of action for group work required****

Week 6

14-20 Feb

The value of life and abortion Review and Mid-term

Introduction to abortion

****Friday 18 Feb: MID-TERM****

Week 7

21-27 Feb

****READING WEEK****

No new readings

21 February: Family Day in British Columbia, and Louis Riel Day in Manitoba

Week 8

28 Feb – 6
Mar

The value of life and abortion (continued)

Marquis, Don, "Why Abortion is Immoral"

Thomson, Judith Jarvis, "A Defense of Abortion"

28 Feb: Last day for withdrawing from courses without penalty of failure

Week 9

7-13 Mar

Fairness and environmental justice

****Film: *Uranium*****

Brook, Andrew, "Ethics of Wastes: The Case of the Nuclear Fuel Cycle"

Collins-Chobanian, Shari, "Environmental Racism, American Indians, and Monitored Retrievable Storage Sites for Radioactive Waste"

****Friday 11 March: Experiential group work reports due****

Week 10

14-20 Mar

Property and Indigenous rights

Locke, John, "The Creation of Property"

Trudeau, P.E., "Remarks on Indian Aboriginal and Treaty Rights"
Extract from *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*
McDonald, Michael, "Aboriginal Rights"
****CLASS in FIRST PEOPLES' HOUSE Ceremonial Hall, Friday 18 March CONFIRMED**
GUEST SPEAKER: TBA, UVic**

Week 11
21-27 Mar **Land ethics, climate change and Indigenous people**
Leopold, Aldo, "The Land Ethic"
Klein, Naomi, "Introduction" and "Conclusion", *This changes everything*
Optional recommended: Siegle, Lucy, "Ethical Guide to the Anthropocene"
Film: Avi Lewis and Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything* (producer: Alfonso Cuarón)

Week 12
28 Mar–3 Apr **Group work presentations**
Presentation schedule TBA

Week 13
4-10 Apr **Group Work presentations + Summary-Conclusion**
Presentation schedule TBA
Wednesday 5 Apr, last day of classes
****FINAL EXAM take-home exam questions handed out****

Week 14
11-17 Apr **Final Exam submission**
*****BEFORE NOON, Monday 11 Apr: Final Exam submission to Brightspace and hardcopy to Department of Philosophy*** NO LATE SUBMISSIONS ARE ACCEPTED!**