PHIL 347 Lec 01
Contemporary Moral Problems
Spring 2023

COURSE OUTLINE

Instructor Name: Nicholas Kerklaan
Email: nicholas.kerklaan@ucalgary.ca
(If emailing during the week, please allow up to 24 hours for a response before following up, particularly if you email after 6pm. On weekends, please allow up to the following Monday for a response. I will do my best to respond to time-sensitive requests even on evenings and weekends, but cannot guarantee that I will be able to do so).
Office hours: via Zoom by email request

COURSE DELIVERY INFORMATION
Synchronous remote: Tuesdays & Thursdays 6:00-8:45pm (lectures not recorded)

PREREQUISITE(S)
There are no prerequisites for this course.

COURSE INFORMATION
In the real world (that is, outside of philosophy departments), debates over right and wrong occur every day, often on issues of potentially far-ranging significance. How we respond to these issues, both as individuals and as a society, may well have long-term practical consequences that are felt for generations to come. This course explores how such issues can be illuminated and clarified, and our ability to debate about them improved, through application of what philosophers call *moral theories*, which in broad terms are just sets of principles that purport to explain what actions are right or wrong, and/or what things are good or bad. We will examine several popular moral theories and apply them to such issues as abortion, animal rights and ethical vegetarianism, the moral and legal status of artificial intelligence, and more.

Our goal in doing this not to definitively resolve any of those issues, nor to change anyone's mind about anyone of them, but to better understand how moral theory can help to make sense of real-world moral debates, and how philosophers use moral theories to develop strong logical arguments (noting that "strong" and "logical" don't necessarily mean "obviously correct") for various positions within those debates.

COURSE OBJECTIVES/LEARNING OUTCOMES
The aim of this course is to introduce students to key moral theories and demonstrate how they can be applied to controversial real-world moral issues. A crucial component of this will be evaluating arguments for and against both the theories themselves, and various positions on different issues using the theories.

REQUIRED/RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS, READINGS AND MATERIALS
All course readings are available online through the library. A list of readings, along with links to them, will be posted on D2L.

COURSE ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION
Assessments in this course test students' comprehension of, and ability to thoughtfully engage with, the material we cover. Because some of these assessments take the form of written work, students' ability to communicate clearly and concisely in writing is also a factor in evaluation.

There is no midterm or final exam for this course.

A passing grade on any particular assessment is not required to pass the course as a whole.

Assessments
- <u>Five</u> discussion board posts, worth 5% each **(25% of total class grade)**
  - There will be a discussion board on D2L for each of weeks 2-6 of the course (May 8-June 11). Students make a 100-150 word (or so) post on each week's board, <u>either as "top level" post or as a response to another student's "top level" post.</u>
  - Posts are due <u>by 11:59 PM on the Sunday of each week</u>:
    - **Post 1: May 14**
    - **Post 2: May 21**
    - **Post 3: May 28**
    - **Post 4: June 4**
    - **Post 5: June 11**
  - Posts are graded out of 5 points.
  - Posts should display thoughtful engagement with material from the week in question. Top-level posts could raise questions or criticisms of material we've read or discussed that week, attempt to illuminate some aspect of the material through personal experience, etc. Comments to your colleagues' posts could critically and respectfully engage with points raised by the poster, expand with additional thoughts and reflections, etc. I am not looking for "correct" posts so much as I am looking for evidence that you are paying attention to, and reflecting on, what we cover in class.
  - You are, of course, encouraged to make more than one post and engage with more than one of your colleagues' posts, <u>but you are only required to make one top-level post OR response comment, and will only be graded on the first post (regardless of type) that you make.</u>
  - As the point of these discussion boards is to give students a chance to engage, less formally and more collaboratively than through other assessment methods, with the material as we work through it, students will <u>not</u> be permitted to "write ahead" to future weeks; the week's board will only be available as of the Sunday which begins each week.

- <u>Two</u> online quizzes, worth 15% each **(30% of total class grade)**
  - Quizzes are multiple choice and designed to test comprehension of the material covered in lectures and readings.
  - Quizzes will be posted on D2L under Assessments (Quizzes). Each will be made available over a weekend (Friday morning to Sunday evening), and you will have 75 minutes to take it (ensure that you have the full 75 minutes available when you start the quiz; the extended period of availability is to give students as much flexibility as possible in finding a period of time to take either quiz).
    - **Quiz 1: available from Friday, May 19 to Sunday, May 21 at 11:59 PM**
    - **Quiz 2: available from Friday, June 9 to Sunday, June 11 at 11:59 PM**
  - The second quiz is <u>not</u> cumulative (i.e. does not encompass material covered by the first quiz). In advance of each quiz being made available, students will be informed exactly what material can be expected to appear – broadly speaking, students can expect to see

any material covered in lecture or required readings up to the class Thursday before the quiz is made available.

- o <u>Quizzes are "open book"</u>; feel free to consult lecture notes, readings, whatever other material, or even with fellow students, while writing, but do keep in mind the 75-minute time limit.

- <u>Two</u> short papers, the first worth 20% and the second worth 25% **(45% of total class grade).**
    - o These are short (1000-15000) word philosophical papers designed to test students' ability to apply and evaluate ideas that we have discussed in class.
    - o Students will select from several questions for each paper, each of which will involve evaluating an argument that we have covered up to that point in the course. <u>More information about what this means, and how the papers should be written, will be provided in class.</u>
    - o Papers are to be submitted through D2L:
        - **Paper 1: due at 11:59 PM on Friday, May 26**
        - **Paper 2: due at 11:59 PM on Sunday, June 18**

Late Policy and Extensions
For discussion posts, because the idea is to get students engaging with the material and with each other during the week we cover it, <u>no late posts will be graded and no extensions will be granted.</u>

For quizzes, because I have tried to be as flexible as possible with when students can take the quiz, <u>I will similarly not accept late quizzes or allow for rescheduling, except under extenuating circumstances, about which I should be contacted as soon as possible.</u>

For the two papers, late submissions will be assessed at -10% of the assignment grade for each day, starting from immediately after the initial deadline. <u>I am more flexible about granting extensions on these assignments, but **please let me know if you anticipate needing one as soon as possible**</u>

Grading Scale
Letter grades will be assigned based on percentage scores as follows:

A+ 96-100	**A** 95-90	**A-** 85-89
B+ 80-84	**B** 75-79	**B-** 71-74
C+ 67-70	**C** 62-66	**C-** 59-61
D+ 54-58	**D** 50-53	**D-** 46-50
F 0-45		

IMPORTANT DEPARTMENTAL, FACULTY AND UNIVERSITY INFORMATION

Academic Accommodations
It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations according to the University policies and procedures. The student accommodation policy can be found at ucalgary.ca/legal-services/sites/default/files/teams/1/Policies-Student-Accommodation-Policy.pdf.

Students needing an Accommodation because of a disability or medical condition should communicate this need to Student Accessibility Services in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: ucalgary.ca/legal-services/sites/default/files/teams/1/Policies-Accommodation-for-Students-with-Disabilities-Procedure.pdf. Students needing an Accommodation in relation to their coursework or to fulfil requirements for a graduate degree, based on a protected ground other than disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to their instructor.

Absence or Missed Course Assessments
Students who are absent from class assessments (tests, participation activities, or other assignments) should inform their instructors as soon as possible. If the reason provided for the absence is acceptable, instructors may decide that any arrangements made can take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.

Student Support and Resources
Full details and information about the following resources can be found at
ucalgary.ca/current-students/student-services

- Wellness and Mental Health Resources
- Student Success Centre
- Student Ombuds Office
- Student Union (SU) Information
- Graduate Students' Association (GSA) Information
- Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points
- Safewalk

Academic Advising
If you are a student in the Faculty of Arts, you can speak to an academic advisor in the Arts Students' Centre about course planning, course selection, registration, program progression and more. Visit the Faculty of Arts website at https://arts.ucalgary.ca/current-students/undergraduate/academic-advising for contact details and information regarding common academic concerns.

For questions specific to the philosophy program, please visit arts.ucalgary.ca/philosophy. Further academic guidance is available by contacting Jeremy Fantl (Undergraduate Program Director jfantl@ucalgary.ca) or David Dick (Honours Advisor dgdick@ucalgary.ca).

Writing Assessment and Support
The assessment of all written assignments—and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses—is based in part on writing skills. This includes correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.), as well as general clarity and organization. Research papers must include a thorough and accurate citation of sources. Students are also encouraged to use Writing Support Services for assistance. For more information, and other services offered by the Student Success Centre, please visit ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success.

Required Technology
In order to successfully engage in their learning experiences at the University of Calgary, students taking online, remote, and blended courses are required to have reliable access to the following technology:
- A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security, and malware updates;
- A current and updated web browser;
- Webcam (built-in or external);
- Microphone and speaker (built-in or external), or headset with microphone;
- Current antivirus and/or firewall software enabled;
- Broadband internet connection.

Most current laptops will have a built-in webcam, speaker and microphone.

Responsible Use of D2L
Important information and communication about this course will be posted on D2L (Desire2Learn), UCalgary's online learning management system. Visit https://ucalgary.service-now.com/it for how-to information and technical assistance.

All users of D2L are bound by the guidelines on the responsible use of D2L posted here: https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/commitment-to-the-responsible-use-of-d2l/. The instructor may establish additional specific course policies for D2L, Zoom, and any other technologies used to support remote learning. Instructional materials, including audio or video recordings of lectures, may not be posted outside of the course D2L site. Students violating this policy are subject to discipline under the University of Calgary's Non-Academic Misconduct policy.

Media Recording
Please refer to the following statement on media recording of students: https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Media-Recording-in-Learning-Environments-OSP_FINAL.pdf

Academic Misconduct/Honesty
Cheating or plagiarism on any assignment or examination is as an extremely serious academic offense, the penalty for which will be an F on the assignment or an F in the course, and possibly a disciplinary sanction such as probation, suspension, or expulsion. For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the University of Calgary Calendar at ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html.

Intellectual honesty requires that your work include adequate referencing to sources. Plagiarism occurs when you do not acknowledge or correctly reference your sources. If you have questions about referencing, please consult your instructor.

University Policies
The Instructor Intellectual Property Policy is available at ucalgary.ca/legal-services/sites/default/files/teams/1/Policies-Intellectual-Property-Policy.pdf

The University of Calgary is under the jurisdiction of the provincial Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act, as outlined at https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/access-information-privacy. The instructor (or TA) must return graded assignments *directly* to the student UNLESS written permission to do otherwise has been provided.

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright (https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/sites/default/files/teams/1/Policies-Acceptable-Use-of-Material-Protected-by-Copyright-Policy.pdf) and requirements of the copyright act (https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html).