

Introduction to Ethics
PHL275H1S
University of Toronto, St. George Campus

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<u>Course Location:</u>	MC-102 / Mechanical Engineering Building
<u>Course Times:</u>	Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:00-11:00am
<u>Tutorials:</u>	Fridays at 10am, 11am, or 12pm
<u>Professor Office Hours:</u>	Tuesday: 4-6pm Or by Appointment
<u>TA Office Hours:</u>	TBA
<u>Course Website:</u>	Via UT Blackboard / Learning Portal https://portal.utoronto.ca/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp

Course Description:

Why be moral? Is it even possible to be motivated to do things that go against one's self-interest? Is happiness or pleasure the ultimate good that we do and should seek or is there more to value in life? What is the good life? Is morality about doing the right thing? Is it about promoting the most good? Or, is morality about being a good person? Is morality really objective and universal, or is it merely subjectively or culturally relative? Is it ever morally permissible to torture someone, even a terrorist with a ticking time bomb? Are human beings the only beings who count morally – what about animals? Is it morally wrong for you to have spent \$5 on coffee today, when that money could have helped to save the life of a person living in abject poverty?

We will ask all of these questions, and more, in this Introductory course in Ethics. And, we will examine various arguments offering differing answers to these questions. Our aim is not necessarily to find *the* right or wrong answers to these questions – as we progress, you might

question whether the search for definitive answers is even the right sort of ethical quest. Instead, our aim will be to better understand what these questions are asking as well as to better understand how best to argue for and defend various conclusions intended to answer them.

In the first part of this course (Weeks 1-3), *The Good Life*, we will examine the question of what makes life valuable and what is worth pursuing. In the second part of this course (Weeks 4-8), *Normative Ethics*, we will discuss three influential moral theories, which attempt to provide systematic accounts of what morality is and what morality demands of us. In the third part of this course (Weeks 9-10), *Moral Challenges*, we will consider two skeptical challenges to morality, namely subjectivism and relativism. And, in the fourth and final part of this course (Weeks 11-13), *Moral Problems*, we will turn our attention to three concrete moral issues and quandaries that face us in our everyday lives: torture, the treatment of animals, and global poverty.

Required Text and Readings:

The Ethical Life: Fundamental Readings in Ethics and Moral Problems (3rd Ed.), edited by Russ Shafer-Landau. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. This text is available at the UTSG Bookstore. Additional readings will be made available over the course's Blackboard page.

Requirements, Assignments, and Evaluation:

- 1) **2 Argument Distillation Assignments:** Sometimes (often!) the structure of a writer's argument isn't immediately self-evident in the text—that is, it isn't laid-out step-by-step, and it doesn't just 'pop' out on a quick read. But, it's incumbent upon us to try to get clear about just what these writers are trying to convey and defend in their arguments. Setting out what you see to be the steps (premises and conclusion) of the argument is your job here. In your second argument reconstruction, you will be asked to briefly articulate and defend a challenge to the argument you have reconstructed.
 - **1st Argument Distillation Due Date: Monday, January 26 by 5:00pm**
 - **2nd Argument Distillation Due Date: Friday, February 13 by 5:00pm**The first Argument Distillation is worth 10% of your final grade. The second Argument Distillation (plus critical challenge) is worth 15% of your final grade.
- 2) **Comparative Argument Assessment Paper:** For this roughly 4-6 page paper (1600 words max), you will be asked to comparatively reconstruct and critically assess two opposing arguments on a topic or issue covered in our readings. Prompts will be provided via Blackboard for this assignment two weeks prior to the paper's due date – the paper is due in-class, at our last session. This paper will be worth 30% of your final grade.
 - **Due Date: Monday, March 30 by 5:00pm**
- 3) **Final Exam:** There will be a 2-hour final examination for this course. It will cover all of the material covered in the course, with an emphasis on material from the latter

third of the term. The date and location of the exam will be announced once the University has set the date. The final exam will be worth 25% of your final grade.

- 4) **Tutorial Attendance and Participation:** All students are required to register for and attend weekly tutorial sections, which will meet on Fridays, beginning in Week 2 (Friday, January 16th) and continuing through Week 12 (Friday, March 27th). Attendance for these tutorials is mandatory. In addition to attendance, your tutorial leaders will be assessing you on the basis of participation, which may include tutorial preparedness, discussion contributions, as well as written assessment. Each tutorial leader will offer more a more explicit rubric for attendance and participation assessment. Tutorial attendance is worth 5% of your final grade. Tutorial participation is worth 15% of your final grade.

Submitting Written Assignments:

Both Argument Distillations as well as the Comparative Argument Assessment Paper will be turned in via Blackboard and Turnitin.com.

Submitting Written Work Via Turnitin.com:

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site. You can find the guide for student use here: <http://www.teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching/academicintegrity/turnitin/guide-students.htm>

Submission work via Turnitin.com is voluntary. However, if you choose to opt-out of using Turnitin.com, you must notify your tutorial leader of your decision at least 1 week prior to the due date of the assignment. You will then be required to submit hard copies of all notes, outlines, and rough drafts used in the writing of your paper to your tutorial leader. You will also be required to meet with both your tutorial leader and the professor to discuss the research methods you utilized in writing your paper. Should you opt-out of using Turnitin.com and should you fail to meet the above listed requirements, you will receive a zero mark on the assignment, without exception.

Paper Extension & Late Paper Submission Policy:

You may be granted an extension of up to 5 days maximum on *one* written assignment, no questions asked, *only if* you email your Tutorial Leader requesting an extension of up to 5 days at least 72 hours before the due date of the assignment – the 72 hour cut-off will be strictly adhered to. Any other extension requests will require an official, university sanctioned written note. Late submission of any written assignment will be penalized 3 percentage points for each day that the assignment is late. If a paper is due in class on Tuesday, it will be counted 1 day late if submitted between 11:01am Tuesday and 11:00am Wednesday (submissions between 11:01am Wednesday and 11:00am Thursday will count as 2 days late, and so on). Late submissions will be made over Blackboard and Turnitin.com.

Missing the Final Exam:

There are no extensions on the Final Exam. Should you miss the final exam, you will need to appeal to the registrar for the possibility of taking a make-up exam. This is under the jurisdiction of the registrar. If you miss the final exam and are not permitted a make-up, you will receive a zero for this requirement.

Source Materials:

All source materials appealed to in your written assignments that do not come from assigned course texts, *must* be cleared with your tutorial leader at least 1 week prior to the due date of the assignment. If you do not clear additional sources with your tutorial leader 1 week prior to turning in your paper, you will be penalized (15% for each source not-cleared, *only if* the source is cited). None of the assignments for this class will require resources beyond the required readings.

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism:

Cheating on the final exam will result in, at least, a zero mark on the exam. The transgression will be reported to the administration as well, which may result in further penalties.

As for your writings, these are meant to reflect your own ideas, interpretations, reflections, and critiques. Plagiarism and academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Confirmed cases of plagiarism will result in a zero mark for the assignment, and may result in failure of the course. All cases of plagiarism will be referred for departmental review by the Philosophy Department, which will determine whether or not the case will need further referral to the University Tribunal.

The University of Toronto statement on Academic Honesty and Plagiarism can be found at the following address:

<http://life.utoronto.ca/get-smarter/academic-honesty/>

During my teaching career, I have had the extremely unfortunate and unpleasant experience of dealing with several plagiarism cases. Believe me, it isn't worth it. Just don't do it. I know that the allure of internet-accessible materials is strong, but I implore you to resist the urge of turning to these sources. You're all quite talented and capable students; you will all do just fine on your assignments, if you put in the work! And, I'm always happy to discuss your work with you during office hours, as are Jeremy, Clinton, Robert, and Joshua. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please don't hesitate to ask either me or your tutorial leader. You are all expected to read, understand, and commit to the University of Toronto Academic Honesty code, which is available at the web address listed above. We will not accept any excuses based on the claim that you didn't know what you were doing amounted to plagiarism. We take this very seriously, and so should you.

Citation Conventions:

It is essential that you cite your source material, when completing your written assignment for class. If you do not cite the assigned texts in your written assignment, your grade will not be higher than 65%. And, to be clear, citing your source material is not the same thing as offering a 'Works Cited' or 'Bibliography' page. You are *required* to cite your source material in the body of your text (or in footnotes or endnotes) whenever you quote or refer to an author's arguments or claims.

We are not particular about citation conventions (e.g. MLA, APA, or Chicago Style) as long as you cite material in a consistent way. The use of parenthetical in-text citations, including author and page number, with an appended works cited page, is fine—e.g. a proper parenthetical citation for a quote taken from the current page of this syllabus would look like this: (Rick, 5). And, again, please note that you must cite more than just quotations. Citations should be made whenever you are discussing any ideas or arguments from a text. Here are two links to sites that provide further links to various referencing conventions:

<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/plagiarism/students/referencing/conventions.html>

<http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/>

Accessibility Needs:

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodation for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: disability.services@utoronto.ca or <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility>

Email Policy:

Neither your Tutorial Leaders nor myself will be able to respond to in-depth, substantive questions about the readings or assignments over email. However, we are *more* than happy to discuss substantive questions of these sorts in office hours. So, please come and see us! We will be happy to address short, logistical, non-substantive questions over email.

Electronic Devices:

Although you will be allowed to take notes on a laptop or tablet, you are not permitted to use your mobile phone in class. You are also not permitted to use any recording devices, without the consent of the professor.

Marking Review:

Your tutorial leader will be available to discuss and explain the grades and marks that you receive for particular assignments. Grade changes by Tutorial Leaders will be considered *only* on grounds of tabulation error. If you wish to appeal your grade with the professor, you will receive the new grade given by the professor, *even if it is worse than your initial grade*.

GRADING SCALE AND RUBRIC

Grading Scale:

10%	First Argument Distillations
15%	Second Argument Distillation + Critical Objection
5%	Tutorial Attendance
15%	Tutorial Participation
30%	Comparative Argument Assessment Paper
25%	Final Exam

Grading Rubric:

Your written assignments and final exam will be assessed by the following grading rubric:

- 1) Follow Instructions: Fully answer all of the questions and directives posed in the prompt. Make sure not to skip over any of the questions/directives. Also, stick to the word count.
 - 2) Citation and Accuracy of Attribution: When you attribute a claim, argument, or conclusion to an author make sure to offer evidence for this attribution either by a simple page citation or by a page citation accompanied by a quotation. Stick close to the text so that you don't misattribute views to authors (views that an author does not actually hold).
 - 3) Clarity & Adequate Definition of Terms: Clarity is of primary importance in these papers. You are to take the reader through your reconstruction of these arguments in your own terms. Of course, some philosophical jargon will enter into play (e.g. 'internal reason' or 'instrumental principle'). When you introduce technical jargon, make sure to clarify what the terms mean in the context of the argument you are reconstructing. We need to know that you understand these thinkers' arguments, so articulate their ideas clearly and, as best you can, in plain and clear language.
 - 4) Comprehensive and Economical Reconstruction: When reconstructing arguments (be they primary arguments, objections, or replies) make sure that you not only reconstruct all of necessary steps (comprehensive) but also avoid any extraneous steps (economical) that are unnecessary for delivering the argument's conclusion. While it is critical that you do not leave out any of the argument's essential steps, it is equally important (especially in a short essay like this) that you do not digress into unnecessary or tangential discussions.
 - 5) Charitableness: Be charitable to the arguments you are reconstructing. Even if you don't agree with them, try to show them in their strongest possible form (so as to avoid erecting 'straw persons').
 - 6) Justify your Arguments and Interventions: When you are asked to offer your critical views on the strengths or weaknesses of an author's arguments or claims, make sure to provide reasoned justifications for your evaluations. Don't just state your opinion. Back it up, as well.
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READING & CLASS SCHEDULE

While we will largely stick to this schedule, we may decide to cut or extend some topics. Any changes to the schedule below will be made via a Blackboard Announcement. **PLEASE Check Blackboard Regularly for any announcements, and please read all emails sent by either your Tutorial Leader or the Professor.**

EL – refers to our required course text, *The Ethical Life*

BB – refers to required readings posted on Blackboard

T – refers to Tuesdays

R – refers to Thursdays

F – refers to Fridays

Week 1: Introduction, The Good Life, and Egoism

T Jan. 6

- Introduction and Syllabus Overview – No Reading

R Jan. 8

- *Plato* ‘Ring of Gyges’ BB 312-315
- *Joel Feinberg* ‘Psychological Egoism’ BB 493-501 (through Section C)

F Jan. 9

- No Tutorial

Week 2: Pleasure & The Good Life

T Jan. 13

- *John Stuart Mill* ‘Hedonism’ EL 17-26

R Jan. 15

- *John Stuart Mill* ‘Hedonism’ EL 17-26 (continued)
- *Robert Nozick* ‘The Experience Machine’ EL 27-30

F Jan. 16

- Tutorial 1

Week 3: Desire & The Good Life

T Jan. 20

- *Chris Heathwood* ‘Faring Well and Getting What You Want’ EL 31-42

R Jan. 22

- *Jean Kazez* ‘Necessities’ EL 43-54

F Jan. 23

- Tutorial 2

Week 4: Normative Ethics - Utilitarianism

Monday, January 26th – First Argument Distillation Due by 5:00pm

T Jan. 27

- *John Stuart Mill* ‘Utilitarianism’ BB 298-307
- *R. M. Hare* ‘A Utilitarian Approach to Ethics’ BB 352-362

R Jan. 29

- *R. M. Hare* ‘A Utilitarian Approach to Ethics’ BB 352-362 (cont.)
- *J. J. C. Smart* ‘Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism’ EL 77-86

F Jan. 30

- Tutorial 3

Week 5: Normative Ethics – Utilitarianism to Kantianism

T Feb. 3

- *Bernard Williams* ‘A Critique of Utilitarianism’ BB 353-363

R Feb. 5

- *Immanuel Kant* ‘The Good Will and the Categorical Imperative’ EL 87-99

F Feb. 6

- Tutorial 4

Week 6: Normative Ethics - Kantianism

T Feb. 10

- *Immanuel Kant* ‘The Good Will and the Categorical Imperative’ EL 87-99 (cont.)
- *Rae Langton* ‘Maria von Herbert’s Challenge to Kant’ BB 1-13

R Feb. 12

- *Susan Wolf* ‘Moral Saints’ BB 419-439

F Feb. 13

- Tutorial 5
- **Second Argument Distillation (plus critical objection) Due by 5:00pm**

Week 7: Reading Week Break

T Feb. 17 No Class

R Feb. 19 No Class

F Feb. 20 No Tutorial

Week 8: Normative Ethics – Aristotelian Virtue Ethics

T Feb. 24

- *Aristotle* ‘Nicomachean Ethics’ EL 123-134

R Feb. 26

- Robert Loudon ‘Some Vices of Virtue Ethics’ BB 227-236

F Feb. 27

- Tutorial 6

Week 9: Moral Challenges – Scepticism and Error Theory

T Mar. 3

- *J. L. Mackie* ‘The Subjectivity of Values’ EL 174-182

R Mar. 5

- *Jesse Prinz* ‘Morality is a Culturally Conditioned Response’ BB 1-6

F Mar. 6

- Tutorial 7

Week 10: Moral Challenges – Relativism and Objectivism

T Mar. 10

- *Harry Gensler* ‘Cultural Relativism’ EL 183-191

R Mar. 12

- *David Enoch* ‘Why I Am an Objectivist about Ethics (And Why You Are, Too)’
EL 192-205

F Mar. 13

- Tutorial 8

Week 11: Moral Problems – Global Poverty

T Mar. 17

- *Peter Singer* ‘The Singer Solution to World Poverty’ EL 223-230

R Mar. 19

- *Jan Narveson* ‘Feeding the Hungry’ EL 231-244

F Mar. 20

- Tutorial 9

Week 12: Moral Problems – The Moral Status of Animals

T Mar. 24

- *Alastair Norcross* ‘Puppies, Pigs and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases’ EL
285-300

R Mar. 26

- *R. G. Frey* ‘Moral Standing, the Value of Lives, and Speciesism’ EL 301-318

F Mar. 27

- Tutorial 10 – Final Tutorial

Week 13: Moral Problems – Terrorism & Torture

Monday, March 30th – Comparative Argument Assessment Paper Due by 5:00pm

T Mar. 31

- *Michael Walzer* ‘Terrorism: A Critique of Excuses’ EL 260-270

R Apr. 2

- *Alan Dershowitz* 'Should the Ticking Bomb Terrorist Be Tortured?' EL 271-284

Final Exam – 2 Hours

Thursday, April 23rd 7:00-9:00pm UC 273