

University of Waterloo
Department of Philosophy
PHIL 121
Moral Issues
Winter 2018
Tuesdays 6:30-9:20 AL 124

This is an unofficial syllabus -- get the official one from Learn or from me. Thanks!

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: Wednesdays 1:30-3:30 (except Jan 10)
Email: pmarino@uwaterloo.ca

Course Description

In this course we'll discuss controversial moral topics, and we'll study a range of philosophical views on each. Topics include global poverty, euthanasia and assisted suicide, abortion, prenatal testing for infants with disabilities, income inequality, sexism, racism, indigenous issues, ethical issues in technology, and environmental ethics. 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 texts listed for a given date before class and be ready to discuss them. 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 points of view on the moral issues in the course;
- analyze and critically evaluate existing arguments related to moral issues;
- identify reasons why there is so much disagreement about controversial moral issues;
- understand some of the ways ethical theory relates to practical moral problems;
- develop your own ideas and arguments concerning the issues in the course;
- 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, due Jan 30, 20%
- In-class test, Feb 13, 25%
- Paper 2, due Mar 13, 20%
- In class test, Apr 3, 25%
- Attendance and participation, 10%

Paper

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 two 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. If for some reason coming to class is a problem for you, let me know and we can discuss.

Course Outline

Jan 9 (week 1): Global poverty and introduction to ethical frameworks

- Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* (1972): 229-243.
- Onora O'Neill, "Kantian Approaches to Some Famine Problems," (published 1980), reprinted in Russ Shafer-Landau (ed.), *Ethical Theory: An Anthology* (Wiley, 2013), **read only pages 510-514.**
- Amartya Sen, "Property and Hunger," *Economics and Philosophy*, 4(01) 57 (2008), 57-68.
- Angus Deaton, "[Response to 'The Logic of Effective Altruism'](#)," July 6, *Boston Review*, July 6, 2015.

Jan 16 (week 2): Assisted suicide and euthanasia

- James Rachels, "Active and Passive Euthanasia," *The New England Journal of Medicine* 292.2 (1975), open-source post-print.
- Daniel Callahan, "A Case Against Euthanasia," in Andrew Cohen and Christopher Heath Wellman, eds. *Contemporary Debates in Applied Ethics* (John Wiley & Sons, 2014), pp. 179-190.
- Rachel Aviv, "[The Death Treatment](#)," *The New Yorker*, June 22, 2015.

Jan 23 (week 3): Abortion

- Mary Anne Warren, "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion," *The Monist* 1973 (43-61), sections 1, 2, and Postscript.
- Don Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral," *The Journal of Philosophy*, 86(4) (1989), 183-202.
- Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1(1) (1971), 47-66.
- Ruth Padawer, "[The Two-Minus-One Pregnancy](#)," *New York Times Magazine*, August 10, 2011.

Jan 30 (week 4) Disability and prenatal testing

- Harriet McBryde Johnson, "[Unspeakable Conversations](#)," *New York Times Magazine*, February 16, 2003.
- Elizabeth Barnes, "Valuing Disability, Causing Disability," *Ethics* 125.1 (2014): 88-113.
- Marsha Saxton, "A Disability Critique: Why Members of the Disability Community Oppose Prenatal Diagnosis and Selective Abortion," in *Prenatal Testing and Disability Rights*, edited by Erik Parens and Adrienne Ash, 2000, Georgetown University Press.
- **FIRST PAPER DUE**

Feb 6 (week 5): Income inequality

- John Rawls, selection from *A Theory of Justice* (first published 1971), reprinted in Russ Shafer-Landau, *Ethical Theory* (Wiley, 2013) 581-591.
- Robert Nozick, "Distributive Justice," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 3 (1973), 45-126 **read only pages 45 to 61.**
- T. M. Scanlon, "[Libertarianism and Liberty](#)," *Boston Review*, October 16, 2011.

Feb 13 (week 6): First test and paper rewrite workshop

Feb 20 READING WEEK - NO CLASS

Feb 27 (week 7): Sexism and gender oppression

- Marilyn Frye, "Sexism," in *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (Crossing Press, 1983): 17-40.
- Ann Cudd, "Oppression by Choice," *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 25 (1994), 22-44.
- Hana Shafi, "[The Trouble with \(White\) Feminism](#)," *THIS*, March 11, 2015.

Mar 6 (week 8): Race and racism

- Jorge Garcia, "The Heart of Racism," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 27.1 (1996): 5-46.
- Tommie Shelby, "Is Racism in the 'Heart'?" *Journal of Social Philosophy* 33 (2002): 411-420.
- Government of Canada, Department of Justice, "Cultural Diversity in Canada: The Social Construction of Racial Difference," [Part 5: The Politics of Multiculturalism](#).

Mar 13 (week 9): Indigenous issues

- Selections from The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, "What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation," pages 1-26 and 51-55.
- University of Manitoba, Centre for Human Rights Research, "[Reconciliation and Decolonization](#)."
- Six Nations Council, [Six Miles Deep - Six Nations of the Grand River](#).
- Bob Joseph, [A Brief Definition of Decolonization and Indigenization](#).
- **SECOND PAPER DUE**

Mar 20 (week 10): Ethical and social issues in technology

- Kenneth Himma, "The Justification of Intellectual Property: Contemporary Philosophical Disputes," *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 59(7) (2008), 1143-1161.
- Joel Achenbach, "[Driverless Cars are Colliding with the Creepy Trolley Problem](#)," *Washington Post*, December 29, 2015.
- Robert Faris, Amar Ashar, Urs Gasser, and Daisy Joo, "Understanding Harmful Speech Online," (December 8, 2016). Networked Policy Series, Berkman Klein Center Publication Series No. 2016-18.
- Abeba Birhane, "[The Dark Side of Big Data -- How Mathematical Models Increase Inequality: My Review of O'Neil's book *Weapons of Math Destruction*](#)."

Mar 27 (week 11): Environmental ethics

- Mark Sagoff, "At the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima, or Why Political Questions Are Not All Economic," *Arizona Law Review* Vol. 23 (1981), pp. 1283-1298.
- Ramachandra Guha, "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Perservation," *Environmental Ethics*. 11 (1989): 71-83.
- Kyle Powys Whyte, "[Why the Native American Pipeline Resistance in North Dakota is about Climate Justice](#)," *The Conversation*, Sept 16, 2016.

Apr 3 (week 12): 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

The use of laptops or tablets in this class is allowed only for students who have received personal approval from me. Please do not use your phone during class. If you need to use your phone, you may step out of the classroom and return when you are done. See details in the "Further Course Information" document.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is required. See "Attendance and participation" section above.

Mental Health Support

On Campus

- Counselling Services: 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 (requirement for all Arts courses)

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.