

PHIL 232 A01
CRN# 12444

September – December 2020
TWF: 1:30am – 2:20pm

Moral Problems of Contemporary Society

Instructor: Scott Woodcock
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See final page of outline for details about online teaching due to COVID-19.

Office Hours: Wednesday 10am-11am group hours individual meetings by appointment

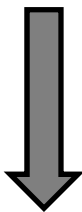
Course Description

The aim of this course is to introduce students to a variety of controversial moral issues in contemporary society. In particular, students will be encouraged to carefully examine the philosophical arguments that arise in debates surrounding these controversial issues. The moral problems we will address in the course involve complex and often highly sensitive questions. The goal is to enable students to thoughtfully engage this subject matter and to learn how to articulate their opinions in the most persuasive way possible. The issues we will address in the course include the following: the moral status of non-human animals, the prospect of decriminalization of addictive recreational drugs, our obligations to protect the environment, the moral status of abortion, ethical questions related to pornography, the duty to help alleviate global poverty, and the distinctive wrongs of colonization. Class participation will be strongly encouraged in order to generate thoughtful discussion of the philosophical arguments proposed in the readings and their application to current events.

Course Website: Online materials will be made available via Uvic Brightspace. Access your customized Brightspace page by signing into Uvic and clicking on Online Tools. You should see Brightspace as an option.

Texts: All readings available online via Uvic Brightspace

Requirements



First Paper (10%)
Mid-term Test (20%)
Second Paper (20%)
Final Exam (40%)
Activist Letters (5%)
Quote & Comment or News & Comment Assignments (5%)

Note: Writing assignment due dates and mid-term test dates are posted below in the weekly schedule. You are responsible for knowing these dates. Plan ahead, and manage your overall personal workload accordingly.

Grading System

Percentage	Letter Grade	Grade Point	Grade Definition
90 – 100	A+	9	An A+, A, or A- is earned by work which is technically superior, shows mastery of the subject matter, and in the case of an A+ offers original insight and/or goes beyond course expectations. Normally achieved by a minority of students.
85 – 89	A	8	
80 – 84	A-	7	
77 – 79	B+	6	A B+, B, or B- is earned by work that indicates good comprehension of the course material, a good command of the skills needed to work with the course material, and the student's full engagement with the course requirements and activities. A B+ represents a more complex understanding and/or application of the course material. Normally achieved by the largest number of students.
73 – 76	B	5	
70 – 72	B-	4	
65 – 69	C+	3	A C+ or C is earned by work that indicates adequate comprehension of the course material and the skills needed to work with the course material and that indicates the student has met the basic requirements for completing assigned work and/or participating in class activities.
60 – 64	C	2	
50 – 59	D	1	A D is earned by work that indicates minimal

Policy on Late Assignments: 5% per working day will be subtracted from grade unless students are delayed by illness or family emergency.

Plagiarism: Review the [University Policy on Academic Integrity](#) very carefully, and be aware that anti-plagiarism software may be used in this course. Resources will be provided via Brightspace for students seeking guidance about what constitutes plagiarism and how they can avoid it, but it is the responsibility of each student to be informed about these details.

Counseling Services: Many, if not most, students experience some difficulties with their mental health during their years as undergraduate students. Make sure you are familiar with Uvic [Counseling Services](#), which is an excellent resource you have at your disposal on campus. It is hard to shake the stigma associated with problems like depression and anxiety, but if at any point you can benefit from help with mental health issues, please contact Counseling Services. They genuinely want to help, and why not take advantage of this free resource?

Important Dates: Please consult the Uvic calendar [Academic Year Important Dates](#) for information about last possible dates to withdraw from courses without penalty, examination period start/end dates, etc.

Technology in Classroom: Some students require laptops or voice recognition apps for their learning strategies, so do not prohibit their use in the classroom. However, studies demonstrate that multi-tasking reduces the performance of other nearby students, so anyone caught on social media, internet surfing, etc. will be asked to leave and potentially subject to disciplinary action.

Uvic Sexualized Violence Prevention and Response:

Learn more about preventing sexualized violence by visiting

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Note: Dates are subject to change. Class attendance is essential to stay informed about scheduling changes. Material should be read before the class in which it is discussed so that students are prepared to contribute to class discussion.

<u>Week</u>	<u>Readings</u>
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<u>Week 1</u>	
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Sept. 9	
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Oct. 9	Robert Elliot:Faking Nature *** First Paper Due ***
<u>Week 6</u>	Collective Action Problems
Oct. 13	Garrett Hardin:The Tragedy of the Commons [Suggested = Simo Kyllonen:Climate Change, No-Harm Principle, and Moral Responsibility of Individual Emitters]
Oct. 14	Review
Oct. 16	*** Midterm Test ***
<u>Week 7</u>	The Moral Status of Abortion – Part One
Oct. 20 Oct. 23	Mary Anne Warren:On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion Don Marquis:Why Abortion is Immoral
<u>Week 8</u>	The Moral Status of Abortion – Part Two
Oct. 27 Oct. 30	Judith Jarvis Thomson:A Defense of Abortion Margaret Olivia Little:Abortion, Intimacy, and the Duty to Gestate
<u>Week 9</u>	The Moral Status of Pornography
Nov. 3	Judith M. Hill: Pornography and Degradation [Suggested = Mary Kate McGowan:On Multiple Types of Silencing]
Nov. 4	
Nov. 6	

Week 12 Obligations to Relieve Global Poverty

Nov. 17 Peter Singer Famine, Affluence, and Morality

Nov. 18

Nov. 20

COVID-19 Online Teaching Information

This will be a strange and challenging year at the University of Victoria. Like most other courses this fall at Uvic, the course will be taught online. Here are some details related to how this will work:

Lecture Format

The lectures will occur in the regular time slot for the course (TWF: 11:30am – 12:20pm) via Zoom. However, to promote accessibility by students facing challenges like variable wifi availability, living in other time zones, losing access to daytime childcare, etc., I will record the lectures and make them available in Brightspace. Students should therefore be aware that their participation in lecture discussions will be recorded.

If you can attend the lectures live via Zoom, I strongly recommend it so you can ask questions as we discuss the material. It will take time to adjust to the online format, but my aim is to facilitate as much collaborative discussion as there would be in an ordinary lecture. We will work out the relevant Zoom conventions for making this happen during the first week of class. However, if at any point you find that you face challenges to fully participating in the course please let me know so that we can try to work out a solution.

Online Testing

The midterm test will be run online during regular class time (1:30pm-2:20pm). If you are unable to write the midterm at that time, please contact me in advance to make other arrangements. The end of term exam will be online at a time TBA after classes are over.

Technical Support

Most technical difficulties are best answered by the [Computer Help Desk](#), but if you find yourself facing persistent technical difficulties, please get