

**Faculty of Business**  
**IBH 2BD3**  
**Moral Issues**  
***Winter 2026***



## Instructor Information

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Johannes Steizinger

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**Office:** UH 305 (University Hall, Department of Philosophy)

**Office Hours:**

TBD

## Course Information

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This course includes two hours of lectures with discussion each week (Wednesdays, 2:30PM - 4:20PM), followed by an hour of exercises (4:30PM - 5:20PM) in which you practice argumentation and writing. Participating in the lectures and the exercises is pivotal. Discussion and social interaction is the bread and butter of philosophy.

The sessions will be technology-free zones to improve the learning experience. So, no smartphones or laptops are allowed. You have to bring pen and paper to make notes. In addition, the slides of the presentation will be uploaded before each session; the lectures will be recorded and provided on A2L; a notetaker will be determined and their notes will be shared on A2L after class. **Participating in class is an important aspect of the learning experience:** there will be unannounced in-class exercises which count towards the final grade. Moreover, attendance and participation count towards the final grade too.

**Course Dates:** 01/05/2026 - 04/07/2026

**Units:** 3.00

**Course Delivery Mode:** In Person

**Course Description:** An introduction to moral philosophy through a consideration of issues in professional ethics (e.g., health care and energy). Topics such as abortion, human experimentation, euthanasia, genetic screening, sustainability and pollution will be investigated. Lectures (two hours), tutorial (one hour) Prerequisite(s): Registration in Level 2 of the Integrated Business and Humanities Program.

**Note that the first session takes place in week 2 on January 14.**

## Instructor-Specific Course Information

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We discuss current moral issues that arise from our interactions with other people (1), with other cultures (2), and with our environment (3) in a globalized and technological world. 1) In the first part, we will examine the troubling issue of dehumanization. We address the significance of dehumanization for justifying mass violence and discuss whether work conditions can have dehumanizing effects. 2) In the second part, we will discuss corporate social responsibility and examine the problem of relativism that arises from the plurality of ethical contexts in a globalized world, focusing on the conflict between Western and indigenous ways of life. 3) In the third part, we will explore moral issues that arise from the technologization of the biological world, focusing on our relationship to animals and synthetic biology. We will also discuss the impact of generative AI tools on higher education.

DISCLAIMER: This course discusses examples (e.g. Nazi concentration camps) and material (e.g. Nazi propaganda) that students could experience as offensive or harmful.

## Important Links

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- [Mosaic](#)
- [Avenue to Learn](#)
- [Student Accessibility Services - Accommodations](#)
- [McMaster University Library](#)
- [eReserves](#)

## Course Elements

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<b>Credit Value: 3</b>	<b>Leadership: Yes</b>	<b>IT Skills: No</b>	<b>Global View: Yes</b>
<b>Avenue to Learn: Yes</b>	<b>Ethics: Yes</b>	<b>Numeracy: No</b>	<b>Written Skills: Yes</b>
<b>Participation: Yes</b>	<b>Innovation: No</b>	<b>Group Work: Yes</b>	<b>Oral Skills: Yes</b>
<b>Evidence-Based: Yes</b>	<b>Experiential: No</b>	<b>Final Exam: Yes</b>	<b>Guest Speaker(s): No</b>

## Course Learning Outcomes

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- Reflecting critically on current moral issues.
- Connecting ethical theories with concrete examples.
- Reading complicated texts carefully and critically.
- Writing focused reflections on moral issues.
- Developing moral arguments on their own.

## Required Materials and Texts

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Please sign in with your MacID [here](#) to view your booklist

**All course materials will be made available on A2L.**

## Class Format

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In Person

## Course Evaluation

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Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Grade Component	Weight	Description
Participating in and preparing the IBH debate	10%	If you participate in the IBH debate you get 40% of this grade; we will also do in-class argumentation exercises before reading week; completing such an exercise will bring you 15% of this grade.
Writing exercises	20%	There will be in-class writing exercises after reading week. Each completed exercise can earn you 20% of the exercise grade (up to 100%).
Midterm exam	30%	We will have a midterm exam in which you have to answer three of five long-answer questions.
Participation	10%	<p>You can gain credits (up to 100%) for the participation grade by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Attendance: Each attendance earns you 5% of the grade.</li> <li>2. Contributions to in-class discussions: Each reasonable contribution earns you 5% of the participation grade.</li> <li>3. Contributions to the discussion boards on A2L: Each reasonable contribution earns you 5% of the participation grade.</li> </ol>
Final Exam	30%	The final exam consists of writing a short essay about a question.

## Course Evaluation Details

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### Participation

The participation part of your grade reflects your engagement in our classroom discussion. There are three ways for earning credits for the participation grade (up to 100%) and it is up to you how you collect credits:

*Attendance:* We take attendance in each classroom session. If you show up for a week's sessions, you earn a 5% credit for your participation grade.

*Contributions to classroom discussions:* We keep a log where we record, after each session, the contributions to the discussion. You can earn a 5% credit for your participation grade, if you participate reasonably productively, which means being prepared and engaging in the conversation in a respectful and sincere way (e.g. by asking good questions). I will explain in week 2 how a reasonable contribution to our classroom discussion looks like.

*Contributions to discussion boards:* We will have weekly discussion boards on A2L. You can earn credits for the participation grade by contributing to the online discussion. A contribution earns you a 5% credit for the participation grade, if it meets certain qualitative and quantitative standards (e.g., engagement with the topic, length, timeliness). We will release a guideline for online discussions in week 2, including a rubric that explains how a reasonable contribution looks like.

## Undergraduate Grading Scale

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The breakdown of McMaster's 12-Point Grading Scale.

Grade	Equivalent Grade Point	Equivalent Percentages
A+	12	90-100
A	11	85-89
A-	10	80-84
B+	9	77-79
B	8	73-76
B-	7	70-72
C+	6	67-69
C	5	63-66
C-	4	60-62
D+	3	57-59
D	2	53-56

Grade	Equivalent Grade Point	Equivalent Percentages
D-	1	50-52
F	0	0-49

## Graduate Grading Scale

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Graduate Student Grading Scale (Except for MBA and Master of Finance)

Grade	Points	Equivalent Percentage	Pass/Fail
A+	12	90-100	P+
A	11	85-89	P
A-	10	80-84	
B+	9	77-79	
B	8	73-76	
B-	7	70-72	
F	0	69 and under	F

MBA and Master of Finance Grading Scale

Grade	Points	Equivalent Percentage	Pass/Fail
A+	12	90-100	P+
A	11	85-89	P
A-	10	80-84	
B+	9	75-79	
B	8	70-74	
B-	7	60-69	
F	0	59 and under	F

## Course Schedule

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Week	Date	Assignment
1	Jan 5-11	<b>No class</b>
2	Jan 12-18	<b>What is dehumanization?</b> - Introduction to the phenomenon of dehumanization

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The psychology of dehumanization</li> </ul> <p><i>Readings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- N. Haslam 2006. Dehumanization: An Integrative Review, Personality and Social Psychology Review 10:3, pp. 252–264.</li> <li>- V. Esses, S. Medianu, A. Sutter 2021. The dehumanization and rehumanization of refugees. In The Routledge Handbook of Dehumanization, pp. 275-287.</li> <li>- D.L. Smith 2011. Less Than Human: Why We Demean, Enslave, and Exterminate Others, pp. 142-154.</li> </ul> <p><i>Cases:</i> the dehumanization of refugees, dehumanization and genocide</p>
3	Jan 19-25	<p><b>Dehumanization and mass violence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dehumanization in the context of National Socialism</li> <li>- The debate on the paradox of dehumanization</li> </ul> <p><i>Readings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- D.L. Smith 2016. Paradoxes of Dehumanization, Social Theory and Practice 42:2, pp. 418–433.</li> <li>- J. Steizinger 2018. The Significance of Dehumanization: Nazi Ideology and its Psychological Consequences, Politics, Religion &amp; Ideology 19:2, pp. 139–157.</li> </ul> <p><i>Cases:</i> Nazi racism, Nazi Concentration Camps</p>
4	Jan 26-Feb 1	<p><b>Dehumanization and exploitation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dehumanizing experiences at the workplace</li> <li>- A Kantian approach: the respect-for-persons principle</li> </ul> <p><i>Readings</i> - N.E. Bowie 2017. Business Ethics: A Kantian Approach, pp. 41-53. - D. G. Arnold, N.E. Bowie, 2003. Sweatshops and Respect for Persons, Business Ethics Quarterly 13:2, pp. 221-242.</p> <p><i>Case:</i> sweatshops</p>
5	Feb 2-8	<p><b>Modern capitalism and the epidemic of loneliness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individual and community in modern economy</li> <li>- The social problem of loneliness</li> </ul>

		<p><i>Readings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- S.A. Marglin 2010. The Dismal Science: How Thinking Like an Economist Undermines Community, pp. 1-36.</li> <li>- Passages from Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community 2023.</li> </ul> <p><i>In-class video</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>A Girl's Day</i> (2014), by Rosa Ziegler</li> </ul> <p><i>Case:</i> loneliness of young people</p>
6	Feb 9-15	<p><b>Cultural relativism: moral ambivalence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The phenomenon of moral ambivalence</li> <li>- How moral ambivalence supports cultural relativism</li> </ul> <p><i>Readings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- D. Wong 2006. Chapter 1: Pluralism and Ambivalence, in <i>Natural Moralities: A Defense of Pluralistic Relativism</i>.</li> <li>- T. Dunfee, D. Robertson, Case 10.2. Foreign Assignment, in <i>Honest Work: Business Ethics Reader</i>, 2018, pp. 374 f.</li> </ul> <p><i>Case:</i> foreign assignment in a sexist context</p>
7	Feb 16-22	<p><b>Mid-term recess</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No class</li> <li>- No assignments</li> </ul>
8	Feb 23-Mar 1	<p><b>Midterm exam</b> (90 minutes) on February 25</p>
9	Mar 2-8	<p><b>Cultural relativism and CSR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Corporate Social Responsibility in the global context</li> <li>- Two business models: the ethical company vs. the political company</li> </ul> <p><i>Readings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- T. Donaldson 2018. Values in Tension: Ethics Away from Home, in <i>Honest Work: Business Ethics Reader</i>, pp. 346-353</li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A.G. Scherer, G. Palazzo 2018. The New Political Role of Business in a Globalized World, pp. 15-40 (reprint from Journal of Management Studies 48 [2011], 899–931).</li> <li>- E. Black, M. Eapen 2018. Suicides at Foxconn, in Honest Work: Business Ethics Reader, pp. 379-381.</li> </ul> <p><i>Case:</i> Apple and suicides at Foxconn</p>
10	Mar 9-15	<p><b>Cultural relativism: cultures in conflict</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Differences between Western cultures and indigenous cultures</li> <li>- Conflicts arising from business activities on indigenous land</li> </ul> <p><i>Readings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- S.B. Banerjee 2003. The Practice of Stakeholder Colonialism: National Interest and Colonial Discourses in the Management of Indigenous Stakeholders, in Postcolonial Theory and Organizational Analysis, pp. 255-279.</li> <li>- W. LaDuke 2017. In the Time of the Sacred Places, in The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Ecology, pp. 71-83.</li> <li>- C. Bellrichard, J. Barrera 2020. What you need to know about the Coastal GasLink pipeline conflict, CBC, Feb 11, <a href="https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/wet-suwet-en-coastal-gaslink-pipeline-1.5448363">https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/wet-suwet-en-coastal-gaslink-pipeline-1.5448363</a></li> </ul> <p><i>Case:</i> the conflict about the Coastal GasLink pipeline in BC</p>
11	Mar 16-22	<p><b>Environment: artificial intelligence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The purpose of humanities education</li> <li>- Pros and cons of the use of generative AI in higher education</li> </ul> <p><i>Readings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- K. Gjesdal 2015. Bildung, in The Oxford Handbook of German Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century, pp. 696-720.</li> <li>- J. Dempere et al 2023. The impact of ChatGPT on higher education, in Frontiers in Higher Education 8. <a href="https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2023.1206936">https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2023.1206936</a></li> <li>- I. Scott 2023. Yes, We Are in a (ChatGPT) Crisis, Insight Higher Ed April 18,</li> </ul>

		<p><a href="https://www.insidehighered.com/opinion/views/2023/04/18/yes-we-are-chatgpt-crisis">https://www.insidehighered.com/opinion/views/2023/04/18/yes-we-are-chatgpt-crisis</a></p> <p>- W.D. Heaven 2023. ChatGPT is going to change education, not destroy it,  <a href="https://www.technologyreview.com/2023/04/06/1071059/chatgpt-change-not-destroy-education-openai/">https://www.technologyreview.com/2023/04/06/1071059/chatgpt-change-not-destroy-education-openai/</a></p> <p><i>Case:</i> generative AI and higher education</p>
12	Mar 23-29	<p><b>Environment: animals</b></p> <p>- The ethics of the relationship between humans and animals</p> <p>- An utilitarian argument for the equal moral status of all animals</p> <p><i>Readings</i></p> <p>- P. Singer 2002. Animal Liberation (1975), chapter 1.</p> <p>- Animal Rights: debate between Peter Singer &amp; Richard Posner. Slate, June 2001;  <a href="https://web.archive.org/web/20150509122917/http://www.utilitarian.net/singer/interviews-debates/200106--.htm">https://web.archive.org/web/20150509122917/http://www.utilitarian.net/singer/interviews-debates/200106--.htm</a></p> <p><i>Case:</i> animal rights</p>
13	Mar 30-Apr 5	<p><b>Environment: synthetic organisms</b></p> <p>- Synthetic biology and the question of life: are we playing God?</p> <p>- Risk management: assessing synthetic biology as new technology</p> <p><i>Readings</i></p> <p>- A. Deplazes-Zemp, N. Biller-Andorno 2012. Explaining Life, EMBO reports 13:11, pp. 959-962.</p> <p>- H. van den Belt 2009. Playing God in Frankenstein's Footsteps: Synthetic Biology and the Meaning of Life, NanoEthics 3:3, pp. 257–268.</p> <p>- M. Engelhard et al 2016. Old and New Risks in Synthetic Biology: Topics and Tools for Discussion. In Synthetic Biology Analysed, pp. 51-62.</p> <p><i>Cases:</i> SynBio</p>

## Absences, Missed Work, Illness

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### **In-class exercises**

There will be unannounced in-class exercises (argumentation exercises before reading week and writing exercises after reading week) throughout the term. If you are unable to come to class on a day of an in-class exercise and can justify your absence, you have the opportunity to come to our office hours to complete it.

## Turnitin.com

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Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

## Generative AI: Use Prohibited

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Students are not permitted to use generative AI in this course. In alignment with [McMaster academic integrity policy](#), it "shall be an offence knowingly to ... submit academic work for assessment that was purchased or acquired from another source". This includes work created by generative AI tools. Also state in the policy is the following, "Contract Cheating is the act of "outsourcing of student work to third parties" (Lancaster & Clarke, 2016, p. 639) with or without payment." Using Generative AI tools is a form of contract cheating. Charges of academic dishonesty will be brought forward to the Office of Academic Integrity.

## APPROVED ADVISORY STATEMENTS

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## Academic Integrity

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

### Authenticity / Plagiarism

**Some courses may** use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. Avenue to Learn, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. **All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld** (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

## **Courses with an On-line Element**

***Some courses may*** use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn, LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

## **Online Proctoring**

***Some courses may*** use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

## **Conduct Expectations**

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online.**

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very

seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms.

### **Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

### **Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work**

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the [Policy on Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work](#).

### **Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous, or Spiritual Observances (RISO)**

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, Indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

### **Copyright and Recording**

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors.

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

## **Extreme Circumstances**

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, Avenue to Learn and/or McMaster email.