

# PHIL 1550 A: Introduction to Ethics and Social Issues

Winter 2019

Tuesdays & Thursdays 4:05-5:25 P.M.

## *Instructor Information*

Dr. Nalini E. Ramlakhan

Department of Philosophy Paterson Hall

Office: 3A38 Paterson Hall

Office hours: Thursdays 6:00-7:30 p.m. or by appointment

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## *Official Calendar Description*

An introduction to understanding, assessing, and formulating ethical arguments concerning controversial issues. Particular issues studied, such as world hunger, capital punishment, abortion, animal rights, terrorism, may vary each time the course is offered.

Precludes additional credit for [FYSM 1209](#) and [PHIL 1500](#).

Lectures three hours a week.

## *TA Information*

Information regarding teaching assistants for this course will be posted on CULearn.

## *Description & Objective*

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the nature and practice of ethics. We will begin the course by examining prominent moral and ethical theories, such as egoism, virtue ethics, deontology, etc. We will then apply these theories by looking at some important ethical and social issues in the contemporary world. These issues may include, but are not limited to, abortion, universal health care, euthanasia, animal rights, environmental ethics, and human enhancement.

You will be presented with arguments that have been offered for and against these different positions. The goal of the course is to stimulate your thinking about the chosen issues and provoke you to form views about them. The objective is not merely for you to understand how philosophers and others have answered these questions, but to understand and evaluate their arguments, recognizing their strengths and weaknesses, possibly trying to improve upon them. You are required to formulate your own arguments and defend them. In order to assist with this, this class will engage with case studies and ethical questions that require your participation throughout the course. You are expected to come to class prepared with answers for discussion if a question is given before class, or to think about and discuss ideas with peers when a question or case study is presented in class.

## *Course Website*

CULearn will be used for access to the course syllabus, grades, announcements, and discussion boards. It is recommended that students regularly check CULearn for course updates and other information. Students are responsible for keeping current with the information on CULearn. Students must check CULearn regularly for important messages and course information.

### *Attendance*

In order to succeed in this course, you must attend lecture. Lecture attendance is not optional. I don't keep a record of attendance since this is university and you're all adults, however, it will be difficult to do well if you regularly skip lectures. If you skip lectures for anything other than a verifiable reason, such as medical attention (please check with me if you're unsure what is considered a verifiable reason), it is your responsibility to make up missed material. Please do not email me to ask if you've missed anything important. If you have a verifiable reason for missing class, I am happy to go over missed material during office hours. If you're regularly attending lecture and having difficulty with course material, please see me during office hours.

Notes and/or lecture slides posted on CULearn are not a replacement for attending lectures, and the material posted is a guideline for content discussed in class, and lacks sufficient content for understanding the course material on its own. Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s).

Please note that you must seek my permission to record lectures, and permission is granted based on academic accommodation.

### *Email Protocols*

The typical response time to answer email is 48 hours, not including weekends. Please include the course title or course code (e.g., PHIL 1550) in the subject line of your email, and send emails from your Carleton University email address. Emails that do not follow these guidelines will not be opened and answered. If the answer to your question can be found on the course syllabus or was discussed in class, your email will not be answered. If your question is detailed and requires quite a bit of explaining, please see me during office hours.

Assignments that are emailed will not be accepted and will be deleted. Instructions for submitting can be found under 'Evaluation.' Emails are for personal and/or administrative issues that arise. All other questions about course material can be asked before, after, or during class or during office hours. Grades won't be sent over email, so please don't ask.

### *Electronic Device Policy*

You should not use your electronic device for emailing, messaging, posting on Facebook, etc. during lecture. With the exception of the writing workshops (see schedule), using your device in class to do anything other than take notes is distracting and disrespectful to me and your classmates. Succeeding in this course requires your full attention. If you multi-task during lecture, you are likely to miss important information.

Your cell phones should be turned off or in silent mode during lecture. It should not be visible or audible during class. If, for whatever reason, you feel the need to be on your cellphone during class and are distracting others, you will be asked to leave. If you need to take an important call during scheduled lecture time, please let me know prior to lecture.

Laptops and tablets should be used for note-taking only if absolutely necessary. I suggest taking notes by hand since it is more effective.

### *Other Classroom Policies*

Please do not wear any perfumes, colognes, or other heavily scented products. These trigger migraines in those with chemical sensitivities. Please refrain from eating foods with a high aroma in class.

Please arrive on time and leave **at the end of class**. Do not start packing up your things until the end of class. It gets loud and it is very distracting to other students. Do not leave in the middle of the class unless you must use the washroom or there is an emergency.

### *Other Important Information*

Please note that this class examines and evaluates many ethical and social issues that might make some students uncomfortable. Please review the topics and readings beforehand, and note that there are mild trigger warnings for each topic we review. During class discussions, please be respectful toward your peers and objective in your discussions. Please come and see me during office hours if you are uncomfortable with a specific topic.

### *Evaluation*

#### Test 1

The purpose of this test is to ensure that you are understanding the ideas and theories we explore in lectures and the readings, and that you are developing the relevant evaluative skills. The test is worth 15% of your total grade. The test will begin at 4:05 PM and end at 5:25 PM. If you arrive late, you will not be given additional time to complete the test. If you arrive thirty minutes after the test has started, you will be unable to write the test. The test will be held on January 24<sup>th</sup>. Material presented during lectures and material from required readings will be on the test.

A make-up test will be **considered** only upon presentation of verifiable documentation (e.g., a doctor's note). A failure to provide one will result in a zero. It is your responsibility to contact me if you miss the test. You must contact me within 48 hours of the missed test to schedule a make-up. This is your responsibility. Arrangements must be made directly with me. There are no exceptions.

#### Test 2

The purpose of this test is to ensure that you are understanding the prominent ethical theories and their strengths and weaknesses, and evaluates your ability to think critically and defend or argue against specific theories. The test is worth 20% of your total grade and is scheduled on the Tuesday following reading week. If you make travel plans during reading week, be sure to schedule your arrival back to Ottawa a few days before the date of the test, as accommodations will not be provided for students who miss the test due to travel. Keep in mind, if you are travelling during reading week, that it is winter and flights are often delayed or cancelled, so you should plan your travels so you don't miss the test. The test will begin at 4:05 PM and end at 5:25 PM. If you arrive late, you will not be given additional time to complete the test. If you arrive thirty minutes after the test has started, you will be unable to write the test. The test will be held on February 26<sup>th</sup>. Material presented during lectures and material from required readings will be on the test.

A make-up test will be **considered** only upon presentation of verifiable documentation (e.g., a doctor's note). A failure to provide one will result in a zero. It is your responsibility to contact me if you miss the test. You must contact me within 48 hours of the missed test to schedule a make-up. This is your responsibility. Arrangements must be made directly with me. There are no exceptions.

### Term Paper

You will be expected to write a term paper, approximately four to six double-spaced typed pages, 12 point font Times New Roman. The term paper is worth 25% of your final grade. Paper topics will be posted on CULearn on March 12<sup>th</sup>, and a discussion of the topics and how to write a paper in philosophy will be held on this day. You will be provided with multiple writing workshops (see schedule) to assist with essay writing and the successful completion of your paper.

### Final Exam

The final exam will be formally scheduled during the final examination period, and will include material from the entire semester. The purpose of this test is to ensure you have developed the necessary analytical, evaluative, argumentative, and critical thinking skills. The exam is worth 40% of your total grade. A discussion of what is expected will be held on the final class. I advise that you do not book travel plans until the end of the examination period to ensure you are present for the exam. All deferrals must be submitted to the registrar's office.

### *Grades*

The standard time for returning graded tests, assignments, etc. is two weeks from the date of the test or assignment due date. If additional time is needed for grading, announcements will be made in class or posted on the CULearn website. If a disagreement over a grade occurs, you must see the TA who graded your work before seeing me. Upon review of your work, I will decide if you deserve a different grade. This grade may be higher or lower than your original grade. You must discuss grades with me during office hours. I will not discuss grades through email.

The deadlines and dates set for assignments and tests are non-negotiable. You are given all of the deadlines and dates for tests in advance, and should manage your time wisely. The value of tests and assignments will not be reweighed or redistributed.

Your official grade is made available once the term is over. Please do not email me before that asking what your final grade is.

### *Readings & Textbook*

I've assigned a number of course readings, corresponding to the various perspectives on ethics and social issues. You should do all of the scheduled readings before class in order to understand lecture material, and I recommend reviewing the readings after lecture. These readings are required, and are listed below.

Most of the readings will be drawn from the following required textbook, which is available at the University Bookstore:

Zeyl, J. & Radke, N. (2018). *Ethical Perspectives*. Don Mills: Oxford University Press.

Other readings can be found on Google Scholar (a link has been provided in the schedule),

Carleton's Library Portal, or Ares.

## Videos

Videos and films screened in class are the equivalent of required readings. You should pay attention and take notes, and not chat through them.

Disclaimer: I reserve the right to change the readings or topics assigned. Changes will not add substantial workload.

## *Schedule*

### January 8<sup>th</sup>

Introduction to the Course

**Readings:** No readings

### January 10<sup>th</sup>

Introduction to Ethics

**Readings:** Zeyl & Radke, Chapter 1: Why Should I Be Ethical? & Chapter 2: Developing Reasonable Arguments

### January 15<sup>th</sup>

The Good Life and Ethics

Documentary (partial class time)

**Readings:** Plato, Ring of Gyges, accessed through Google Scholar

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/d6f3/957113c5d0b52247e80753aa3ff68fa5bdd8.pdf>

Nozick, R. (2013). The Experience Machine, accessed through Google Scholar (the first two pages) <http://www.aaron-zimmerman.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Nozick-Parfit.pdf>

Zeyl & Radke, Existential Ethics, found in Chapter 11 (pp. 216-218)

### January 17<sup>th</sup>

Subjectivism, Relativism, and Absolutism

Documentary (partial class time)

**Readings:** Zeyl & Radke, Chapter 3: Subjectivism, Relativism, and Absolutism

### January 22<sup>nd</sup>

Social Contract Theory

**Readings:** Zeyl & Radke, Chapter 7: The Theory of Rights

### January 24<sup>th</sup>

## **Test 1**

### January 29<sup>th</sup>

Ethical Theories: Virtue Ethics

**Readings:** Zeyl & Radke, Chapter 8: Virtue ethics

### January 31<sup>st</sup>

Ethical Theories: Deontology

**Readings:** Zeyl & Radke, Chapter 5: Kantian Ethics

### February 5<sup>th</sup>

Ethical Theories: Consequentialism

**Readings:** Zeyl & Radke, Chapter 6: Utilitarianism

### February 7<sup>th</sup>

Ethical Theories: Feminist Ethics

**Readings:** Zeyl & Radke, Sex and Society, found in Chapter 12 (pp. 222-232)

Burnor & Raley, Chapter 12 (pp. 249-275), accessed through Ares

February 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>

Ethical Theories: Buddhist Ethics

**Readings:** Keown, D. *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*, Chapters 1-4, accessed through Carleton's Library Portal (February 12<sup>th</sup>)

Keown, D. *Buddhist Ethics: A Very Short Introduction*, Chapters 1 & 2, accessed through Carleton's Library Portal (February 14<sup>th</sup>)

February 19<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup>

Winter break—no classes

February 26<sup>th</sup>

**Test 2**

February 28<sup>th</sup>

Evolutionary Ethics

Documentary (partial class time)

**Readings:** Zeyl & Radke, Chapter 9: Evolutionary Ethics

March 5<sup>th</sup>

Animal Ethics

**Readings:** Singer, P. (1974). All Animals Are Equal. *Philosophic Exchange* Volume 5 Number 1, accessed through Google Scholar

[https://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1179&context=phil\\_ex](https://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1179&context=phil_ex)

Regan, T. (1986). The Case for Animal Rights. In M.W. Fox & L.D. Micklethwait (eds.), *Advances in Animal Welfare Science* (pp. 179-189). Washington, DC: The Humane Society of the United States, accessed through Google Scholar

[https://animalstudiesrepository.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=acwp\\_away](https://animalstudiesrepository.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=acwp_away)

Regan, T. (1997). The Rights of Humans and Other Animals. *Ethics and Behaviour* Volume 7 Number 2, accessed through Carleton's Library Portal

Davis, S.L. (2003). The Least Harm Principle May Require That Humans Consume a Diet Containing Large Herbivores, Not a Vegan Diet. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 16: 387–394, accessed through Carleton's Library Portal

March 7<sup>th</sup>

Environmental Ethics

**Readings:** Burnor & Raley, Chapter 14 (pp. 310-316, 323-325, cases 2 and 3, bottom of 328-332), accessed through Ares

March 12<sup>th</sup>

How to Write an Essay in Philosophy

**Readings:** No Readings

March 14<sup>th</sup>

Writing Workshop

**Readings:** No Readings

March 19<sup>th</sup>

Animal and Environmental Ethics

Documentary

**Readings:** No Readings

March 21<sup>st</sup>

Writing Workshop

**Readings:** No Readings

March 26<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup>

Personal Autonomy, Moral Agency, and Medical Ethics

**Readings:** Burnor and Raley, Chapter 3 (pp. 46-56, case study 4, 66-67) & Chapter 14, Section II

(pp. 303-308), accessed through Ares

April 2<sup>nd</sup>

The Ethics of Human Enhancement

**Readings:** Zeyl & Radke, Transhumanism, found in Chapter 12 (p. 235)

Bostrom, N. and Sandberg, A. (2009). Cognitive Enhancement: Methods, Ethics, Regulatory Challenges. *Science and Engineering Ethics*, 15(3), pp.311-341, accessed through Carleton's Library Portal

Bostrom, Nick (2003). Human Genetic Enhancements: A Transhumanist Perspective. *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 37: 493–50, accessed through Google Scholar

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/ebc1/f73ee2b78b72b05b6b4d774650cbb223cf86.pdf>

April 4<sup>th</sup>

Writing Workshop

**Readings:** No Readings

April 9<sup>th</sup>

Review

**Readings:** No Readings

## **Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2018-19)**

### **Assignments:**

Unless specifically told otherwise by their instructors, students:

- Must not use a plastic or cardboard cover or paper clips.
- Must staple the paper (there is a stapler on the essay box).
- Must include the following on the first page: student name and number; course name and number; instructor's name.
- No assignments will be accepted after the last day for handing in term work – see dates below.
- Assignments handed in through the essay box (just inside the glass doors, Paterson Hall, Floor 3A) must be dropped into the box by **4:15** on a regular business day in order to be date-stamped with that day's date. Assignments handed in after 4:15 or on a non-business day will be stamped as having been handed in on the next business day.
- Students are required to keep copies of their assignments. If your paper is lost at any point, you will be considered not to have submitted it if you cannot produce a copy immediately on request.

### **Evaluation:**

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

### **Deferrals for Final Exams:**

If you miss a final examination (formally scheduled or take-home) because of circumstances beyond your control, you may apply for a deferral. You must apply within 3 working days after the scheduled date of your formally scheduled exam or within 3 working days after the due date of a take-home exam. Visit the Registrar's Office for more information:

<http://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulationsoftheuniversity/acadregsuniv2/#2.5>

### **Plagiarism:**

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of 'plagiarism' as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

### **Academic Accommodation:**

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. [carleton.ca/pmc](http://carleton.ca/pmc)

**Pregnancy obligation:** write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

**Religious obligation:** write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

**Survivors of Sexual Violence:** as a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and its survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: [carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support](http://carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support)

**Accommodation for Student Activities:** Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

For more information on academic accommodation, please contact the departmental administrator or visit: [students.carleton.ca/course-outline](http://students.carleton.ca/course-outline)

**Important Dates:**

Jan. 7	Classes begin.
Jan. 18	Last day for registration and course changes in the winter term.
Jan. 31	Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter term courses or from the winter portion of two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
Feb. 18	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Feb. 18-22	Winter Break – no classes.
Mar. 26	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in winter term or fall/winter courses before the official examination period.
Apr. 9	Last day of two-term and winter term classes. Last day for academic withdrawal from fall/winter and winter courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for two-term and for winter term courses.
Apr. 12-27	Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Apr. 19-21	Statutory holiday. University closed. No examinations take place.
Apr. 27	All take-home examinations are due on this day.

**Addresses:**

Department of Philosophy:	3A35 Paterson Hall <a href="http://www.carleton.ca/philosophy">www.carleton.ca/philosophy</a> 520-2110
Registrar's Office:	300 Tory <a href="http://www.carleton.ca/registrar">www.carleton.ca/registrar</a> 520-3500
Academic Advising Centre:	302 Tory <a href="http://www.carleton.ca/academicadvising">www.carleton.ca/academicadvising</a> 520-7850
Writing Services:	4 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Library <a href="http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/">http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/</a> 520-3822
MacOdrum Library	<a href="http://www.library.carleton.ca/">http://www.library.carleton.ca/</a> 520-2735