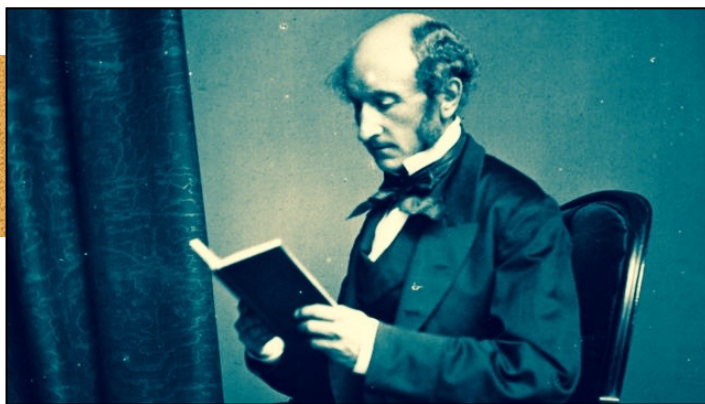


# PHIL 337 Ethics: Theory and Practice

Summer 2025



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**Office:** Clearihue B314  
**Office Hours:** Immediately following class M, W, Th

**DRAFT**  
**This is Not the Official  
Course Outline**

## Course Description

In this course we will work to understand four philosophical traditions in ethics: utilitarianism, Kantian ethics, contractarianism and Aristotelian virtue ethics. We will begin with a classic text in each tradition and move through contemporary attempts to critique, develop and apply these four conceptions of ethics. We will consider the problems that motivate the accounts and the reasoning that supports them. Just as importantly, we will put all of them to the test of practical application. Among the applied topics we will grapple with are a duty to aid people in need, the treatment of non-human animals, promises, abortion, assisted suicide, the consumer lifestyle, free speech, journalistic ethics and our impact on the environment. Throughout, we will be asking whether any of these approaches to ethics 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 together.

## Texts

All of the course readings will be available through the course Brightspace page.

## Brightspace

To access the course readings and other course materials on Brightspace go to [bright.uvic.ca](http://bright.uvic.ca) and log in with your regular network ID. If you have difficulty accessing Brightspace 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.

The Brightspace page contains all sorts of information you will need for the course. It's where you will find more detailed course reading assignments, your grades and instructions for the quote and comment essay assignments.

## Course Work

Exam One	25%	5 Quote & Comments	25%
Exam Two	20%	Essay (max. 2000 words)	30%

Information about the essay assignment and the quote and comment assignments, including detailed instructions and late policies, can be found on the Brightspace page. There will be 7 quote and comment opportunities. For full credit you need to do 5 of the 7. Please note that **to receive full credit for a quote and comment assignment you must participate in the class discussion the day the assignment is due.**

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## Missed Exams

If you miss an exam due to an illness or exceptional circumstance contact me immediately to schedule a make-up.

## Academic Integrity and Professional Conduct

The use of Chat GPT and similar technologies are not permitted for this course. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will not be tolerated. It is each student's responsibility to know the University's regulations in this regard. [The Policy on Academic Integrity](#) is published in the University Calendar. You can also consult the [Libraries' plagiarism guide](#) or the [Tri-Faculty Standards for Professional Behaviour for Students](#), which draws together a number of existing UVic policies in one place for ease of reference. Professionalism is expected from all students enrolled in courses in the Faculty of Humanities. As part of professionalism, students, faculty and staff are expected to be familiar with University policies, including the Tri-Faculty Standards.

If you have any doubts about what this policy requires or any questions about whether or not you are complying with it, please don't hesitate to ask me about it.

## **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.

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## Course Schedule

**Q/C** indicates that a quote and comment assignment is due in class that day.  
The **Q/C** is repeated to indicate which of the day's readings you should write about.

Consequentialism

May 12	Introduction Kagan "Is Death Bad for You?"
May 13	Mill <i>Utilitarianism</i> , Chapter II, Chapter IV
May 14 <b>Q/C</b>	Williams from <i>Utilitarianism: For and Against</i> <small>recommended</small> Liberman "Consequentialism and Promises" <b>Q/C</b>
May 15 <b>Q/C</b>	Morgan-Knapp & Goodman "Consequentialism, Climate Harm and Individual Obligations" <b>Q/C</b> Norcross "Great Harms from Small Benefits Grow: How Death can be Outweighed by Headaches" <small>recommended</small>

Virtue Ethics

May 16	Aristotle <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book I, II & III ch.1-5
May 19	Victoria Day — No Class
May 20	Aristotle <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book VI, Ch. 5 — Book VII, ch 1-3, 8-10 MacIntyre "The Nature of the Virtues" <small>recommended</small>
May 21 <b>Q/C</b>	Borden "Shared Vulnerability as a Virtuous Frame for Poverty Journalism" <b>Q/C</b> Gambrel and Cafaro "The Virtue of Simplicity" <small>recommended</small>
May 22	Hursthouse "Virtue Theory and Abortion"

## May 23 EXAM ONE

Kantian Ethics

May 26	Kant <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , First Section
May 27 <b>Q/C</b>	Kant <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Second Section Gunderson "A Kantian View of Suicide and End of Life Treatment" <b>Q/C</b>
May 28 <b>Q/C</b>	Williams "The Social Creation of Morality and Complicity in Collective Harms: A Kantian Account" <b>Q/C</b> Skidmore "Duties to Animals: The Failure of Kant's Moral Theory"
May 29 <b>Q/C</b>	Tan "Kantian Ethics and Global Justice" <b>Q/C</b> Thomson "The Trolley Problem" <small>recommended</small>

Contractarianism

May 30	Hobbes <i>Leviathan</i> , Part I, Chapter XIII, XIV, XV
June 2 <b>Q/C</b>	Eggers "Applied Ethics: A Challenge to Contractarianism?" <small>recommended</small> van Mill "Hobbes and Free Speech" <b>Q/C</b>
June 3	Rowlands "Contractarianism and Animal Rights"

## June 4 EXAM TWO

June 6 Papers Due at 8pm

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## **Territory Acknowledgement**

The University of Victoria acknowledges with respect the Lekwungen-speaking peoples on whose traditional territory the University of Victoria stands, and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

## **Equity**

Uvic is committed to promoting, providing and protecting a positive, supportive and safe learning and working environment for all its members. Information about Uvic policies on human rights, equity, discrimination and harassment are available at <https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/future/undergrad/index.php#/policy/HkQ0pzdAN>. If you have any particular concerns about equity in our course please don't hesitate to contact me.

## **Religious Accommodation**

The University recognizes its obligation to make reasonable accommodation for students whose observance of holy days might conflict with the academic requirements of a course or program. Information regarding accommodation of religious observance can be located in the [UVIC Calendar](#).

## **Intellectual property of materials on the LMS website**

Please note that all assignments for this course and all materials posted to the LMS website are the intellectual property of myself and the University of Victoria. Do not circulate this material or post it to note-sharing sites without my permission. Posting course materials to note-sharing sites or otherwise circulating course materials without the permission of your instructor violates the [Policy on Academic Integrity](#). Any evidence you are circulating materials without permission will be referred to the Chair of the Philosophy Department for investigation.

## **Academic Accommodation**

The University of Victoria is committed to creating a learning experience that is as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this course, please feel welcome to discuss your concerns with me. If you believe you will require academic accommodations to address barriers to your education in this course and you have not already registered with the [Centre for Accessible Learning](#), please do so. The Centre for Accessible Learning is the office designated to make arrangements for accommodations. You can find information about academic accommodations through their website.