

The Chinese University of Hong Kong
2022/23 1st semester
PHIL3253 Practical Ethics
Course Outline

Instructor: Dr. Kwok Pak Nin, Samson
Time: Tuesday 14:30-16:15
Venue: LDS 214
Tutorial Section: TBA

Course overview:

This course examines a range of moral problems confronting individuals in today's society, showing how philosophical thought can be brought to bear upon contemporary issues. Students will learn to identify ethical principles and considerations relevant to these problems, to reflect critically on them, and to construct their own responses. Among the topics that may be discussed are theories of normative ethics, abortion, the death penalty, human enhancement, the ethics of war, animal rights, and environmental issues.

*Advisory to Majors: to be taken in year 2 or above.

Learning outcomes:

1. Understand the characteristics and value of ethical theories.
2. Understand the characteristics and importance of some controversial and difficult ethical-social issues.
3. Ability to apply normative ethics to the issues and form considered judgments concerning them.
4. Ability to explain and assess different moral stances in a perspicuous, non-doctrinaire way.

Learning activities and workload:

- 1. Lecture:** 2 hours each week.
- 2. Interactive tutorial:** one 2-hour session every two weeks. Students are required to discuss, and present reading material assigned.

Assessment:

Task nature	Description	Weight
Tutorial	Discussion and Presentation	30%
Quiz	Two Take Home Quizzes	30%
Term Paper	Term-end research paper	40%

Details of course website:

Lecture notes and information on assignments will be posted on the Blackboard Learn website.

Grade Descriptors:

http://phil.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/~phidept/UG/Grade_descriptors.pdf

Course schedule:

Week	Date	Lecture Topic	Reading	Remark
1	Sept 6	Introduction: Meta-Ethics, Normative Ethics, and Applied Ethics	Hugh LaFollette, "Theorizing about Ethics"	
2	Sept 13	Abortion	Mary Ann Warren, "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion"	
3	Sept 20	Abortion	Judith Jarvis Thomson, 'A Defense of Abortion'	1 st Tutorial: Hugh LaFollette, "Theorizing about Ethics"
4	Sept 27	Capital Punishment	Stephen Nathanson, <i>An Eye for an Eye?</i> , Ch 2, 4-6.	
5	Oct 4	<u>Public Holiday</u>		2 nd Tutorial: Judith Jarvis Thomson, 'A Defense of Abortion'
6	Oct 11	Capital Punishment	Larry Alexander, "Retributivism and the inadvertent punishment of the innocent"	
7	Oct 18	Human Enhancement	Nick Bostrom, "Why I Want to be a Posthuman When I Grow Up"	3 rd Tutorial: Larry Alexander, "Retributivism and the inadvertent punishment of the innocent"
8	Oct 25	Human Enhancement	Michael Sandel, "The Case Against Perfection: What's Wrong with Designer Children, Bionic Athletes, and Genetic Engineering"	
9	Nov 1	The Ethics of War	Michael Walzer, "Terrorism and Just War"	4 th Tutorial: Michael Sandel, "The Case Against Perfection: What's Wrong with Designer Children, Bionic Athletes, and Genetic Engineering"
10	Nov 8	The Ethics of War	Frances Kamm, "Terror and Collateral Damage: Are they Permissible?"	
11	Nov 15	The Moral Status of Animals	Peter Singer, <i>Animal Liberation</i> , Ch 1.	5 th Tutorial: Frances Kamm, "Terror and Collateral Damage: Are they Permissible?"
12	Nov 22	The Moral Status of Animals	Shelly Kagan, "What's Wrong with Speciesism?"	
13	Nov 29	Environmental Ethics	Ronald Sandler, "The Value of Nature".	6 th Tutorial: Shelly Kagan, "What's Wrong with Speciesism?"

Recommended learning resources:**General References:**

Cohen, Andrew I. & Wellman, Christopher Heath (eds.). (2013). *Contemporary Debates in Applied Ethics*, 2nd edition, Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell.

Frey, R. G. (ed.).(2005). *A Companion to Applied Ethics*, Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell.

LaFollette, Hugh (ed.). (2013). *Ethics in Practice: An Anthology*, 4th edition, Malden, Mass.: Wiley-Blackwell.

Glover, Jonathan. (1977). *Causing Death and Saving Lives*, Harmondsworth.

Lippert-Rasmussen, Kasper, Brownlee, Kimberlee, & Coady, David (eds.). (2017). *A Companion to Applied Philosophy*, Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons.

Mappes, Thomas A. & Zembaty, Jane S (eds.). (2006). *Social Ethics: Morality and Social Policy*, 7th edition. McGraw Hill Higher Education.

Rachels, James. (2003). *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 4th edition. McGraw Hill Higher Education.

Singer, Peter. (2011). *Practical Ethics*, 3rd edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Olen, Jeffrey and Barry, Vincent (eds.). (2004). *Applying Ethics*, 8th Edition, Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing.

Reading list:

Topic-specific lists of references, required and suggested readings will be given in lecture notes and bibliographical notes (separate) for each topic.

Contact:

Lecturer	
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Feedback for evaluation:

1. Students are strongly encouraged to provide feedback on the course via email or meetings with lecturer.
2. Students evaluate the course through a survey and written comments at the end of the term as well as via regular feedback between teacher and students. This information is highly valued and is used to revise teaching methods, tasks, and content.

Academic honesty and plagiarism:

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations.

Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/> .

With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed **declaration** that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures. For group projects, all students of the same group should be asked to sign the declaration.

For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment. Assignments without the receipt will not be graded by teachers. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.