

IBH 1BC3 – Fundamentals of Ethics

Term 1 (Fall) 2022-23

Tuesdays 12:30-13:20; Thursdays 10:30-12:20

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students should possess a basic familiarity with different ethical frameworks and their implications for contemporary ethical issues. Students will have developed an ability to:

- Read and understand complex philosophical arguments related to the theory and practice of ethics
 - Critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of arguments
 - Articulate and defend their views in classroom discussions and in writing
 - Appreciate unfamiliar ideas and points of view by constructively and respectfully discussing ethical issues with their classmates
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INSTRUCTOR AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Kerry O’Neill

Email: oneillke@mcmaster.ca

Office Hours and Location: Tuesdays 2:00-3:00 pm; UH 307

Teaching Assistant: TBC (@mcmaster.ca)

TA Office Hours: TBD

Course website: <https://avenue.mcmaster.ca/>

COURSE ELEMENTS

Credit Value:	3	Leadership:	Yes	IT skills:	No	Global view:	Yes
A2L:	Yes	Ethics:	Yes	Numeracy:	No	Written skills:	Yes
Participation:	Yes	Innovation:	No	Group work:	Yes	Oral skills:	Yes
Evidence-based:	Somewhat	Experiential:	No	Final Exam:	Yes	Guest speaker:	No

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides a general introduction to ethical theory as well as issues in applied ethics. In the first half of the course, students will become familiar with ethical theory and will then deploy that knowledge when examining ethical issues during the second half of the course. Questions to be considered include: What is the purpose of ethics? Is morality relative

to culture or tied to religion? We will examine some of the most popular and influential ethical frameworks, including utilitarianism, Kantianism, social contract theory and care ethics before finally turning to a discussion on contemporary ethical issues. Ethical issues to be discussed may include topics such as poverty, abortion, the environment, immigration, and the status of non-human animals.

BASIC COURSE FORMAT

This course is designated as an in-person course. This course meets twice per week for lectures and discussions (Tuesdays 12:30-13:20; Thursdays 10:30-12:20). ***We will not be meeting during the Tutorial time slot on Tuesdays 13:30-14:20.***

Lectures will take place on Tuesdays and in the first half of Thursdays classes. The second half of class on Thursdays will be devoted to class discussion (as a class and in small groups). Students are expected to attend class having done the readings and prepared to discuss course materials.

COURSE MATERIALS AND READINGS

There are two required textbooks for this course:

1. Daniel R. DeNicola. *Moral Philosophy: A Contemporary Introduction* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2019).
2. Daniel R. DeNicola. *A Reader in Moral Philosophy* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2022).

Both books are available for purchase through the [Campus Store](#). You may also purchase the books directly from Broadview Press [here](#). To succeed in this course, you will need to purchase both books as they will be used extensively. Any additional readings and resources will be placed on our course website.

Course Website: This course will be on Avenue to Learn (<https://avenue.mcmaster.ca/>). The Avenue to Learn course page will act as the main hub for all course information. Along with the course syllabus, all other materials and resources used in this course will be placed on the Avenue page. It is there that you will find writing advice, citation guidelines, supplemental readings, assignment instructions, discussion boards, and course announcements. You will also submit all written assignments through Avenue. Please check our Avenue page on a regular basis to ensure you are up-to-date in course materials.

EVALUATION

Detailed descriptions of the assignments will be posted to Avenue and discussed during class in advance of due dates.

1. Course Engagement (Attendance and Participation) (15%)

Students are expected to come to class having completed the assigned readings and prepared to discuss them. Course engagement reflects your overall engagement with the course and its materials. Students will be graded holistically based on their attendance and participation in discussions sessions. This includes how actively you contribute to discussions, the quality of your participation, and your ability to act collegially during discussion components (e.g., not dominating discussions) in both large and small groups. Participation on discussion boards and exchanges with the instructor or TA about course materials also contribute to the grading of this component.

Contact the course instructor and your TA immediately if you anticipate difficulties with the course engagement component of your grade.

NOTE: Missing one or two classes due to a valid reason (i.e., being ill) is acceptable and will not negatively impact your course engagement grade. As a courtesy, contact your TA if you are unable to attend the discussion period (Thursdays 11:30-12:20). Please stay home if you feeling are unwell.

2. Critical Reading Responses (30%)

You will be expected to complete three (3) Critical Reading Responses for this course. Each assignment will have two components: an exposition and an evaluation. You will be asked to explain and critically engage with an assigned reading or portion of the text. The purpose of these assignments is to encourage you to read and analyze small portions of text, while providing you with multiple opportunities to practice and strengthen your writing and critical thinking skills. Prompts will be provided for each critical reading response in advance of the due date.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Weight</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
Critical Reading Response 1	500 words	5%	11:59 pm on Friday September 23
Critical Reading Response 2	800-1000 words	10%	11:59 pm on Friday October 21
Critical Reading Response 3	1000-1200 words	15%	11:59 pm on Friday November 4

3. Essay (on contemporary ethical issue) (25%)

You will be asked to write one argumentative essay in this course. Your essay should be between 1500-1600 words. Your essay may not exceed 1600 words (excluding bibliography and title page). I will distribute essay questions approximately one month before the assignment is due. The essay is due by 11:59 pm on Thursday December 1.

4. Final Exam (30%)

The final exam will take the form of a Take-Home Exam. The exam will be assigned during the last week of class and is due electronically one week (7 days) from the date of distribution. Further information will be provided closer to the end of term. Exams are ineligible for extensions.

Summary of Assignments

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Total Weight</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
Course Engagement	15%	Ongoing
Critical Reading Responses	30%	11:59 pm on Sept. 23; Oct. 21; Nov. 4
Essay	25%	11:59 pm on Thursday Dec. 1
Final Take Home Exam	30%	TBD (exam period)

Turnitin

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity

Policy on Missed Work, Extensions, and Late Penalties

All written assignments must be submitted on Avenue to Learn. All extension requests must be communicated to **your TA at least one (1) day prior to the due date**. TAs are able to provide short extensions (up to 3 days) for students who suddenly find themselves unable to complete an assignment on time. You do not need to explain to your TA the reason you require an extension – it is sufficient to simply ask if you may have an extension. It is your responsibility to let your TA know if you require an extension ahead of the due dates.

Assignments submitted after the due date will be marked late. Late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 3% per day or part day late (including weekends). Assignments more than one week late will not be accepted (i.e., will receive a grade of zero (0)), except with special permission from the course instructor on legitimate medical or compassionate grounds

NOTE: *It is your responsibility to ensure you submit the correct file when uploading your assignments.* Files containing the wrong assignment (e.g., an essay for another course; draft etc.) or that are corrupted (e.g., unreadable) will be marked late until the correct file is uploaded.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Class Dates	Topic and Required Reading
Week 1	September 6 September 8	Course Introductions <i>Ethical Theory and Thinking About Morality</i> Readings: DeNicola 2019 – Ch. 1
Week 2	September 13 September 15	<i>Morality and Religion</i> Readings: DeNicola 2019 – Ch. 2 (Supplemental: DeNicola 2022 – pp. 38-42) <i>Cultural Relativism and Moral Pluralism</i> Readings: DeNicola 2019 – Ch. 3 (Supplemental: DeNicola 2022 – pp. 71-77)
Week 3	September 20 and 22	<i>Human Nature, Morality, & Egoism</i> Readings: 2019 – Ch. 5; 2022 – Ch. 5 (Nozick and Stouts excerpts, pp. 112-126)
Week 4	September 27 and 29	<i>Utilitarianism</i> Readings: 2019 – Ch. 6; 2022 – Ch. 6 (Bentham, Mill, and Letwin, pp. 129-143; 153-161)
Week 5	October 4 and 6	<i>Kantianism</i> Readings: 2019 – Ch. 7; 2022 – Ch. 7 (Herman and Korsgaard pp. 175-190))
Week 6	October 11 and 13	READING WEEK (No Class)
Week 7	October 18 and 20	<i>Social Contract Theory</i> Readings: 2019 – Ch. 8; 2022 – Ch. 8 (Rawls pp. 215-223)
Week 8	October 25 and 27	<i>Virtue Ethics</i> Readings: 2019 – Ch. 9; 2022 – Ch. 9 (excerpts TBD)

Week 9	November 1 and 3	<i>Care Ethics and Feminist Perspectives</i> Readings: 2019 – Ch. 11; 2022 – Ch. 11 (Noddings 305-311; Friedman & Bolte 317-323)
Week 10	November 8 and 10 <i>(Guest Speaker on Nov. 10)</i>	<i>Contemporary Ethical Issue 1: Poverty</i> Readings: Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality” Kate Manne, “Against Swooping in”
Week 11	November 15 and 17	<i>Contemporary Ethical Issue 2: Abortion</i> Readings: 2022 – Ch. 15
Week 12	November 22 and 24	<i>Contemporary Ethical Issue 3: Animals, Humans, & Moral Standing</i> Readings: 2022 – Ch. 16
Week 13	November 29 and December 1	<i>Contemporary Ethical Issue 4: Immigration</i> Readings: 2022 – Ch. 20
Week 14	December 6 and 8	<i>Course conclusion and exam review</i>