

PHIL 335

Contemporary Moral Philosophy



This is a draft — not the official course outline.

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30–2:00 in person
Thursdays 8:00 am–9:30 am on Zoom

Course Description

In this course we will attempt to develop a solid understanding of four prominent normative ethical theories: contractarianism, Kantian ethics, consequentialism and contractualism. We will begin with a classic text in each tradition and move through contemporary attempts to explain, develop and critique these different conceptions of ethics. We will try to understand the intuitions and problems that motivate these accounts, the reasoning that supports them and some of the issues they have yet to resolve. Throughout, we will be asking whether any of these theories 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.

Texts

All of the readings for the course will be available on-line through Brightspace.

To access the readings and other course information on Brightspace go to 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.

Course Work

Five Quote and Comment Assignments 7% each

These will be very short written responses to the reading assigned for the day they are due. Details are available on Brightspace. **Be sure to read that more detailed statement of the assignment.** Note that part of the assignment is to participate in class discussion the day the Q/C is due. Those due dates are marked with a **Q/C** on the schedule below.

Missed Quote and Comments

If you miss a quote and comment assignment you can do a makeup Q/C on April 1.

Two Exams Exam One 20% and Exam Two 15%

The exams will be in-class exams covering material from the readings and class discussion. They will be a combination of short answer questions and essay questions. Review questions for the exams will be posted on Brightspace.

Missed Exams

If you miss an exam you should contact me as soon as possible and we will schedule a make up exam.

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One Essay 30%

I will give you a list of suggested essay topics, but you are very welcome to propose your own topic. If you intend to write on a topic of your own devising you need to submit your idea *for approval*. You must get your proposed topic to me in writing (email is fine) by **Friday, 3/28**. Further details about the essay assignment are available on Brightspace along with advice on how to write a philosophical essay.

Late Essays

After the Initial Cutoff (5pm April 2) you will have one additional week to get your essay in without a grade penalty. Essays submitted in the grace period – after the Initial Cutoff and before the Final Cutoff (5pm April 9) – will receive full credit but they will not receive any comments. Essays submitted after the Final Cutoff will not be accepted without a successful application for academic concession. If you find that you cannot get your essay in by the final cutoff, you can find information about your options here: <https://www.uvic.ca/registrar/students/appeals/acad-concession/index.php>

Academic Integrity and Professional Conduct

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.

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

Please note that this schedule is tentative.
Any changes will be announced in class and posted on Brightspace.

All readings can be found through Brightspace.

Contractarianism

T 1/7	Introduction
W 1/8	Hobbes <i>Leviathan</i> , Part One, Chapter XIII
F 1/10	Hobbes <i>Leviathan</i> , Part One, Chapters XIV and XV
T 1/14, W 1/15	Gauthier Why Contractarianism?
Q / C F 1/17	Held Feminist Transformations of Moral Theory
T 1/21	Baier Demoralization, Trust, and the Virtues

Kantian Ethics

W 1/22	Kant <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Preface
F 1/24	Kant <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , First Section
T 1/28	Baron Acting from Duty
W 1/29	Kant <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Second Section
F 1/31	Herman Mutual Aid and Respect for Persons, up to II B on page 590
Q / C T 2/4	Herman Mutual Aid and Respect for Persons, starting on page 590
W 2/5, F 2/7	Korsgaard The Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing with Evil
T 2/11	Slote The Problem We All Have with Deontology
W 2/12	Kagan Kantianism for Consequentialism

F 2/14	E x a m O n e
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2 / 17 – 2 / 21 R e a d i n g B r e a k – N o C l a s s e s

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Consequentialism

	T 2/25	Nussbaum Mill between Aristotle and Bentham Bentham from <i>An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation</i>
Q / C	W 2/26	Griffin Utilitarian Accounts: State of Mind or State of the World?
	F 2/28, T 3/4	Sidgwick from <i>The Methods of Ethics</i>
	W 3/5	Williams Consequentialism and Integrity
	F 3/7	Railton Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality
Q/C	T 3/11	Woodcock When will your consequentialist friend abandon you for the greater good?
	W 3/12	Rawls Classical Utilitarianism
	F 3/14	Budolfson The Inefficacy Objection to Consequentialism and the Problem with the Expected Consequences Response
Q/C	T 3/18	Nefsky How You Can Help, without Making a Difference
	W 3/19	Hooker Rule-Consequentialism

Contractualism

	F 3/21	Rawls from A Theory of Justice
	T 3/25	Hampton Feminist Contractarianism Radzik Justice in the Family: A defence of Feminist Contractarianism
	W 3/26	Scanlon Contractualism and Utilitarianism
	F 3/28	Kumar Contractualism on the Shoal of Aggregation <i>Last day to propose your own essay topic.</i>
Q/C makeup	T 4/1	Mendus The Magic in the Pronoun 'My'
	W 4/2	Essay Initial Cutoff – 5 p.m.

F 4/4

E x a m T w o

W 4/9

Essay Final Cutoff – 5 p.m.

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.

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Equity

The University of Victoria is committed to promoting, providing and protecting a positive, supportive and safe learning and working environment for all its members. Information about university policies on human rights, equity, discrimination and harassment are available [here](#). 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 the instructor and the University of Victoria. Do not circulate this material or post it to note-sharing sites without the instructor's 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 that you are circulating materials without permission will be referred to the Chair of the Philosophy Department for investigation.

Academic Support

The University has a number of academic support services that may help you in this course, including the [Centre for Academic Communication](#) and the Library's "[Ask Us](#)" service. Information about academic supports can also be found through the University's [Learn Anywhere](#) site.

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.