

**University of Waterloo**  
**Department of Philosophy**  
**PHIL 221**  
**Ethics**  
**Fall 2017**  
**Tue/Thur 1:00-2:20 MC4040**

**Territorial Acknowledgement**

We acknowledge that we are living and working on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (also known as Neutral), Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes six miles on each side of the Grand River.

**Instructor Information**

Instructor: Patricia Marino  
Office: HH 332  
Office Phone: ext. 32779  
Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:30-4:00 and by appointment  
Email: pmarino@uwaterloo.ca

**Course Description**

This is a course on ethical theory in the Western philosophical tradition. Ethical theorizing attempts to find general principles tying together our various particular judgments, with the aims of explaining and justifying beliefs we have, correcting mistaken judgments, and finding out what to believe about new, complex, and controversial cases. Whether this is possible and what form it should take are both matters of much debate. In the first part of the course we will consider several different ethical views, including utilitarianism, Kantian ethical theory, and contractarianism. In the second, we'll consider challenges to those views and also how theories relate to contemporary topics including disability rights, racism, inequality, indigenous issues, bioethics, and climate change.

This course does not endorse any particular conclusion about these matters; rather, the idea is for you to both understand what others have had to say, and to develop, possibly change, and learn how to intelligently defend, your own opinions.

You should read the text listed for a given date before class and be ready to discuss it. I will post study questions on LEARN ahead of time for each reading and you should come to class having given some thought to these. Course announcements and information will be on the LEARN page so please check it daily.

There is more information about this course on the "Further Course Information" document posted on LEARN. Be sure to read it. If you experience difficulties of any kind during the term, please come talk to me. Also, information about contacting mental health resources is included below. If you have questions about the syllabus, the course, the requirements, the assignments, or anything else to do with this course, please do not hesitate to ask!

## **Course Objectives**

As in most branches of philosophy, philosophical thinking about moral issues encompasses a variety of theoretical approaches and perspectives on specific topics. This course aims to acquaint you with some of this variety, and to develop your understanding of the reasoning underlying the various perspectives we consider. It will also invite you to engage these perspectives actively and critically by developing your own analyses and reasoned evaluations of the views discussed. This approach will contribute to the development of your critical thinking skills—skills which are useful not only in philosophy, but in many other walks of life, both academic and non-academic. Our approach will also provide useful preparation for future courses in philosophy, especially higher-level courses in ethics, medical ethics, social philosophy, and political philosophy.

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- understand and explain various moral theories;
- analyze and critically evaluate arguments ethicists have developed;
- understand some of the ways moral theories relate to current political, legal, and societal, issues;
- develop your own ideas and arguments concerning topics in ethical thinking;
- effectively communicate your analyses, evaluations, and ideas in written work.

## **Readings**

All readings are posted on LEARN as pdfs you can download.

## **Course Requirements and Assessment**

- Paper 1: Oct 5, 20%
- Test 1: Oct 19, 20%
- Paper 2: Nov 16, 30%
- Test 2: Nov 30, 20%
- Attendance and participation: 10%

## **Papers**

Both papers should be 900-1200 words and topics will be handed out. For the first paper, you have the option of handing in a rewrite based on my comments. If you choose to do this your new paper grade will be an average of the original and the rewrite; your grade will not go down if the new draft is worse, but improved grades require significant changes and not just small edits. Paper assignments will ask you to write about your own ideas about a philosophical problem while engaging the texts and ideas we've encountered in class. The focus is on presenting an original argument. Of course this means the ideas in your papers must be your own; we will talk more in class about how to ensure that the ideas you present as your own really are, and how to cite any outside sources you do use appropriately. If you have any questions at any time about academic honesty and what it requires, do not hesitate to ask. Just raise your hand or approach me after class. For help with writing, check out [The Writing Centre](#).

## Tests

Tests will be a mix of multiple choice, short answer and short essay; test 1 covers the first six weeks of material. Test 1 covers the first half of the course and test 2 the second half.

## Attendance and Participation

Attendance is required and everyone should participate in class discussion. There are several ways to participate in this class: you can participate in class discussion, or by contributing to the discussion on LEARN, or by emailing or speaking with me personally. If you have to miss class, you are responsible for finding out what content you missed. If you come to class regularly without participating, your attendance and participation grade will be 70 percent (you may miss up to three classes for any reason with no penalty). If you participate regularly that will increase your participation grade; if you attend less frequently that will lower it. Contributing several questions and comments during each week will earn a grade at least in the 80s range. I will post attendance and participation grades on LEARN at the end of term; if you don't agree with yours please email me and we can discuss it.

## Course Outline

### Week 0: Introduction

- Sept 7: Introduction. No reading assigned.

### Week 1: Moral theory: early utilitarianism

- Sept 12 John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Read Chapters 1 and 2 and pp 41-51).
- Sept 14: J. J. C. Smart, "Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism," *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 6(25) (1956), 344-354.

### Week 2: Moral theory: Kantian moral philosophy

- Sept 19: Immanuel Kant, selection from *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, reprinted in Russ Shafer-Landau, *Moral Theory: An Anthology* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).
- Sept 21: Christine Korsgaard, "Kant's Formula of Universal Law," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 66 (1985), reprinted in Russ Shafer-Landau, *Ethical Theory: An Anthology*, 2nd edition (Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 499-509.

### Week 3: Moral theory: pluralism, relativism, skepticism

- Sept 26: W. D. Ross, "What Makes Right Acts Right," from his book *The Right and The Good* (Oxford University Press) 2002 (1930) (read pp. 16 - 47)
- Sept 28: Oct 29 J. L. Mackie, "The Subjectivity of Values" in his *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (Pelican Books, 1977). Read sections 1, 7, 8, 10, and 11.

### Week 4: Moral theory: self-interest and contractarianism

- Oct 3: David Gauthier, "Why Contractarianism?" In Vallentyne, P. (ed) *Contractarianism and Rational Choice: Essays on David Gauthier's Morals by Agreement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 15-30.

- Oct 5 Christopher Morris, "Moral Standing and Rational-Choice Contractarianism," In Vallentyne, P. (ed) *Contractarianism and Rational Choice: Essays on David Gauthier's Morals by Agreement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 76-95. **First paper due.**

#### **Week 5: Utilitarianism, disability, and challenges to theory**

- Oct 10: FALL BREAK - NO CLASS
- Oct 12: Peter Singer, selection from *Practical Ethics 2nd edition* (Cambridge University Press, 1993). Read pages 83-109 and pages 181-190.

#### **Week 6: Utilitarianism, disability, and challenges to theory, continued**

- Oct 17: Eva Feder Kittay, "The Personal is Philosophical is the Personal," in Kittay and Carlson, eds., *Cognitive Disability and Its Challenge to Moral Philosophy*, (Wiley-Blackwell 2010).
- Oct 19: **FIRST TEST**

#### **Week 7: Feminism, racism, and challenges to theory**

- Oct 24: Nel Noddings, "An Ethic of Caring," from *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (University of California Press, 1984), 79–103, reprinted in Russ Shafer-Landau, *Moral Theory: An Anthology* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).
- Oct 26: Charles Mills, "'Ideal theory' as Ideology," *Hypatia*, 20(3) (2005), 165–183.

#### **Week 8: Values, ownership, and income inequality**

- Oct 31: John Rawls, selection from *A Theory of Justice* (first published 1971), reprinted in Russ Shafer-Landau, *Ethical Theory* (Wiley, 2013) 581-591.
- Nov 2: Robert Nozick, "Distributive Justice," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 3 (1973), 45-126. Read pages 45 to 61 only.

#### **Week 9: Decolonization and reconciliation**

- Nov 7: Truth and Reconciliation Committee of Canada, "What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation, 2015). Read pp. 1-8. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1 (1) (2012), 1-40. Read pages 1-22.
- Nov 9: Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1 (1) (2012), 1-40. Read pages 23-40.

#### **Week 10: Responses to global inequality: effective altruism and its critics**

- Nov 14: Peter Singer, "[The Logic of Effective Altruism](#)," *Boston Review*, July 6, 2015.
- Nov 16: Angus Deaton, "[Response to 'The Logic of Effective Altruism'](#)," *Boston Review*, July 6, 2015; Amia Srinivasan, "[Stop the Robot Apocalypse](#)," *London Review of Books*, Sept 23, 2015; Jennifer Nagel, "[Effective Altruism and the Syrian Refugee Crisis: A Canadian Response](#)." **Paper 2 due.**

### **Week 11: Bioethics and the problem of pluralism**

- Nov 21: Leigh Turner, "Bioethics in a Multicultural World: Medicine and Morality in Pluralistic Settings," *Health Care Analysis* 11 (2003), 99-117.
- Nov 23: Donald Ainslie, "Bioethics and the Problem of Pluralism," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 19 (2002), 1-28.

### **Week 12:**

- Nov 28: selection from Tim Mulgan, *Ethics for a Broken World* (Acumen Publishing, 2011), Read pages 1-11, 122-129, and 173-178.
- Nov 30: **SECOND TEST**

### **Late work**

Please submit your papers to LEARN before class on the day they are due. Obviously, you should hand in your papers on time, but if you must be late, I will subtract three percentage points from your paper grade per day of lateness. If you experience unexpected difficulties like illness or personal difficulties, please let me know; if you expect to miss a deadline or test, please let me know by email as soon as possible and preferably beforehand.

### **Information on Plagiarism Detection**

No formal or technological plagiarism detection mechanisms will be used in this class.

### **Electronic Device Policy**

There is no formal policy against the use of laptops or tablets in class, but there are two rules: 1) please do not use technology in ways that are distracting to me or to the other students and 2) please be mentally present for what is going on in the classroom. This means no videos, no social media, no email, and no checking your phone during class. If you must use your phone, please leave the classroom.

### **Attendance Policy**

Attendance is not formally required, and you will not be graded on it but attendance, but in practice you have to be in class to understand the material. If you have to miss class, you are responsible for finding out what content you missed.

### **Mental Health Support**

All of us need a support system. The faculty and staff in Arts encourage students to seek out mental health supports if they are needed.

### **On Campus**

- Counselling Services: [counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca) / 519-888-4567 xt 32655
- **MATES**: one-to-one peer support program offered by Federation of Students (FEDS) and Counselling Services
- Health Services Emergency service: located across the creek from Student Life Centre

### **Off campus, 24/7**

- **Good2Talk**: Free confidential help line for post-secondary students. Phone: 1-866-925-5454

- Grand River Hospital: Emergency care for mental health crisis. Phone: 519-749-433 ext. 6880
- [Here 24/7](#): Mental Health and Crisis Service Team. Phone: 1-844-437-3247
- [OK2BME](#): set of support services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning teens in Waterloo. Phone: 519-884-0000 extension 213

Full details can be found online at the Faculty of ARTS [website](#)

Download [UWaterloo and regional mental health resources \(PDF\)](#)

Download the [WatSafe app](#) to your phone to quickly access mental health support information

### **Cross-listed course**

Please note that a cross-listed course will count in all respective averages no matter under which rubric it has been taken. For example, a PHIL/PSCI cross-list will count in a Philosophy major average, even if the course was taken under the Political Science rubric.

### **Academic Integrity**

**Academic Integrity:** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. See the [UWaterloo Academic Integrity webpage](#) and the [Arts Academic Integrity webpage](#) for more information.

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to [Policy 71 - Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties check [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read [Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances](#), Section 4. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

**Appeals:** A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to [Policy 72 - Student Appeals](#).

### **Accommodation for Students with Disabilities**

**Note for students with disabilities:** The [AccessAbility Services](#) office, located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (1401), collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term.