PHIL 337 A01 January – April 2027
CRN# 22704 HHB 110 TWF: 11:30pm – 12:20pm

Ethics: Theory and Practice

Instructor: Scott Woodcock
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Office Hours: Wed 10am – 11am open hrs + individual zoom meetings by appointment

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: You are welcome to find used copies of other editions of the textbooks to save money. However, the *Broadview* editions I have chosen are reasonably-priced.

Requirements: Quote & Comment Assignments (10%)
(Optional) First Writing Assignment (10%)
Midterm Test (10% or 20%)
Second Writing Assignment (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 but *will not receive written comments*. After five working days, late assignments would require unexpected or unavoidable circumstances.

Academic Integrity: Review the Uvic Policy on Academic Integrity *carefully*. Note: AI/plagiarism detection software may be used in this course, and students may be asked for oral explanations of written work.

Student Conduct: This course is governed by general Uvic policies for equity, fairness, & discrimination, and the Tri-Faculty Student Code of Conduct.

Counseling: Many students experience difficulties with mental health during their years as undergraduate students. Make sure you are familiar with Uvic Student Wellness, which is an excellent resource on campus. It is hard to shake the stigma associated with problems like depression and anxiety, but if you can benefit from help with mental health issues, then why not take advantage of this free resource? They are understaffed, but they genuinely want to help.

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.

Tech in Class: Some students require laptops/tablets for their learning strategies, so I do not prohibit their use in class. However, studies prove that multi-tasking *reduces performance for nearby students*, so anyone who distracts others will be asked to leave and potentially subject to disciplinary action.

Uvic Sexualized Violence Prevention and Response:

Sexualized violence is a serious issue on campus. You can learn more about how Uvic defines sexualized violence and its approach to prevention by visiting www.uvic.ca/svp. If you or someone you know is impacted by sexualized violence and needs information, advice, and/or support, please contact the sexualized violence resource office in Equity and Human Rights (EQHR). Whether or not you have been directly impacted, if you want to take part in important prevention work on campus, you can reach out to: 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 in our historical readings is *not* because these groups are less philosophically capable. 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

Dates and page numbers listed are subject to change, so regular class attendance is essential to stay informed about scheduling changes.

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. 6	First Meeting
Jan. 8	Robert Nozick: *The Experience Machine* James Griffin: *Utilitarian Accounts: State of Mind or State of the World?*

Jan. 12	John Stuart Mill: *Utilitarianism* [chapter 2; pp. 30 – 41]
Jan. 13	John Stuart Mill: *Utilitarianism* [chapter 4; pp. 56 – 62]
Jan. 15	Guy Fletcher: *Objective List Theory* [skip section 6]
Jan. 19	John Stuart Mill: *Utilitarianism* [chapter 2; pp. 41 – 49]
Jan. 20	Andrew Walton: *Consequentialism, Indirect Effects and Fair Trade*
Jan. 22	Karolina Kudlek: *On the Uneasy Alliance between Moral Bioenhancement and Utilitarianism*
Jan. 26	John Stuart Mill: *Utilitarianism* [chapter 5; pp. 62 – 84]
Jan. 27	Review
	***** (Optional) First Writing Assignment Due *****
Jan. 29	***** Midterm Test *****
Feb. 2	Thomas Hobbes: *Leviathan* [chapter 13; pp. 123 – 127]
Feb. 3	Thomas Hobbes: *Leviathan* [chapter 14; pp. 128 – 138]
Feb. 5	Thomas Hobbes: *Leviathan* [chapter 15; pp. 138 – 150]
Feb. 9	Susan Dimock: *Why All Feminists Should Be Contractarians* [skip s.3-4]
Feb. 10	Angus Taylor: *...The Illiberal Intuition that Animals don't Count*
Feb. 12	Gregory S. Kavka: *When Two 'Wrongs' Make a Right*
Feb 15-19	**Reading Break – No Class**
Feb 23	Immanuel Kant: *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* [pp. 55 – 62]
Feb. 24	Immanuel Kant: *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* [pp. 63 – 83]
Feb. 26	Immanuel Kant: *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* [pp. 83 – 93]

Mar. 2	Todd Calder: *Kant and Degrees of Wrongness*
Mar. 3	Colin Hickey: *Biomedical Enhancement and the Kantian Duty to…*
Mar. 5	Emilian Mihailov: *Enlightened Beneficence: A Kantian Alternative to EA*
Mar. 9	Philippa Foot: *The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of the Double Effect*
Mar. 10	Judith Jarvis Thomson: *The Trolley Problem* [sections I-II, IV-VIII]
Mar. 12	Pauline Kleingeld: *A Kantian Solution to the Trolley Problem*
	***** Last Day to Start Submitting Q&C Assignments for full marks*****
Mar. 16	Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics* [Book I; pp. 29 – 52 (skip chapter 6)]
Mar. 17	Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics* [Book II; pp. 53 – 68]
Mar. 19	Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics* [Book III; pp. 82 – 89 (chapters 6-9)]
	***** Second Writing Assignment Due *****
Mar. 23	S. Stewart Braun: *A Modest Dilemma: Can the Virtue of Modesty Coexist…*
Mar. 24	Jason Kawall: *Environmental Virtue Ethics*
Mar. 26	**No Class – Good Friday**
Mar. 30	Rosalind Hursthouse: *Virtue Theory and Abortion*, pp. 223 – 233
Mar. 31	Rosalind Hursthouse: *Virtue Theory and Abortion*, pp. 233 – 246
April 2	Julia Driver: *Virtue Theory*
April 6	Susan Kennedy & Erick Jose Ramirez: *Don't Play that Game…*
	***** Last Day to Submit Q&C Assignments *****
April 7	Review + "One Theory to Rule Them All" Class Debate

Warning: there will be a **Registrar Scheduled Exam in April.** I don't control the date of this exam, so *do not book travel* until you know the dates of your exams.

Frequently Asked Questions

Please read these over so you can anticipate common issues before it's too late.

Q: Do I really have to read the historical stuff? Kant is super hard to understand!

A: Yes, *make the effort*. We can sort things out in class, but reading the material on your own (and then also coming to class) will help you to understand the content.

Q: Do I need to complete each of the course requirements to pass the course?

A: No, in this particular course (unlike some other courses at Uvic), I do not require each of the various tests/assignments to be completed for an overall pass. So, for example, if you are unable to complete a certain assignment, you can still pass the course.

Q: I'm having a difficult week in terms of workload in my other courses and hours at my job (that I need to pay for school). Can I have an extension?

A: No. I genuinely sympathize with these requests, but I do not grant extensions based on workload rather than illness or family emergency so please do not ask me this. As stressful as workload issues are for students, I can't compare the workloads different students in the class might be facing without my knowledge. All I can do is give due dates well in advance and recommend that students plan accordingly.

Q: I'm over the word count. Does this really matter?

A: Would I include it in the instructions if it didn't? If you are only a few words over I won't give you a zero, but still: use the opportunity to work on *editing* your writing.

Q: What is the best way to succeed in this course?

A: Do the readings in advance to get the most out of the lectures. Make sure you clearly understand the material *as we cover it* (using email or office hours if necessary), and make solid notes as you go. Then, when you prepare for a test/assignment, use your notes to *remind* yourself of what you have previously understood. In short, your aim should be to gain clear comprehension of the material as we discuss it so you can get help if you need it. Avoid trying to learn material right before a text or assignment.

Q: Are you willing to look over drafts of our assignments?

A: I'm not against it in principle, but in a large class it's not always feasible. Still, if you finish early enough I'll do my best to make time. More often it's helpful to send me a provisional outline of your argument so that I can make suggestions.

Q: I didn't read the instructions for the Q&C Assignments. Now it's the last week of class. Can I hand in retroactive assignments on readings we already covered?

A: No. It defeats the point of the assignment. Read instructions. Read course outlines.

Q: I have a conflict with another course in my schedule. Can I just take this course and miss class once a week?

A: While attendance will not be taken in the course, it is *highly discouraged* to miss class this often. (And how is the Uvic registration system letting you add both courses?!)

Q: I'm not feeling well, but *maybe* I'm ok to write the test. Should I just try and see what happens? I can always just quit and write it again later, right?

A: No! I respect students trying to tough things out, but think it over procedurally from the perspective of the university: it is 100% reasonable to delay a test due to student illness, but it is another thing entirely to let a student see the contents of that test and then have a second try at it. So if you think you might not be well enough to write an exam, then do not write that exam. Contact me instead.

Q: What will be the format of the midterm test and final exam?

A: Each will include a mix of different questions. Some will require short answers (e.g. T/F, multiple choice or filling in a blank), but some will be *open-ended opportunities* to write as much as one can in the time allocated.

Q: I know the material but I'm just really busy – can't I just get ChatGPT to write my assignment for me?

A: First, remember that you are taking a course in applied *ethics*. Second, remember that professors are starting to get a feel for how ChatGPT works so they can assign unique assignment instructions and recognize anomalous passages. Third, re-read the section above on plagiarism and academic integrity. I aim to provide students with sufficient help and support that they do not have reason to turn to academic misconduct. If they do take this option, the consequences of being detected can be extremely serious.

Q: Will graduating with a Minor in Applied Ethics help me get a job?

A: How could it not? While there are no straightforward employment opportunities for a MAE graduate like there are for vocations like plumbing or engineering, it is certainly true that graduating with a MAE shows employers that you can *think critically about complex problems* and express your own views on these difficult topics. These skills transfer to other contexts, and employers can be expected to recognize this fact.

Q: There are so many great courses on the MAE list of electives. How do I choose?

A: I don't know! There are just so many options. ☺