



FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

PHIL 249 Lec 01: "Morality, Virtue and Society"

Fall Term 2016

Course Outline

Lectures: MWF 09:00-9:50, ENE 239

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Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the philosophical discipline *Ethics*, aka *Moral Philosophy*. The discipline involves investigations of the underlying natures of values, duties, rights, and of virtues like justice, loyalty, and so on.

Such investigations can be either (a) *descriptive* or (b) *normative* – e.g., what is justice *taken* to involve and what *ought* it to be taken to involve? What rights and duties *are* we taken to have and what rights and duties *ought* we be taken to have? The focus of philosophical ethics is primarily normative.

As an introduction to Ethics, the course aims to lay the ground for further study in the field and above all to make clear the importance and interest in such studies. Correspondingly, the course will introduce each of the three interconnected parts into which the discipline is usually thought to be divided:

(a). **Applied ethics (aka “first order ethics”):** Applied ethical investigations identify and examine arguments for and against the various possible answers to questions like the following: “Is it *always* or *ever* morally wrong to abort a foetus?” “Is germ-line genetic engineering for enhancement purposes *always* morally impermissible?” “Is happiness to supreme good?” “Is the right to free speech of greater moral importance than the right to freedom of religion?” “Does society have a moral duty to create procedures under which people who want to die can be helped to die?” “Does the management of a corporations have a moral duty above all to seek to maximize profits for that corporation and, if so, is that duty an overriding duty?”. Applied Ethics courses offered by the Philosophy Department include PHIL 313 (Bioethics), PHIL 329 (Business Ethics), PHIL 345 (Issues in Environmental Ethics), and PHIL 547 (Advanced Topics in Applied Ethics).

(b). **Normative Ethical Theory:** Normative Theory investigates various theories about how we *ought* to (or how we *can best* or *can only*) address and decide on the answers to questions in Applied Ethics. The various theories serve to organize and give structure to the various arguments developed in investigating the various questions in applied ethics. Famous theories include *divine voluntarism* (very roughly, the applied ethics arguments in the final analysis come to the injunction to consult God’s will), *natural law theory* (very roughly, the applied ethics arguments in the final analysis come to the injunction to examine what acts are natural and what unnatural), *utilitarianism* (very roughly, the applied ethics arguments in the final analysis come to the injunction to look to see whether the consequences of the act maximize human well-being), *contractarianism* (roughly, the applied ethics arguments in the final analysis come to the injunction to look to see whether adopting and enforcing a contract to require certain acts and forbid other would be rationally required if we were choosing the fundamental contracts for us to live by), *Kantian*

Constructivism (roughly, the applied ethics arguments in the final analysis come to the injunction to check to see whether a rule requiring such and such and forbidding such and such would be “universalizable”), and various mixes and variants of the above. Courses in Normative Ethics offered by the Philosophy Department include PHIL 397 (Value Theory), PHIL 451 (Contemporary Ethical Theories) - PHIL 549 (Advanced Topic in Ethics) also sometimes focuses on Normative Ethical Theory.

- (c). **Metaethical Theory:** Metaethical theory is best thought of as investigating the very nature of moral duties, rights, values, and virtues and doing so as a step in deciding which, if any, of the various normative ethical theories is acceptable as an account of how to decide issues in Applied Ethics. Famous theories here include *Moral Realism* (aka Moral Objectivism): this suggests that there are certain moral duties, rights, and values which exist independently of people’s *beliefs about* these duties, rights, and values, and independently of people’s *attitudes to* them. Thus, realist/objectivist theorists have espoused the Divine Voluntarism and/or perhaps Natural Law Theory. But the existence of some very pressing objections to Moral Realism has led modern metaethical theorists to try to develop theories about the nature moral duties, rights, values and virtues that avoid these objections while still retaining certain seemingly vital features of moral duties, rights, values, and virtues. These theories are referred to as “Anti-Realist” Theories. Most of these theories fall into two main kinds – Constructivist Theories and Expressivist Theories. Constructivist Theories in the final analysis claim that at least fundamental moral duties, rights and values are what human beings would choose if they were choosing what fundamental duties, rights and values it would be rational to govern their lives by. Expressivist Theories in various ways in the end argue that to understand the basic nature of moral duties, rights, and values, we need first to recognize the non-rational bases of fundamental moral claims about duties, rights and values. Undergraduate courses in Metaethical Theory offered by the Philosophy Department include PHIL 449 and, usually, PHIL 549 (Advanced Topic in Ethics).

Required Texts

1. Russ Shafer-Landau, editor, *The Ethical Life – Fundamental Readings in Ethics and Moral Problems*, 3rd Edition, Oxford University Press, 2015.

The readings in this text are organized into the three parts of the discipline described above.

2. Various readings will as we go along be posted in D2L on the website for this course.

Course Requirements

In the following, percentages will be computed using the numbers set by the University as equivalent to the letter grades: for these see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/f-2.html>.

1. There will be two short writing assignments, worth 20% and 25% of the final grade respectively. These will be due on October 6th and December 2nd respectively. Details will be posted in the Assignments section of D2L. Completed assignments must be placed in the PHIL 249.1 “Drop Box” in the Department.
2. There will be a closed-book Midterm Test, worth 20% of the final grade. This will take place on October 28th. Details will be posted in the Assignments section of D2L.
3. There will be a closed-book Registrar Scheduled Final Examination, worth 35% of the final grade. Details will be posted in the Assignments section of D2L. This will take place on a date to be announced the Registrar’s office.
4. In evaluation of the written assignments, the Midterm Test, and the Final Examination, the clarity, coherence, and focus of writing will be taken into account.
5. A passing grade on any particular component of the course is not required for a pass in the course as a whole.
6. Later ‘virtue’ will be allowed to redeem earlier ‘sin’.
7. No late papers will be accepted and the Midterm Test and Registrar Scheduled Final Examination may not be taken on any day other than that scheduled for the class without official and adequate documentation.

NB. There are no tutorials in the first week of term: they begin in the week of September 19th.

Academic Honesty

Cheating or plagiarism on any assignment or examination is regarded as an extremely serious academic offence, the penalty for which may be an F on the assignment, an F in the course, academic probation, or requirement to withdraw from the University. See the relevant sections on 'Academic Misconduct' in the current University Calendar. 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 correct referencing, consult your instructor.

Academic Accommodation

Student's seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services. SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For more information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>. Students who require accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their instructor. The full policy on student accommodations is available at http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf

D2L Help

Desire2Learn is UCalgary's online learning management system. Go to <http://www.ucalgary.ca/it/services/d2l> for help.

Student Advising and Information Resources

- General Academic Concerns and Program Planning – Have a question but not sure where to start? The Arts Students' Centre is your information resource for everything in the Faculty of Arts. Drop in at SS102, call 403-220-3580, or email ascarts@ucalgary.ca. Advisors in the ASC can also provide assistance and advice in planning your program through to graduation. Visit the Faculty of Arts website at <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> for detailed information on common academic concerns.
- **Advice on Philosophy Courses** – You may find answers to your more specific questions about a philosophy degree on the Department of Philosophy's website <http://phil.ucalgary.ca> or contact one of Philosophy's Undergraduate Advisors (see below)
- **Registration Overload/Prereq Waivers** – If you are seeking to register in a Philosophy course that is full or to get permission to waive the prereqs for a course, email the Department Manager, Merlette Schnell, schnell@ucalgary.ca.

Protection of Privacy

The University of Calgary is under the jurisdiction of the provincial Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act. The Department of Philosophy ensures the student's right to privacy by requiring all graded assignments be returned to the student directly from the instructor or teaching assistant.

Safewalk

Call 403-220-5333 (24/7/365) for a Safewalk volunteer to accompany you safely to your destination on campus including parking lots, housing, and the LRT station or use a Campus Help Phone.

PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT

The Department of Philosophy is located on the 12th floor of the Social Sciences Building
and on the web at www.phil.ucalgary.ca

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For assistance with registration issues in Philosophy courses, contact
Merlette Schnell (schnell@ucalgary.ca)