

## PHIL 230 (003) – Introduction to Ethics

Winter Term 2, 2017 – 18

Mon, Wed, Fri, 14:00 – 15:00

Chemistry Building, room D200

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### Course description

Some of the things we do and care about seem to be imbued with moral properties. For example, it seems rather uncontroversial that some actions are morally wrong. That is, from the point of view of morality, there seems to be actions that we should not do. Other actions appear to be morally right, or morally required. We may think that these actions are morally obligatory. Some states of affairs seem to be good, while others appear to be bad. But is it true that some actions are morally wrong; others, morally right? If so, what makes an action morally wrong, or morally right? What explains the fact—if it is a fact—that an action has the moral status it has? Is it true that some states of affairs are good; others, bad? What explains their goodness or badness? Indeed, what is it for something to be good or bad? This course offers an introduction to various ethical and metaethical theories that attempt to answer such fundamental questions about ethical life.

The aim of this course is two-fold. The first is to develop a working familiarity with the strengths and weaknesses of some of the most important views and theories in ethics, and—to some extent—in metaethics. The second is to develop your writing and analytic skills by paraphrasing and evaluating various arguments, understanding their objections, and presenting good arguments for your views.

### Required Texts

- *The Ethical Life: Fundamental Readings in Ethics and Moral Problems*, Forth Edition (2018), edited by Russ Shafer-Landau. Oxford University Press.
- *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, Forth Edition (2018), by Russ Shafer-Landau. Oxford University Press.

Both books are available for purchase as a package at the *UBC Bookstore*.

### Evaluation

- 3 short (3-4 pages) papers (each worth 20% of final mark)
- Final exam (worth 35% of final mark)
- Participation (worth 5% of final mark)

### Handouts, slides etc.

Handouts and announcements will be distributed via *Connect*. Slides will also be posted on *Connect* after each class. Slides are not available before class. Please note that all slides and handouts are copywritten. This means that you are not permitted to upload (e.g. on *Course*

*Hero*) or distribute this material without permission from the instructor. Failure to abide by this policy amounts to academic misconduct (see more below) and students who upload or distribute course material without permission from the instructor are subject to disciplinary measures.

## **Papers**

Each paper should be double-spaced, and no longer than four pages. Two copies of a draft of the first paper is due at the beginning of class on Friday, October 5<sup>th</sup>. Two copies of a draft of your second paper is due at the beginning of class on Friday, November 24<sup>th</sup>. On both days, your in-class group exercises will consist in peer-reviewing the papers of the other members of your group. Note that you are required to bring in *two* copies of your draft. You will be given an instruction sheet with a list of questions to help guide your review. A revised version of your first paper is due in class along with the drafts (with comments) on Friday, October 13<sup>th</sup>, and a revised version of your second paper is due in class along with the drafts (with comments) on December 1st. Late papers will be marked down 5% per calendar day late. Failure to write a draft will also lower the final mark on your paper by 5%. No extensions will be given on papers except for medical reasons. Requests for extensions must be supported by appropriate medical documentation. The deadline for requesting an extension is one business day before a paper is due. Information about how to write a philosophy paper is available [here](#) and [here](#). Each paper will be evaluated in light of the grading scale outlined below. Given that there are no prerequisites for this course, I am not assuming that you are familiar with writing philosophy papers. So, I will be holding a mini writing workshop one week before your first draft is due (see reading schedule).

## **Grading Scale**

A+ (90-100%), A (85-89%), A- (80-84%)

Exceptional Performance. Student demonstrates a mastery of the subject matter and shows strong evidence of original thinking, good organization in written work, impressive capacity to analyze and offers insightful critical evaluations.

B+ (76-79%) B (72-75%), B- (68-71%)

Competent Performance. Student demonstrates an understanding of subject matter, as well as some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability, and a reasonable understanding of relevant issues.

C+ (64-67%) C (60-63%), C- (55-59%)

Adequate Performance. Student demonstrates an understanding of the subject matter, the ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material. The work is acceptable but uninspired; not seriously faulty but lacking style and vigour.

D (50-54%)

Problematic Performance. Student demonstrates some, albeit incomplete, understanding of the subject matter, limited evidence of critical and analytical skills. The work lacks original thinking.

F (0-49%)

Inadequate Performance. Student demonstrates little or no evidence of understanding of the subject matter, as well as little or no evidence of critical and analytical skills, and applies a limited or irrelevant use of the literature.

### **Final examination**

The final examination will consist of twenty multiple-choice questions and five short-answer essay questions. You will be required to answer four out of five questions. The final exam will be held during the final exam period; the specific date will be determined at some later time.

### **Participation**

As stated above, your participation in the course counts for 5% of your final mark. There are no specific criteria by which I evaluate student participation. Your participation in this course will be evaluated holistically. That is, there are various ways one can obtain participation marks. These include, but are not limited to the following: active contribution in class, asking questions, offering comments, and generally engaging with the course material.

### **Policy on Lateness**

Papers which are turned in late without an extension will be penalized at the rate of 5% *per calendar day*. No extensions will be given on papers except for medical reasons. The deadline for requesting an extension is one business day before papers are due. Differed exams will not be considered except for medical reasons.

### **Academic honesty and integrity**

Here is a statement from the UBC website:

“Academic honesty is essential to the continued functioning of the University of British Columbia as an institution of higher learning and research. All UBC students are expected to behave as honest and responsible members of an academic community. Breach of those expectations or failure to follow the appropriate policies, principles, rules, and guidelines of the University with respect to academic honesty may result in disciplinary action.

It is the student's obligation to inform himself or herself of the applicable standards for academic honesty. Students must be aware that standards at the University of British Columbia may be different from those in secondary schools or at other institutions. If a student is in any doubt as to the standard of academic honesty in a particular course or assignment, then the student must consult with the instructor as soon as possible, and in no case should a student submit an assignment if the student is not clear on the relevant standard of academic honesty. If an allegation is made against a student, the Registrar may place the student on academic hold until the President has made his or her final decision. When a student is placed on academic hold, the student is blocked from all activity in the Student Service Centre.”

Students should also familiarise themselves with UBC regulation on plagiarism:

“Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation. Where direct quotations are made, they must be clearly delineated (for example, within quotation marks or separately indented). Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else's work as one's own. Plagiarism should not occur in submitted drafts or final works. A student who seeks assistance from a tutor or other scholastic aids must ensure that the work submitted is the student's own. Students are responsible for ensuring that any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. Students who are in any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult their instructor before handing in any assignments.”

See the following link for further information about academic dishonesty and plagiarism:  
<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/?tree=3,54,111,959>

**Provisional Reading Schedule** (subject to change)

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Mon, Wed, Fri, 14:00 – 15:00

Chemistry Building, room D200

FE: The Fundamentals of Ethics

EL: The Ethical Life: Fundamental Readings in Ethics and Moral Problems

Date	Topic	Readings	Notes
<b>Week 1</b>			
Wed. 3 Jan.	▪ Introduction	▪ Course Syllabus	
Fri. 5		▪ FE, Introduction (1 – 20) ▪ EL, Introduction (1 – 7)	
<b>Week 2</b>			
Mon. 8	▪ <b>Normative ethics:</b> Divine command theory	▪ FE, Ch. 5 (63 – 75) ▪ EL, Ch. 6 (75 – 83)	
Wed. 10		▪ Cont'd.	
Fri. 12	▪ Psychological egoism	▪ FE, Ch. 7 (91 – 106)	
<b>Week 3</b>			
Mon. 15	▪ Ethical egoism	▪ FE, Ch. 8 (107 – 119)	
Wed. 17	▪ <b>Interlude I – How to write a philosophy paper</b>	▪ <a href="#">Horban (1993)</a> ▪ <a href="#">Horban (2005)</a>	Paper topics released on Connect
Fri. 19	▪ <b>Interlude II – The Good Life:</b> Hedonism	▪ FE, Ch. 1 (23 – 31) ▪ EL, Ch. 1 (11 – 20)	
<b>Week 4</b>			
Mon. 22		▪ Cont'd.	
Wed. 24	▪ Value pluralism	▪ FE, Ch. 2 (32 – 43) ▪ EL, Ch. 2 (21 – 24)	
Fri. 26	▪ Desire satisfaction theory	▪ FE, Ch. 3 (44 – 50) ▪ EL, Ch. 3 (25 – 36)	First papers due at the beginning of class
<b>Week 5</b>			
Mon. 29		▪ FE, Ch. 4 (51 – 60) ▪ EL, Ch. 4 (37 – 52)	
Wed. 31	▪ <b>Back to normative ethics:</b> Consequentialism	▪ FE, Ch. 9 (120 – 138) ▪ EL, Ch. 8 (97 – 106)	
Fri. 2 Feb.		▪ Cont'd.	

<b>Week 6</b>			
Mon. 5		▪ Cont'd.	
Wed. 7		▪ FE, Ch. 10 (139 – 159)	
Fri. 9		▪ Cont'd.	

<b>Week 7</b>			
Mon. 12	▪ Family Day		University closed
Wed. 14	▪ Kant's moral theory	▪ FE, Ch. 11 (160 – 174) ▪ EL, Ch. 9 (107 – 119)	Second paper topics released on Connect
Fri. 16	▪	▪ Cont'd.	

<b>Reading Week</b>			
Mon. 19			No classes
Wed. 21			No classes
Fri. 23			No classes

<b>Week 8</b>			
Mon. 26		▪ Cont'd.	
Wed. 28		▪ FE, Ch. 12 (175 – 193)	
Fri. 2 Mar.		▪ Cont'd.	Paper 2 due at the beginning of class

<b>Week 9</b>			
Mon. 5		▪ Cont'd.	
Wed. 7	▪ Ethical pluralism	▪ FE, 15 (221 – 238)	
Fri. 9		▪ Cont'd.	

<b>Week 10</b>			
Mon. 12		▪ FE, Ch. 16 (239 – 255) ▪ EL, Ch. 11 (131 – 142)	
Wed. 14		▪ Cont'd.	
Fri. 16		▪ Cont'd.	

<b>Week 11</b>			
Mon. 19	▪ Virtue Ethics	▪ FE, Ch. 17 (256 – 275) ▪ EL, Ch. 12 (143 – 154)	
Wed. 21		▪ Cont'd.	
Fri. 23		▪ Cont'd.	

<b>Week 12</b>			
Mon. 26	▪ <b>Metaethics:</b> Ethical relativism	▪ FE, Ch. 19 (293 – 309) ▪ EL, Ch. 16 (190 – 198) ▪ EL, Ch. 17 (199 – 207)	
Wed. 28		▪ Cont'd.	Third paper topics posted on Connect
Fri. 30	▪ Moral Nihilism	▪ FE, Ch. 20 (310 – 322) ▪ EL, Ch. 15 (181 – 189)	

<b>Week 13</b>			
Mon. 2 Apr.	▪	▪ Cont'd.	▪
Wed. 4	▪	▪ Cont'd.	▪
Fri. 6	▪ Moral Objectivity (Time permitting)	▪ FE, Ch. 21 (323 – 342) ▪ EL, Ch. 18 (208 – 221)	Paper 3 due at the beginning of class

Exam period:

April 10 – 25