Carleton University | Department of Philosophy

PHIL 3320 A
Contemporary Ethical Theory
Winter 2024

Instructor: Gloria K. Sánchez-Cuevas, MA, MBA & Ph.D. (Candidate) Ethics & Public Affairs
Email: gloria.sanchez@carleton.ca
Office: N/A
Office Hours: By appointment only

Class Meeting: Tuesday and Thursday 8:35 – 9:55 am, Canal Building 2202
Link to course Brightspace page: brightspace.carleton.ca/d2l/home/223682

Course Calendar Description:

Critical study of modern ethical theories, their views on the nature of morality and the justification of moral claims. Topics may include utilitarianism, libertarianism, communitarianism, egoism, neo-Kantianism, virtue ethics, social contract ethics, feminist ethics, and moral rights.

Precludes additional credit for PHIL 2102.

Course Description:

This course offers a critical examination of a broad spectrum of ethical theories, providing students with a contemporary perspective on the principles of morality. The first half of the course focuses on understanding and discussing major theories such as consequentialism, including rule-utilitarianism, libertarianism and left libertarianism, contractualism, egalitarianism, and the capability approach. This sets the stage for the latter half, where we will delve into feminist ethics, especially care ethics, concepts of social justice (broadly understood) and other views influenced by Marxism, including theories of liberation. The course is designed to enhance students' comprehension of various ethical theories and to refine their ability to articulate and contrast these theories through well-structured ethical arguments.

Course Learning Objectives:

- Analyze a broad range of contemporary ethical and political theories to evaluate their underlying moral claims.
- Synthesize concepts from modern ethical theories and use specialized vocabulary effectively to articulate these concepts in both oral and written forms.
- Critically compare and contrast different ethical approaches from a contemporary perspective, demonstrating an understanding of their nuances and implications.
- Develop and express ideas with clarity, confidence, and both analytical and critical depth, effectively persuading and engaging audiences in both oral and written formats.
- Enhance speaking and individual and group presentation abilities to articulate complex philosophical arguments coherently.
- Foster a heightened sensitivity to ethical issues and improve the ability to detect and articulate these issues in various contexts.

Required Materials:

Readings: All required and supplemental readings will be posted on Brightspace.

Final Exam Date: There will be no final examination in this course. Instead, an oral examination will take place during class time on April 2, 4, and 9. The scope of the examination will encompass the topics of the latter half of the course.

Drop Course Policy: The final day for withdrawal from Winter semester courses is March 15.

Communication with Instructor:

I am available to meet with you in person or online for office hours. However, I do not have a fixed schedule for these meetings. If you need to ask me anything or want to book a consultation, please send me an email. I will try to get back to you within 24-48 hours on weekdays and within 48 hours on weekends. Please be aware that I usually use Brightspace to make class announcements, so make sure that you regularly check your Carleton email or the Brightspace portal to keep up with any updates. The office hours are intended to help you understand concepts and answer any questions that cannot be answered easily by consulting the course outline or by sending an email. Please do not use your personal email and only use your Carleton email account.

Grading Scheme:

Your final grade for the course will be calculated based on the percentage score assigned to each component. Once a grade has been assigned, you can review the rubric and/or personalized feedback. The sum of the percentage scores for each component will be your final course grade as follows:[1]

In-class activities	**25%**
▪ Weekly quizzes 20%	
▪ Short-class presentation 5%	
Group presentation	**20%**
▪ Presentation 10%	
▪ Q&A 10%	
Class-participation	**25%**
▪ Discussions Questions 10%	
▪ In-class participation 15%	
Mid-term	**15%**
Oral exam	**15%**
TOTAL	**100%**

In-class activities (25%)

Weekly quizzes (20%): Every Thursday, you will take a short quiz for a total of 10 mini quizzes throughout the term (see Course Schedule). These quizzes are designed to test your understanding of the week's readings and discussions. Each quiz will have two parts:

- an in-class component, which will consist of 5 closed-book multiple-choice, true/false, or short answer questions held every Thursday before the end of the class; and
- a take-home open question component, which will require a 200-word response that you will need to submit before each Tuesday's class via Brightspace. Using AI generative tools for the take-home question is strictly prohibited, and any use of such tools will result in an immediate penalty unless they are required to complete the open question.

[1] In case you have a Letter of Accommodation from the PMC, please inform me as soon as possible. This will enable us to review the suggested academic accommodations for any evaluation component(s) and come to an agreement on the most suitable accommodation or replacement.

There will not be any makeup activities for the in-class component. However, if you are unable to attend a class due to illness or an emergency, please notify me immediately so that we can come up with an appropriate solution.

Short-class presentation (5%): I will randomly choose one student each class to give an informal five-minute presentation. You will not be required to use slide decks but will have to discuss important or controversial claims from the assigned readings or analyze discussion questions. Please come prepared for this every class but note that you will only be asked to present on topics covered in the assigned reading of the week. There is no need to create handouts for your presentations. I will ensure that by the end of the term, everyone has had the opportunity to present.

Group presentation (20%)

The aim of this presentation is to promote teamwork and discussion. During the presentation, you and a partner will not only be required to present the main claims of the assigned reading but also to contrast them with previous material, with a maximum of two authors and/or readings. Both of you will have around 15 minutes at the beginning of the class to present, followed by 10-15 minutes of Q&A from the rest of the group. Your ability to respond to the Q&A will account for 10% of your presentation grade. Although the use of a slide deck is encouraged, it is not mandatory. You must select your group and topic by the end of the first session via Brightspace. Time will be given in class to do so.

Class participation (25%)

The course will be structured like a seminar, with more emphasis on class discussion of the readings rather than traditional lectures. Therefore, students will need to take a more active role in their learning by completing assigned readings before classes and preparing to discuss them with the instructor and fellow students in class. Regular class attendance and contribution to class discussion are expected, and full presence from start to end of class is required. The only prerequisite is a willingness to think critically about the content and reasonableness of your own ethical views, while taking alternative views seriously. The class participation component is comprised of:

In-class participation (15%): Students will be graded on their participation in class discussions. The grade will be based on both the quantity and quality of their contributions. Every time a student makes a quality contribution, they will earn a participation token. In weeks 12 and 13, students will exchange these tokens for their final participation grade. Please note that you will be fully responsible for your tokens once they are handed in. If any tokens are lost, they will not be replaced. The class participation threshold for the maximum grade (15%) will be determined by the mean and average of tokens earned by the class.

Discussions Questions (Brightspace) (10%): As a part of your coursework, you need to actively participate in class discussions by submitting discussion questions via Brightspace. For each class, you must submit one question related to the readings assigned for that day. Although not all questions may be covered in class, this exercise can help identify areas that may need further clarification and questions that may be included in midterms or oral exams.

- *Deadline*: Your questions must be submitted by noon the day before the class is scheduled. For example, if the class is on January 11th, your question should be posted by noon on January 10th.
- *Grading Criteria*: Your questions will be evaluated based on their quality and quantity. This means that submitting 20 questions on time does not guarantee a full 10% grade.
- *Types of questions*: Questions can be interpretative or critical. Interpretative questions are designed to explore and clarify the meaning, concepts, and arguments presented in a text.

Critical questions, on the other hand, go beyond understanding the text to evaluate, analyze, and challenge the ideas or arguments presented.

- *Additional considerations:* Ensure that your questions are clear, specific, and directly related to the readings. Avoid vague or general questions. This reflects your engagement and understanding of the material. Always proofread your questions and include the appropriate citation if you are referring to a specific part of the reading.

Midterm exam

The midterm exam will cover topics discussed from week 1 to 6. Students will be required to write their responses during class time and are allowed to refer to their notes and course materials during the exam. The purpose of the midterm is to evaluate your comprehension of the course material and your critical thinking skills. It is important to note that the use of AI generative tools is strictly prohibited and will result in penalties if detected.

Oral Exam

Oral exams are crucial for philosophy students to demonstrate their grasp of concepts through argumentative clarity and critical thinking. Unlike written tests, oral exams allow for immediate discussion, encouraging the development of skills in formulating coherent arguments and responding to counterarguments. They are a vital component of a well-rounded philosophical education and mirror real-life situations where philosophers must articulate and defend their viewpoints.

The process for the oral exam is as follows:[2]

- To schedule an exam slot, you need to log in to Brightspace and select your preferred date between April 2, 4, or 9. Please make sure to do this before February 27th.
- On March 26th, you will be asked to provide two options from the course readings to base your examination on (from week 7 to 11). Later that day, you will be assigned a single reading based on your preferences. Once you have the selected reading, you need to study another complementary text of your choice along with the required reading.
- On the day of the exam, you will have around 3-5 minutes to summarize the core parts of the texts. After that, I will ask you follow-up questions for the remaining time (around 6-10 minutes) to test your comprehension and ability to critically or constructively explore a view or argument. These questions may be based on class discussion, questions posted on Brightspace, or claims not covered in the initial presentation. Please note that this is a close-book, no-notes exam.
- All examinees are required to attend the entire session. Examinees have the option to submit a short 600-word response paper on any of the claims discussed during the examination for bonus points applicable to your oral exam. These must be submitted before April 11. The use of AI generative tools is strictly forbidden for this assignment.

Late Policy for Coursework

Group presentation: No extensions are allowed for group assignments. Team members are expected to collaborate and compensate for any member who might be unable to contribute, ensuring the project is completed on time.

Discussion questions: Late submissions for discussion questions will not be accepted under any circumstances. It is important to adhere to the deadlines to ensure full participation in class discussions.

[2] If you have a Letter of Accommodation from the PMC, it is important that you inform me as soon as possible to discuss the academic accommodations recommended for your oral examination. By working together, we can reach an agreement on an appropriate accommodation that will enable you to perform your best on the exam.

In-class activities (in-class quizzes): Activities completed during class must be submitted by the end of the class session. No submissions will be accepted after the class has concluded.

Late Assignments (weekly take-home questions): Late submissions of weekly take-home questions will be penalized to ensure fairness for all students. For each day an assignment is submitted after the deadline, one (1) point will be deducted from the grade, in addition to an initial penalty of two (2) points. For instance, an open question that would typically merit 5 points will receive a maximum grade of 3 points if submitted after the deadline on the due date, 2 if submitted the following day, and so on. In cases of illness, family emergencies, or other exceptional circumstances, requests for an extension will be considered.

Mid-term and oral exam: Requests for rescheduling the mid-term or oral exams will be evaluated on an individual basis, primarily in cases of illness, family emergencies, or other exceptional circumstances. To ensure fairness for all students and depending on the circumstance, an initial penalty of 5 percentage points will be applied for rescheduling, with an additional 5 percentage points added for each day of delay. It is imperative to inform the instructor as soon as possible about any such exceptional circumstances requiring rescheduling to avoid penalties.

COURSE SCHEDULE [3]

Week	Date	Class	Reading
1	Jan 9	**1**	No assigned reading. Class introduction. Group and topic selection for group presentations.
	Jan 11	**2**	Goodin, R. (1995). *Utilitarianism as a Public Philosophy.* Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1, pp. 3-28. Submission of Discussion Questions begins. Weekly quiz
2	Jan 16	**3**	Hooker, B. (2000) Ideal Code, Real World; A Rule-Consequentialist Theory of Morality. Oxford University Press. Chapter 1, pp. 1-31.
	Jan 18	**4**	Hooker, B. (2000) Ideal Code, Real World; A Rule-Consequentialist Theory of Morality. Oxford University Press. Chapter 2, pp. 32-71. Weekly quiz
3	Jan 23	**5**	Nozick, R. (2013), *Anarchy, State, and Utopia,* Basic Books (1974). pp. 3-35
	Jan 25	**6**	Rawls, J. (2001). *Justice as Fairness. A Restatement*. Harvard University Press. Part I (§2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8). Weekly quiz
4	Jan 30	**7**	van Parijs, P. (1991). Why Surfers Should be Fed: The Liberal Case for an Unconditional Basic Income, Philosophy & Public Affairs 20(2): 101-131.
	Feb 1	**8**	Robeyns, I. (2001) "Will a Basic Income do Justice to Women?" Analyse & Kritik 23 (1): 88-105. Weekly quiz
5	Feb 6	**9**	Anderson, E. (1999). What Is the Point of Equality? Ethics 109 (2) pp. 287-312.
	Feb 8	**10**	Anderson, E. (1999). What Is the Point of Equality? Ethics 109 (2) pp. 312-337. Weekly quiz
6	Feb 13	**11**	Nussbaum, M. (2011) Creating Capabilities. Harvard University Press. Chapter 2. pp. 17-45.
	Feb 15	**12**	Midterm
	Feb 20		**Winter Break**
	Feb 22		

[3] Please note that the schedule may change during the term, and students will receive advanced notice in such cases.

7	Feb 27	**13**	Baier, A. (1995) *Moral Prejudices: Essays on Ethics*. Harvard University Press. Chapter 2 pp. 18-32. Deadline to schedule an oral exam slot.
	Feb 29	**14**	Walker, M.U. (1998). *Moral Understandings: A Feminist Study in Ethics*. Routledge. Chapter 1. (3-28) Weekly quiz
8	Mar 5	**15**	Tronto, Joan C. (1993) *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care.* Routledge. Part Three, Chapter Four. pp. 101-124
	Mar 7	**16**	Tronto, Joan C. (1993) *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care.* Routledge. Part Three, Chapter Five. pp. 125-155 Weekly quiz
9	Mar 12	**17**	Young, Iris Marion. (1990) *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Chapter 2. pp. 39-65.
	Mar 14	**18**	Mills, C.W. (2015). "Racial Justice," in *The Equal Society: Essays on Equality in Theory and Practice,* ed. George Hull. Lexington Books. Chapter 2, pp. 43-71. Weekly quiz
10	Mar 19	**19**	Fraser, N. (2016). Contradictions of Capital and Care. New Left Review. 100, July–August 2016.
	Mar 21	**20**	Hartmann, H. (1979). The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union. *Capital & Class* 3(2):1-33. Weekly quiz
11	Mar 26	**21**	Dussel, E. (2018). "Are Many Modernities Possible? A South-South Dialogue," in *Decolonizing Ethics. The Critical Theory of Enrique Dussel,* eds. Amy Allen and Eduardo Mendieta. Chapter 2. pp. 22-41. Deadline for providing two reading options for the oral exam. Topic to be assigned later that day.
	Mar 28	**22**	Deere, D.T. (2018). "The Upsurge of the Living: Critical Ethics and the Materiality of the Community Life," in *Decolonizing Ethics. The Critical Theory of Enrique Dussel* eds. Amy Allen and Eduardo Mendieta. Chapter 5. pp. 90-106. Weekly quiz
12	Apr 2	**23**	**Oral examination Group A** *Submit your participation tokens*
	Apr 4	**24**	**Oral examination Group B** *Submit your participation tokens*
13	Apr 9	**25**	**Oral examination Group C** *Submit your participation tokens*

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2023-24)

Assignments:
Please follow your professor's instructions on how assignments will be handled electronically. There will be NO hard copies placed in the essay box this coming year.

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 Term Work:
If students are unable to complete term work because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control, they should contact their course instructor no later than *three working days* of the due date. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of the term. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.

Deferrals for Final Exams:
Students are expected to be available for the duration of a course including the examination period. Occasionally, students encounter circumstances beyond their control where they may not be able to write a final examination or submit a take-home examination. Examples of this would be a serious illness or the death of a family member. If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a take-home examination by the due date, you may apply for a deferral no later than *three working days* after the original due date (as per the University Regulations in Section 4.3 of the Undergraduate Calendar). Visit the Registrar's Office for further information.

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. (Section 10.1 of the Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations)

Academic Accommodation:
You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term:

- *Pregnancy or 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 EDC website.
- *Academic accommodations for students with disabilities:* The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class test or exam requiring accommodation. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your professor to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.
- *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 where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy.
- *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.

Important Dates:

Sept. 6	Classes start.
Sept. 19	Last day for registration and course changes for fall term and fall/winter (two-term) courses.
Sept. 30	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from fall term or two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
Oct. 9	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Oct. 23-27	Fall Break – no classes.
Nov. 24	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, before the official examination period.
Dec. 8	Last day of fall term classes. ***Classes follow a Monday schedule***. Last day for academic withdrawal from fall term 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 term work for a fall term course.
Dec. 10-22	Final examinations for fall term courses and mid-term examinations in two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Dec. 22	All take-home examinations are due.
Jan. 8	Classes begin.
Jan. 19	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. 19	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Feb. 19-23	Winter Break – no classes.
Mar. 15	Last day for academic withdrawal from fall/winter and winter courses.
Mar. 27	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.
Mar. 29	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Apr. 10	Last day of two-term and winter term classes. ***Classes follow a Friday schedule.*** 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. 11-12	No classes or examinations take place.
Apr. 13-25	Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Apr. 25	All take-home examinations are due.

Addresses:

Department of Philosophy:
www.carleton.ca/philosophy
520-2110

Registrar's Office:
www.carleton.ca/registrar
520-3500

Academic Advising Centre:
www.carleton.ca/academicadvising
520-7850

Writing Services:
http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/
520-3822

MacOdrum Library
http://www.library.carleton.ca/
520-2735