

PHIL 2070: INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS, FALL 2011

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Class Location: Vanier College 135
Class Time: Tues,Thurs 11.30-12.30
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

A basic introduction both to the major ethical theories in Western thought and to some basic meta-ethical questions concerning the possibility of moral truth. We will also explore the application of these theories to the moral questions that arise in our everyday engagement with the world around us, and we will consider their application to contemporary debates on contentious moral issues.

COURSE READINGS:

There is one primary textbook for this course, in which almost all of your readings can be found.

Steven M. Cahn and Peter Markie, *Ethics: History, Theory and Contemporary Issues*, 4th Edition. Oxford University Press, 2009.

You can purchase the text at the York University Bookstore. Any other readings or links to podcasts, videos and other media can be found (for free) on the course Moodle website.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this course:

1. You will be able to identify, recognize and critically examine the major ethical theories in Western thought, and to identify key thinkers associated with those theories.
2. You will be able to think imaginatively and critically about questions in metaethics (are there moral truths?), ethical theory (how should I decide what to do?) and their application (what should I do? How should I persuade others what they should do?), and you will begin to grasp the relationship between them.
3. You will develop basic reading and comprehension skills in philosophy: namely, the ability to read a philosophy text carefully, to identify the author's position, and to identify and evaluate the arguments she uses to support them.
4. You will develop basic analytic and communicative skills in philosophy; these include the ability to form a thesis statement, to support it with your own arguments and to defend it against possible objections, within a short essay format.

York students are required to maintain high standards of academic integrity and are subject to the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty:

(<http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/legislation/senate/acadhone.htm>)

Students are also expected to review the materials on the Academic Integrity website.

(<http://www.yorku.ca/academicintegrity>).

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

There are five components to your course assessment in PHIL 2070:

a) In-Class Test (25% of final grade)

There will be an in-class test (60 minutes) on material covered thus far. The format will be a combination of definitions and short-answer questions. A list of potential terms and questions will be given out in advance (by September 27). The test will be held on **October 18**.

b) Take-Home Essay (25% of final grade)

4-5 pages double-spaced. Topics will be given out in class (by October 20), along with instructions for writing a paper in philosophy. You must submit one copy of your paper through www.turnitin.com and one paper copy to your TA in lecture, and must attach a copy of the results page of your online academic integrity test. Your paper is due **November 10**.

c) Take-Home Assignment (10% of final grade)

You will be asked to find a newspaper, magazine or blog article that describes a contemporary moral issue and write a short analysis of the issue applying what you have learned in this course, following a series of critical questions. Detailed instructions, more information, and a sample will be provided in class (by November 10). This assignment is due **November 29**.

d) Final Exam (30% of final grade)

The exam format will be a combination of definitions, fill-in-the-blank, short-answer and long-answer questions. Students will be expected to know, and apply, the material covered in class, tutorials and the readings. Further details will be provided in class. **DATE TBA:** Do not make travel arrangements during the exam period (**December 8-22**) until you know the dates of all your exams.

e) Participation: (10%: 5% attendance, 5% participation)

This includes attendance, respectful and engaged verbal contributions to tutorial discussions (this is a matter of quality, and *not* quantity, of contributions) as well as your participation in our class's online discussion forums.

Late work (or a missed test) will only be accepted without penalty if you have prior approval from me, or in the event of a documented emergency. All other work will be penalized at a rate of 3% per day. After 5 days it will not be accepted.

If you are registered with Counseling and Disability Services, or if have particular circumstances you believe may prevent you from participating fully in the class, please let me or your TA know as soon as possible so that we can make all the necessary arrangements.

Please note: the last day to drop this course without receiving a grade is **November 11**. If you write the midterm test, you will have 25% graded feedback by this date, with which to make your decision.

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SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

Date:	Topic:	Background Reading/Resources (to be completed <i>before</i> class that day)
8/9	Introduction to the Course	<i>None Required, but you are encouraged to read/listen to the following before class:</i> Podcast: Radiolab on "Morality" (48 minutes) Article: Guy Kahane, "Would we swallow a 'morality' pill?" (Globe and Mail)
13/9	God and Morality	Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i> pp. 5-16
15/9	God and Morality	Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i> pp. 5-16 Podcast: "Morality Without God" (13 minutes) Experiment: "Talking with God: The Euthyphro Dilemma" http://philosophyexperiments.com/euthyphro/Default.aspx
20/9	The Social Contract	Thomas Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> pp. 216-227 Podcast: Hobbes – <i>Leviathan</i> (17 minutes)
22/9	Reason and Duty	Immanuel Kant, <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> pp. 283-289 Podcast: Kant – <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> (14 minutes)
27/9	Reason and Duty <i>Potential Test Questions Available</i>	Immanuel Kant, <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> pp. 289-305 Onora O'Neill, "A Simplified Account of Kant's Ethics" (on Moodle)
29/9	Reason and Duty	Immanuel Kant, <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , pp. 305-311
4/10	Reason and Duty	Immanuel Kant, <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , continued
6/10	Duty vs. Sentiment	David Hume, <i>A Treatise of Human Nature</i> pp. 243-254 Podcast: Julian Savulescu on the 'Yuk' Factor (9 minutes)
11/10 & 13/10	<i>Co-Curricular Week</i>	<i>None</i>
18/10	In-Class Midterm Test	<i>None</i>
20/10	Utilitarianism <i>Essay Questions Posted Online</i>	Jeremy Bentham, <i>Introduction to the Principles of Morals...</i> pp. 319-326
25/10	Utilitarianism	John Stuart Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , pp. 327-344 Podcast: Roger Crisp on Utilitarianism (13 minutes)

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SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS, CONTINUED

Date:	Topic:	Background Reading/Resources (to be completed <i>before</i> class that day)
27/10	Utilitarianism	John Stuart Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> pp. 345-361
1/11	Utilitarianism	John Stuart Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , continued
3/11	Character and Virtue	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> pp. 124-132 Podcast: Aristotle – Nicomachean Ethics (24 minutes)
8/11	Character and Virtue	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> pp. 132-147 Podcast: Terence Irwin on Aristotle's Ethics (17 minutes)
10/11	Character and Virtue Take-Home Essay Due <i>Take-Home Assignment Posted</i>	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> continued
15/11	Ethics and Gender	Virginia Held, "Feminist Transformations of Moral Theory" pp. 724-738
17/11	Cultural Relativism	James Rachels, "The Challenges of Cultural Relativism" pp. 696-703 Podcast: Susan Neiman on Morality in the 21 st century (18 minutes)
22/11	Poverty	Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence and Morality" pp. 821-828 Podcast: Peter Singer on the life you can save (15 minutes) Youtube Video: Peter Singer on the Colbert Report (7 minutes)
24/11	Abortion	Judith Jarvis Thompson, "A Defense of Abortion" pp. 765-775 Experiment: "Whose Body is it Anyway?" http://philosophyexperiments.com/whosebody/Default.aspx
29/11	Animals Take-Home Assignment Due	Alaistair Norcross: "Puppies, Pigs, and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases" (article posted as pdf on Moodle) Podcast: Peter Singer on the Human Use of Animals
1/12	Exam Review	<i>None</i>

Note: due to time constraints, I have only assigned one required reading for each applied topic. In each case, I will provide some recommendations for an alternative perspective or opposing viewpoint in class (there are also examples in your textbook).