



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
FACULTY OF ARTS  
Department of Philosophy

## PHIL 649:13 Topics in Ethics: Rational Deliberation

Winter Term 2023

Course Outline

MW 15:30 – 16.45

SA 124

**Instructor:** John A. Baker

**Office:** SS 1222

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When emailing please put “**PHIL 649**” in the subject line of the email.

**Office Hours:** After class or by zoom at other times (please email me to make an appointment).

### Course Description:

An examination of current thinking **(i)** on what might be called ‘the building blocks’ of moral deliberation, **(ii)** on marks moral *deliberation* from other kinds of moral *reasoning*, **(iii)** on what marks *moral* deliberation from other kinds of practical deliberation, **(iv)** on the implications of the fact that most or maybe all deliberation seems to be a kind of *defeasible* reasoning, **(v)** on whether the defeasible reasoning in moral and other kinds of practical deliberation should be viewed as being subject to some canons of rationality and if so what kinds of canons.

### Prerequisites:

Two previous courses in Philosophy, one of which must be Philosophy **249** [Morality, Virtue, and Society], Philosophy **397** [Value Theory], **425** [Philosophy of Law], **449** [Contemporary Metaethics] or **453** [Social and Political Philosophy] and at least one of which must be a 400 level or higher; or consent of the Department.

### Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course students

- should be able to position the study of moral deliberation and of moral reasoning in relation to classic normative metaethical and normative ethical inquiries;
- should be able to articulate reasons for viewing practical and moral reasoning as *defeasible* reasoning;
- should be able to explain how certain canons of rationality might apply to practical and moral reasoning;
- should have developed and refined their ability (i) to formulate explicit and precise analyses of the reasoning in academic papers in the field, (ii) clearly and concisely to frame and state arguments both for and against philosophical theses, and (iii) to gain the kinds of skills in analysis, argumentation, and research that would be of value in law, government and business policy development and implementation.

### Required/Recommended Texts:

Readings for the course will all be available online either directly through the University Library or through *Leganto* (accessed through ‘My Tools’ on D2L).

NB: There is a growing number of articles relevant to the issues to be examined in this course in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* – this is available online at <https://plato.stanford.edu>.

### **Assignments, due dates, and grading**

#### ***Assignments – details of what is wanted will be posted on D2L:***

1. Weekly reading assignments will be set and announced ahead of time on D2L.
2. **Two short essays** (each about 1200 words maximum, excluding footnotes and bibliography).
3. An eight minute “Speed Lecture” summarizing the main thesis of the term paper.
4. **A term paper** (about 1800 words maximum, excluding footnotes and bibliography).
5. Assignments are to be uploaded as **MS-Word files (not as pdf files)** to the digital drop box in D2L
6. There will be no registrar-scheduled final examination.

#### ***Due-dates:***

- Short Essay 1: Friday, February 10<sup>th</sup>.
- Short Essay 2: Friday, March 10<sup>th</sup>.
- Speed Lectures: Wednesday, April 10<sup>th</sup> or April 12<sup>th</sup> – the schedule will be announced in class on April 5<sup>th</sup>.
- Term Paper: Wednesday, April 26<sup>th</sup>

#### ***Grading***

1. *Ceteris paribus* the short essays will be worth 15% and 25% respectively.
2. *Ceteris paribus*, the “speed lecture” will be worth 15% of the final grade.
3. *Ceteris paribus* the term paper will be worth 45% of the final grade.
4. Except in very exceptional circumstances, and at the discretion of the instructor, a passing grade in the course will be received only if each of the essays and the term paper is submitted and the “Speed Lecture” is delivered.
5. Later virtue will be allowed to redeem earlier sin.
6. If an essay is submitted after the stated deadline, then it will receive at most a B and then only if submitted by 9am of the day after the due day: it will receive at most a C if submitted by 9am of the day after that, and so on.
7. Percentages will be computed using the numerical values set by the University as equivalent to the letter grades.

### **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/access/accommodations/policy](http://ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy).

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/policies/files/policies/procedure-for-accommodations-for-students-with-disabilities.pdf](http://ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/procedure-for-accommodations-for-students-with-disabilities.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. Instructors may request that evidence in the form of

documentation be provided. 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. For information on possible forms of documentation, including statutory declarations, please see [ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html](http://ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html)

### **Student Support and Resources**

Full details and information about the following resources can be found at [ucalgary.ca/Registrar/registration/course-outlines](http://ucalgary.ca/Registrar/registration/course-outlines)

- 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 [arts.ucalgary.ca/advising](http://arts.ucalgary.ca/advising) for contact details and information regarding common academic concerns.

For questions specific to the philosophy program, please visit [phil.ucalgary.ca](http://phil.ucalgary.ca). Further academic guidance is available by contacting David Dick (Undergraduate Program Director [dgdick@ucalgary.ca](mailto:dgdick@ucalgary.ca)) or Jeremy Fantl (Honours Advisor [jfantl@ucalgary.ca](mailto:jfantl@ucalgary.ca)). If you have questions regarding registration, please email Rebecca Lesser (Undergraduate Program Administrator [phildept@ucalgary.ca](mailto:phildept@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 (one-on-one appointments, drop-in support and writing workshops). For more information, and other services offered by the Student Success Centre, please visit [ucalgary.ca/ssc](http://ucalgary.ca/ssc).

### **Online Resources and Electronic Devices**

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

The instructor reserves the right to establish specific course policies regarding the use of electronic devices. If permitted, the use of devices must be exclusively for instructional purposes, and without disruption to the instructor or fellow students. Devices should be set to silent mode during lectures. Audio or video recording of lectures is not permitted without the written permission of the instructor. Students violating this policy are subject to discipline under the University of Calgary's Non-Academic Misconduct policy.

**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](http://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/policies/files/policies/Intellectual%20Property%20Policy.pdf](http://ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/Intellectual%20Property%20Policy.pdf)

The University of Calgary is under the jurisdiction of the provincial Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act, as outlined at [ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip](http://ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip). 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 ([ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf](http://ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf)) and requirements of the copyright act ([laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html](http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html)).