

PHIL 1550: Introduction to Ethics and Social Issues (Summer 2023)

Class time/location: Most lectures asynchronous (see schedule on page 3)

Ongoing participation on Brightspace discussion boards

Instructor: Matthew Scarfone, matthew.scarfone@carleton.ca

Office hours: W 1:00 – 2:00, <https://carleton-ca.zoom.us/j/93647691291>, password: ethics

Teaching assistant: TBD

Coursepage: <https://brightspace.carleton.ca/d2l/home/181211>

Calendar Course Description

An introduction to understanding, assessing, and formulating ethical arguments concerning controversial issues. Particular issues studied may include, world hunger, capital punishment, terrorism, euthanasia, abortion, pornography and hate speech, animal rights, the environment, and topics in theories of race, gender and disability.

Course Description

Our social lives are awash in ethical issues. What is freedom of speech? How does free expression relate to activities at universities? Are there norms about how we should govern our beliefs? What makes for a good or bad source of evidence? Is abortion morally permissible? What is the relationship between sex, gender, and culture? Are there good reasons for us to delete all our social media accounts? What are the benefits and/or harms of online shaming and cancelling? How should we treat non-human animals? Our course serves as an introduction to using philosophical arguments to understand and critique these matters. Nearly all of us have strong beliefs about ethics and social issues, and one of our aims in this course is to uncover and analyze the underlying arguments that can be given for or against various beliefs and positions.

Prerequisites

None. This course is suitable for any university student, irrespective of background in or familiarity with philosophy.

Preclusions

FYSM 1209 and PHIL 1500

Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to (i) identify, understand, and evaluate some philosophical arguments relevant to contemporary social issues; (ii) engage in thoughtful and considered discussion on a range of ethical matters; and (iii) explain how looking at social issues through different ethical theories can result in different ethical assessments.

Texts

None to purchase. All the readings are made available through the coursepage.

Plagiarism

Don't. Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Plagiarism consists of "presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own". This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Plagiarism also includes submitting work that uses AI assistance - e.g., ChatGPT, QuillBot, etc.

Evaluation

Overview

▪ Discussion board contributions	25% of final grade	ongoing
▪ Argument summary 1	10% of final grade	due May 17
▪ Argument summary 2	15% of final grade	due May 29
▪ Argument summary 3	20% of final grade	due June 9
▪ Take-home Exam	30% of final grade	due June 25

25% Discussion board contributions: Our class has ongoing discussion boards on Brightspace, under Tools > Discussions. This is the way we will ‘participate’ in the course. The expectation is that we all contribute through posts the same way we would contribute during an in-class discussion – it isn’t necessary that each of us participates in *every* discussion, but we should contribute to *many* of them throughout the course.

I will start a couple threads for each topic: you can respond to these threads, respond to responses in a thread, start new threads yourself, etc. Our aim is to post thoughtful messages that contribute to the conversation in a meaningful way. For example, posting ‘Yeah, I agree’ is not the sort of post that will earn any credit. Rather, posts should show that you have read the material in the text, viewed the lecture, and are using your knowledge to respond to the question or issue at hand. When posting to the discussion boards, ask yourself: “does my contribution show that I am familiar with the assigned material and lectures? does my contribution encourage further discussion or follow up on others’ thoughts?” When responding to someone else’s response, ask yourself: “does my contribution show that am I making an effort to understand their position or argument?”

Important: Because we will be discussing together some sensitive and at times contentious social issues, we should all be especially mindful of the effect our contributions can have on others. By default the discussion boards will show your name alongside your post, but you also have the option to also post specific messages or threads anonymously. In this latter case, I will still be able to see your name (and thus assess your participation) but your classmates will not. You should use the ability to post anonymously very carefully. As a general rule of thumb, if you wouldn’t say something when sitting across from someone then you shouldn’t post it on our discussion boards. And even if you *would* say it, please think about whether you *should* say it.

45% Argument Summaries: Because this is a philosophy course, it is essential that we are able to accurately reconstruct the central arguments from the works we are studying. To practice this skill, you will submit three argument summaries throughout the course. These will each be 1 page, double-spaced (approx. 350 words). The due dates are **May 17**, **May 29**, and **June 9**. The specific readings and arguments that you should summarize will be noted 5 days in advance.

30% Take-home Exam: The exam is cumulative. It consists of short answer and essay questions regarding the entire course content, and will require a combination of argument reconstruction and analysis – i.e., the skills we have practiced throughout the course. The exam will be released on **June 18** and is due by **June 25**

Late Policy

1/3 alpha grade per 24 hours for the Argument Summaries – e.g., from A- to B+ after 1 day, from A- to B after 2 days, etc. No late submissions accepted for the Take-home Exam. Discussion board contributions do not have a deadline.

All the deadlines for your assignments are noted here, so you know them well in advance. But sometimes unforeseen circumstances arise that might prevent you from turning in work on time. To accommodate for this, you will have **three extension days** at your disposal for the entire course. You may use these extension days whenever and however you wish (except for on the Take-home Exam). No explanation for using these extension days is needed. Simply submit your assignment with a note that mentions how many of your (remaining) extension days are being used. For example, you can submit an assignment one day late and use one of your extension days; or you can submit an assignment three days late and use all three of your extension days; or you can submit two of your assignments 1 day late each and use two extension days; or you can refrain from using any extension days; and so on.

NB: If you are dealing with an extraordinary circumstance for which extension days would be insufficient (e.g. long-term illness, family crisis, etc.) please get in touch with me as soon as possible to make other arrangements.

Schedule

Date	Topic	To do:
Week 1	Speech & Expression	readings: Mill, Waldron, Levy videos: lectures 1 & 2 released on May 8
Week 2	Beliefs & Evidence	readings: Clifford, James, Fricker videos: lectures 3 & 4 released on May 15
Week 3	Reproductive Ethics	readings: Thomson, Marquis, Hendricks, Berg videos: lectures 5 & 6 released on May 22
Week 4	Sex & Gender	readings: Beauvoir, Barnes, Young videos: lectures 7 & 8 released on May 29
Week 5	Social Media	readings: Ronson, Norlock, Nguyen, Lanier videos: lectures 9 & 10 released on June 5
Week 6	Animal Rights	readings: Singer, Zangwill, Kymlicka & Donaldson videos: lectures 11 & 12 released on June 12
June 16	Wrap up & Exam Preview	live Zoom lecture 11:30 - 1:00 https://carleton-ca.zoom.us/j/93647691291 (pass: ethics)
June 18	Take-home Exam released	
June 25	Take-home Exam due	

I will only make changes to the syllabus, including due dates, when unforeseen circumstances occur. The changes will be announced as soon as possible so that you can adjust your schedule and expectations accordingly.

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Summer 2023)

Assignments:

Please follow your professor's instructions on how assignments will be handled electronically.

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:* 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. For more details, visit the [Equity Services website](#).
- *Academic accommodations for students with disabilities:* 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 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. For more details, visit the [Paul Menton Centre website](#).
- *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. 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
- *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:

May 4	Classes start.	July 3	Statutory holiday, University closed.
May 10	Last day for registration and course changes for <u>early</u> summer courses.	July 4	Late summer courses begin and full summer courses resume.
May 17	Last day for registration and course changes for <u>full</u> summer courses.	July 10	Last day for registration and course changes for late ____ summer courses.
May 17	Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from <u>early</u> summer courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.	July 17	Last day to withdraw from <u>late</u> summer courses with a full fee adjustment. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
May 22	Statutory holiday, University closed.	Aug. 1	Last day for academic withdrawal from full and late summer courses.
May 31	Last day to withdraw from full summer courses with a full fee adjustment. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.	Aug. 7	Civic holiday, University closed.
June 9	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade for <u>early</u> summer courses before the official examination period.	Aug. 9	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade for late <u>summer</u> and <u>full</u> summer courses before the official examination period.
June 16	Last day for <u>early</u> summer classes. Classes follow a Monday schedule. Last day for handing in term work, subject to any earlier course deadline.	Aug. 16	Last day of <u>late</u> and <u>full</u> summer term classes. Classes follow a Monday schedule. Last day for handing in term work, subject to any earlier course deadline.
June 17-18	No classes or examinations take place.	Aug. 17-18	No classes or examinations take place.
June 19-25	Final examinations.	Aug. 19-25	Final examinations.
June 25	Take-home examinations for <u>early</u> summer courses are due.	Aug. 25	Take-home examinations for late <u>or</u> full <u>summer</u> courses 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