

PHIL 232 A01
CRN#12481

September – December 2019
TWF: 11:30am – 12:20pm

Moral Problems of Contemporary Society

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Office Hours: Wednesday 2:30pm – 4:30pm

Provisional Draft: This outline gives students a sense of what the course involves, but it is not the final, *official* outline.

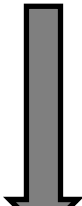
Course Description:

The aim of this course is to introduce students to a variety of controversial moral issues in contemporary society. In particular, students will be encouraged to carefully examine the *philosophical arguments* that arise in debates surrounding these controversial issues. The moral problems we will address in the course involve complex and often highly sensitive questions. The goal is to enable students to thoughtfully engage this subject matter and to learn how to articulate their opinions in the most persuasive way possible. The issues we will address in the course include the following: the ethical treatment of non-human animals, the basis for our obligation to protect the environment, the moral status of abortion, the duty to help alleviate global poverty, the moral status of pornography, the distinctive wrong of colonization, and the possible decriminalization of addictive recreational drugs. Class participation will be strongly encouraged in order to generate thoughtful discussion of the philosophical arguments proposed in the readings and their application to current events.

Course Website: Online course materials will be available via Uvic [CourseSpaces](#). To access your customized *CourseSpaces* page, sign in to Uvic and click on *Online Tools*. You should see *CourseSpaces* as an option.

Texts: All readings available online via Uvic *CourseSpaces*.

Requirements:



- First paper (10%)
- Mid-term test (20%)
- Second paper (20%)
- Final exam (40%)
- Five: quote & comment assignments, *or*
news & comment assignments (5%)
- Two activist letters (5%)

Note: Writing assignment due dates and midterm test dates are posted below in the weekly schedule. *You are responsible for knowing these dates.* Plan ahead, and manage your overall personal workload accordingly.

Grading System

Percentage	Letter Grade	Grade Point	Grade Definition
90 – 100	A+	9	An A+, A, or A- is earned by work which is technically superior , shows mastery of the subject matter, and in the case of an A+ offers original insight and/or goes beyond course expectations. Normally achieved by a minority of students.
85 – 89	A	8	
80 – 84	A-	7	
77 – 79	B+	6	A B+, B, or B- is earned by work that indicates a good comprehension of the course material, a good command of the skills needed to work with the course material, and the student's full engagement with the course requirements and activities. A B+ represents a more complex understanding and/or application of the course material. Normally achieved by the largest number of students.
73 – 76	B	5	
70 – 72	B-	4	
65 – 69	C+	3	A C+ or C is earned by work that indicates an adequate comprehension of the course material and the skills needed to work with the course material and that indicates the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and/or participating in class activities.
60 – 64	C	2	
50 – 59	D	1	A D is earned by work that indicates minimal command of the course materials and/or minimal participation in class activities that is worthy of course credit toward the degree.
0 – 49	F	0	F is earned by work, which after the completion of course requirements, is inadequate and unworthy of course credit towards the degree.

Interpretation of these grade definitions is up to the discretion of the instructor. If you receive a grade during the course that you believe is unfair, please begin by discussing the matter with the instructor (or TA) in a respectful, open-minded manner. Rest assured that if you still believe the grade you received is unfair you can appeal the matter to the chair of the department.

For additional information regarding undergraduate grades, please consult pp. 51-53 of the **2019-2020 [Uvic Undergraduate Calendar \(September Edition\)](#)**.

All evaluations of tests and assignments will be calculated according to *percentage scores*. Letter grades and grade point scores are listed purely for reference.

Final examinations are the property of Uvic and are not returned. They are available for viewing at the Records Office according to Uvic procedures and regulations (pp. 49-51 of the calendar).

Uvic is committed to providing a safe, supportive learning environment for all members. Further information regarding Uvic policies on human rights, equity, discrimination and harassment are located in the Uvic calendar (p. 15), but if you have any particular concerns in our course please do not hesitate to contact me.

Policy on Late Assignments: 5% per working day will be subtracted from grade unless documentation is provided of illness or family emergency.

Plagiarism: Review the [University Policy on Academic Integrity](#) (pp. 45-47) *carefully*, and be aware that anti-plagiarism software may be selectively used in this course. Resources will be provided via CourseSpaces for students seeking guidance about what constitutes plagiarism and how they can avoid it, but *it is the responsibility of each student* to be informed about these details.

Counseling Services: Many, if not most, students experience some difficulties with their mental health during their years as undergraduate students. Make sure you are familiar with Uvic [Counseling Services](#), which is an excellent resource you have at your disposal on campus. It is hard to shake the stigma associated with problems like depression and anxiety, but if at any point you can benefit from help with mental health issues, please contact *Counseling Services*. They genuinely want to help, and why not take advantage of this free resource?

Important Dates: Please consult the Uvic calendar's [Academic Year Important Dates](#) for information about last possible dates to withdraw from courses without penalty, examinations period start/end dates, etc.

Technology in Classroom: Some students require laptops or voice recognition apps for their learning strategies, so I do not prohibit their use in the classroom. However, studies demonstrate that multi-tasking reduces the performance of *other nearby students*, so anyone caught on social media, internet surfing, etc. will be asked to leave and potentially subject to disciplinary action.

Academic Advising: For information about declaring a program, academic concessions or interpreting your Uvic CAPP report, please visit [Undergraduate Advising](#) or make an appointment with an adviser.

Minor in Applied Ethics: If you enjoy this class, you will almost certainly want to look into the requirements for the [MAE program](#).

Territory Acknowledgment

The University of Victoria is committed to acknowledging and respecting the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.


For information about support for indigenous students and efforts to foster reconciliation, please visit the Uvic [Office of Indigenous Academic & Community Engagement](#).


Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Note: *Dates are subject to change!* Class attendance is essential to stay informed about scheduling changes. Material should be read *before* the class in which it is discussed so that students are prepared to contribute to class discussion.

Week Readings

<u>Week 1</u>	Introduction to Moral Problems
Sept. 4	First Meeting
Sept. 6	Michael J. Sandel: <i>The Case Against Perfection</i>
<u>Week 2</u>	Background Ethical Theory
Sept. 10 Sept. 13	Louis P. Pojman: <i>Utilitarianism</i> Steven Luper: <i>Kantianism</i>
<u>Week 3</u>	The Ethics of Genetic Engineering
Sept. 17	Julian Savulescu & Guy Kahane: <i>The Moral Obligation to Create Children with the Best Chance of the Best Life</i> [parts I & II] [Suggested = Russell Powell & Allen Buchanan: <i>Breaking Evolution's Chains: The Prospect of Deliberate Genetic Modification in Humans</i>]
Sept. 18	Robert Sparrow: <i>A Not-So-New Eugenics</i>
Sept. 20	How to Write a Philosophy Paper
<u>Week 4</u>	Genetic Engineering and the Concept of Disability
Sept. 24	Adrienne Asch: <i>Prenatal Diagnosis and Selective Abortion: A Challenge to Practice and Policy</i> + Julian Savulescu & Guy Kahane: <i>The Moral Obligation to Create Children with the Best Chance of the Best Life</i> [part III]
Sept. 25	David DeVidi & Catherine Klausen: <i>No Mere Difference</i> [Suggested = Elizabeth Barnes: <i>Valuing Disability, Causing Disability</i>]
Sept. 27	Sahar Akhtar: <i>Respecting Embedded Disability</i>

<u>Week 5</u>	Environmental Ethics
Oct. 1	Joseph DesJardins: <i>Biocentric Ethics and the Inherent Value of Life</i>
Oct. 2	Ben Bradley: <i>The Value of Endangered Species</i>
Oct. 4 	Robert Elliot: <i>Faking Nature</i> *** First Writing Assignment Due ***
<u>Week 6</u>	Collective Action Problems
Oct. 8	Garrett Hardin: <i>The Tragedy of the Commons</i>
Oct. 9	Review
Oct. 11	*** Midterm Test #1 ***
<u>Week 7</u>	The Moral Status of Abortion – Part One
Oct. 15 Oct. 18	Mary Anne Warren: <i>On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion</i> Don Marquis: <i>Why Abortion is Immoral</i>
<u>Week 8</u>	The Moral Status of Abortion – Part Two
Oct. 22 Oct. 25	Judith Jarvis Thomson: <i>A Defense of Abortion</i> Margaret Olivia Little: <i>Abortion, Intimacy, and the Duty to Gestate</i>
<u>Week 9</u>	The Moral Status of Prostitution + MMA
Oct. 29	Martha Nussbaum: <i>“Whether from Reason or Prejudice” Taking Money for Bodily Services</i>
Oct. 30	Scott A. Anderson: <i>Prostitution and Sexual Autonomy: Making Sense of the Prohibition of Prostitution</i>
Nov. 1	Steven Weimer: <i>On the Alleged Intrinsic Immorality of Mixed Martial Arts</i>
<u>Week 10</u>	Obligations to Relieve Global Poverty
Nov. 5	Peter Singer: <i>Famine, Affluence, and Morality</i>
Nov. 6	Jan Narveson: <i>We Don’t Owe Them a Thing!</i>

Nov. 8	Robert Noggle: <i>Give Till It Hurts? Beneficence, Imperfect Duties, and a Moderate Response to the Aid Question</i> [Suggested = Violetta Igneski: <i>Defending Limits on the Sacrifices We Ought To Make For Others</i>]
<u>Week 11</u>	Sweatshop Labour and Just Restitution
Nov 11-13	Reading Break – No Class
Nov. 15	Todd Calder: <i>Shared Responsibility, Global Structural Injustice, and Restitution</i>
<u>Week 12</u>	The Wrong(s) of Colonialism
Nov. 19	Anna Stilz: <i>Occupancy Rights and the Wrong of Removal</i> [Parts I and III] [Suggested = Margaret Moore: <i>The Taking of Territory and the Wrongs of Colonialism</i>]
Nov. 20	Lea Ypi: <i>What's Wrong with Colonialism</i> [Parts I-III, VII-VIII, & X, XI]
Nov. 22 	Glen Coulthard: <i>Seeing Red</i> (ch. 4 from <i>Red Skin, White Masks</i>) *** Writing Assignment #2 Due ***
<u>Week 13</u>	Sex and Drugs
Nov. 26	Danielle Bromwich and Joseph Millum: <i>Lies, Control, and Consent</i>
Nov. 27	Douglas Husak: <i>Four Points about Drug Decriminalization</i>
Nov. 29	Peter De Marneffe: <i>Against the Legalization of Heroin</i> *** Last Day to Submit Q&C Assignments ***
<u>Week 14</u>	Final Review
Dec. 3	Review *** Last Day to Submit Activist Letters ***
Dec. 4	<i>National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women</i> All Classes at Uvic cancelled from 11:30 am - 12:30 pm.

Warning: there will be a **Registrar Scheduled Exam in December**. I do not control the date of this exam, and I do not have the power to change this date once it is scheduled. Therefore, *do not book travel during the exam schedule* until you know the dates of your exams.