

## PHIL 232 A01: Moral Problems of Contemporary Society



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Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays  
2:30-3:00 and by appointment

### **Course Description**

William James once described philosophy as "the unusually stubborn attempt to think clearly." In this course we will take a philosophical approach to a variety of controversial and sometimes emotionally charged moral issues facing us today. Topics we will address include the treatment of non-human animals, pornography, abortion, our handling of the environment, sex work, euthanasia, and our response to human starvation and suffering. As we approach each of these issues, we will consider what various philosophers have said makes an act right or wrong and see whether their theories help us in solving moral problems. We will make a determined effort to develop well-reasoned positions on these issues, articulating and evaluating arguments on both sides of the debates. In short, we will be thinking in a philosophical way about how we should live our lives.

### **Texts**

All of the readings for this course will be available through the CourseSpaces page. To access the page, go to [coursespaces.uvic.ca](https://coursespaces.uvic.ca) and log in with your regular network ID. Please let me know immediately if you have any difficulty accessing the readings.

**Course Requirements** (See schedule below for dates.)

First Paper	25%	Exam One	20%
Second Paper	30%	Exam Two	25%

**The exams** will be in-class exams consisting of short answer questions. If you miss an exam due to illness or accident, contact me immediately to schedule a make-up.

**The papers** will be opportunities for you to develop and defend a position on one of the issues we have been discussing in class. The first paper will be 1300 words maximum. The second will be 1500 words maximum. Due dates for the papers can be found on the schedule below. Detailed instructions for the papers and advice about how to write a philosophy paper are available on CourseSpaces.

Late Papers

If you have a legitimate reason for submitting your paper late, please notify me immediately. Unexcused lateness will result in a 5% reduction in the grade for that assignment each day. No essay will be accepted for grading after June 8 unless academic concession has been granted. For policies concerning academic concession see <https://web.uvic.ca/calendar2018-05/undergrad/info/regulations/concessions.html#>.

Academic Integrity

Please familiarize yourself with the University Policy on Academic Integrity. It will be enforced in this course. You can find it online in the UVIC Calendar at <https://web.uvic.ca/calendar2018-05/undergrad/info/regulations/academic-integrity.html>

Help with proper citation for your papers is available through the CourseSpaces page.

**Please Note: Anyone who does not write both of the two assigned papers will receive a grade of N for the course.**

Information regarding accommodation of religious observance can be located in the UVIC Calendar at <https://web.uvic.ca/calendar2018-05/undergrad/info/regulations/religious-observanc.html#>

**Grading**

Letter grades for the course will be assigned using the standard university scheme:

Percentage	Grade
90 - 100	A+
85 - 89	A
80 - 84	A-
77 - 79	B+
73 - 76	B
70 - 72	B-
65 - 69	C+
60 - 64	C
50 - 59	D
Below 50	F

**Missed Classes**

Class slides will be posted on CourseSpaces. The slides are not intended to fully replace class attendance, so if you miss class you should contact another student in the class to find out what you missed. Student email addresses are available in the Participants section of the CourseSpaces page.

**Course Schedule**

Please note that this schedule is tentative.

Any changes to the schedule will be announced in class and posted on CourseSpaces.

M 5/14	Introduction <i>Singer All Animals are Equal . . .</i>
T 5/15	Pojman <i>Utilitarianism</i>
W 5/16	<i>Luper Kantianism</i> Steinbock <i>Speciesism and the Idea of Equality</i>
TH 5/17	Regan <i>The Case for Animal Rights</i> Varner <i>The Prospects for Consensus and Convergence in the Animal Rights Debate</i>
F 5/18	Jaggar <i>Prostitution</i> Nussbaum <i>Whether from Reason or Prejudice</i>

M 5/21	no class — Victoria Day —
T 5/22	— <b>First Paper Due at 5 p.m.</b> — Klepper <i>Sexual Exploitation and the Value of Persons</i> Husak <i>Vehicles and Crashes: Why is this Moral Issue Overlooked?</i>
W 5/23	Singer <i>Famine, Affluence and Morality</i> Igneski <i>Defending Limits on the Sacrifices We Ought to Make for Others</i>
TH 5/24	Gardiner <i>A Perfect Moral Storm: Climate Change, Intergenerational Ethics and the Problem of Moral Corruption</i>
F 5/25	Callahan <i>When Self-Determination Runs Amok</i> Rachels <i>Active and Passive Euthanasia</i>

M 5/28	— <b>Exam One</b> —
T 5/29	Steinbock <i>The Intentional Termination of Life</i>
W 5/30	The Philosophers' Magazine <i>Would You Eat Your Cat?</i> Nussbaum <i>Discussing Disgust</i>
TH 5/31	Hill <i>Pornography and Degradation</i> Christensen from <i>Pornography: The Other Side</i>
F 6/1	Willis <i>Feminism, Moralism, and Pornography</i> Thomson <i>A Defense of Abortion</i>

M 6/4	— <b>Second Paper Due at 5 p.m.</b> — Warren <i>On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion</i> Marquis <i>Why Abortion is Immoral</i>
T 6/5	LaFollette <i>Licensing Parents</i>
W 6/6	— <b>Exam Two</b> —