



DEPARTMENT Humanities and Social Sciences

COURSE OUTLINE - Fall 2025

**PH1010(A2/VC): Introduction to Philosophy: Values and Society - 3 (3-0-0) 45 Hours
for 15 Weeks**

Northwestern Polytechnic acknowledges that our campuses are located on Treaty 8 territory, the ancestral and present-day home to many diverse First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people. We are grateful to work, live and learn on the traditional territory of Duncan's First Nation, Horse Lake First Nation and Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, who are the original caretakers of this land.

We acknowledge the history of this land and we are thankful for the opportunity to walk together in friendship, where we will encourage and promote positive change for present and future generations.

INSTRUCTOR: Joseph Van Weelden

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OFFICE: C307

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OFFICE HOURS: Tuesday 9:30-11:00 am, Thursday 1:30-3:00 pm.

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION: This is an introduction to the classical problems of philosophy through study and critical discussion of selected philosophical classics and contemporary works. Emphasis will be placed on questions of moral and other values and on the nature of society and justice.

PREREQUISITE(S):

None

COREQUISITE(S):

None

REQUIRED MATERIALS: There is no required textbook for this course. All readings and other materials (including the instructor's ppts/handouts) will be made available on MyClass.

DELIVERY MODE(S):

On-Campus for students enrolled in Section A2.
Synchronous for students enrolled in Section VC.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:



The learning outcomes stressed in this course are Communication Skills, Critical Thinking Skills, and Ethical Reasoning.

1. Students will use **Communication Skills** in

- Communicating clearly and concisely while employing written and verbal skills appropriate to class assignments and discussion.
- Demonstrating interpersonal skills by listening effectively, establishing rapport, and monitoring non-verbal signals.
- Expressing awareness of and respect for self and others.
- See section on Philosophical Etiquette for a further description.

2. Students will use **Critical Thinking Skills** in

- Learning how to understand and charitably interpret others' arguments and developing the ability to rearticulate arguments in a philosophical form.
- Analyzing theoretical concepts and examining the connections between them.
- Developing written arguments with strong logical inferences to show support for your claims.
- Critically assessing philosophical theories and arguments in support of these theories.

3. Students will use **Ethical Reasoning** in

- Applying ethical reasoning to practical situations.
- Recognizing and examining multiple perspectives.
- Analyzing and discussing issues from an ethical perspective.

Course Objectives:

- 1.To gain an understanding of important historical approaches to ethics.
- 2.To develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills through the analysis of ethical theories and their application to moral issues.
3. To examine assumptions, values, goals, principles, and actions as they affect society as a whole.
- 4.To gain an understanding of the effect of individual and social moral decisions.
- 5.To enhance awareness and increase understanding of the nature of ethics.

TRANSFERABILITY:

Please consult the Alberta Transfer Guide for more information. You may check to ensure the transferability of this course at the Alberta Transfer Guide main page <http://www.transferalberta.alberta.ca>

** For courses with alpha (letter) grading, a grade of D or D+ may not be acceptable for transfer to other post-secondary institutions. **Students are cautioned that it is their responsibility to contact the receiving institutions to ensure transferability**

EVALUATIONS:

Class Participation (worth 10%)

Group Presentation (worth 10%)- Working in groups of 2 or more (pending enrolment), students will present a summary of one of the pre-readings to the rest of the class. They will together prepare and submit a write-up of their presentation to the instructor.

4 Quizzes (worth a total of 20%)- Quizzes will consist of a series of basic comprehension questions.

Mid-Semester Exam (worth 25%)- The exam will consist of 4 short essay questions from which each student may select any 2 to answer.

End-Semester Exam (worth 35 %)- The exam will consist of 6 short essay questions from which each student may select any 3 to answer.

GRADING CRITERIA:

Please note that most institutions will not accept your course for transfer credit **IF** your grade is **less than C-**.

Grading Chart

Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines	Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines
A+	4.0	95-100	C+	2.3	67-69
A	4.0	85-94	C	2.0	63-66
A-	3.7	80-84	C-	1.7	60-62
B+	3.3	77-79	D+	1.3	55-59
B	3.0	73-76	D	1.0	50-54
B-	2.7	70-72	F	0.0	00-49

COURSE SCHEDULE/TENTATIVE TIMELINE

Topic Title	Week No.	Details	Readings.	Activities	Date (s)
Introduction. What is Moral	1	Course Outline and Expectations from	Post-Reading: Julia Driver. Ethics-The	Icebreaker:	Wednesday,

Philosophy?		Students. The Subject Matter of Moral Philosophy. Some Important Moral Questions.	Fundamentals Introduction	My Philosophy	September 3
Why do Moral Philosophy? Thinking (Better) About Ethics.	2	Simple Subjectivism, Cultural Relativism, Moral Universalism. Thinking About Ethics: A Conceptual Toolbox. Thinking Better About Ethics: Common Traps to Avoid	Julia Driver. Ethics (Ch.1) Mary Midgley, Philosophical Plumbing.	Lecture, Group Discussion.	Monday, September 8 Wednesday, September 10
Classical Utilitarianism	3	What is classical utilitarianism? The Principle of Utility. Mill on the 'philosophy of swine' objection. Nozick's argument against hedonism. Mill's Proof of the Principle of Utility.	John Stuart Mill. Utilitarianism (excerpts). Robert Nozick 'The Experience Machine'	Lecture, Student Presentations.	Monday, September 15 Wednesday, September 17
Classical Utilitarianism Continued: Criticisms of Classical Utilitarianism: Rawls and Nozick	4	Mill on Secondary Rules. Rawls's 'separateness of persons' objection: Utilitarianism insensitive to distributive justice. Nozick's 'side	Mill. Utilitarianism (excerpts). John Rawls. 'Classical Utilitarianism' Robert Nozick. 'Side Constraints'	Lecture, Student Presentations, 1 st Quiz on September 24.	Monday, September 22, Wednesday, September 24.

		constraints' objection: Utilitarianism permits violations of rights.			
Introducing Kantian Ethics	5	What is deontology? What is distinctive of Kant's deontological approach? What are Kant's aims? The Good Will and Moral Worth	Immanuel Kant. Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals, Preface and Ch.1 (Excerpt)	Lecture, Student Presentations.	Monday, September 29, Wednesday October 1.
Kantian Ethics Continued	6	The Categorical Imperative: The Formula of Universal Law with Illustrations of Perfect and Imperfect Duties	Kant Groundwork Chs 1 and 2 (excerpts)	Lecture, Student Presentations.	Monday, October 6 Wednesday, October 8
Kantian Ethics: 2 nd Formulation of the Categorical Imperative	7	The Formula of Humanity with Illustrations of Perfect and Imperfect Duties.	Kant Groundwork Ch 2 (excerpt). Onora O'Neill 'Kantian Approaches to Some Famine Problems'	Lecture, 2 nd Quiz.	Thanksgiving, October 13 Wednesday, October 15
Criticism of Kantian Ethics	8	The rule- worshipping objection? Is Kant's Theory too Rigid? The motive of duty and the 'one thought too many" objection.	Kant's Reply to Constant, Bernard Williams 'Persons, Character and Morality'	Lecture, Student Presentations.	Monday October 20, Wednesday, October 22

Introduction to Virtue Ethics. Aristotle on Happiness and the Virtues.	9	What is virtue ethics? Aristotle on the human good.	Aristotle. Nicomachean Ethics Book 1 (excerpts)	Midterm Exam on October 27. Lecture, Student Presentations.	Monday, October 27, Wednesday, October 29
Virtue Ethics Continued	10	What are the virtues? How do we acquire them? Can virtue ethics actually help to guide our actions?	Aristotle. Nicomachean Ethics Books 1 and 2 (excerpts) Julia Annas. "Being Virtuous and Doing the Right Thing"	Lecture, Student Presentations.	Monday, November 3 Wednesday, November 5
Criticism of Virtue Ethics.	11	Non-ideal moral theory as a challenge to virtue ethics. The situationist challenge. Doris against stable character traits.	Robin Dillon. "Critical Character Theory" John Doris. "Persons, Situations, and Virtue Ethics"	Lecture, Student Presentations. 3 rd Quiz.	Monday, November 10 Wednesday, November 12
Feminist Ethics. Sikh Ethics	12	What must a feminist ethical theory look like? A Sikh Perspective on Ethics.	Margaret Urban Walker. "Feminism, Ethics, and the Question of Theory". Keshav Singh "Vice and Virtue in Sikh Ethics.	Lecture, Student Presentations.	Monday, November 17 Wednesday, November 19
Metz on African Moral	13	What is distinctive of African approaches	Thaddeus Metz. "Towards an African	Student	Monday,

Theory, Rawls on Justice		to moral theory? What is the idea of ubuntu and what does a moral system based on it look like? Introducing John Rawls' Theory of Justice.	Moral Theory", John Rawls. <i>A Theory of Justice</i> (excerpt)	Presentations.	November 24, Wednesday, November 26
Mills on Racial Justice, Krishnamurthy on Justice and Health in the Canadian Context	14	Charles Mills. 'Racial Justice' Meena Krishnamurthy. 'Political Solidarity, Justice, and Public Health'.		Lecture, Student Presentations.	Monday, December 1 Wednesday, December 3.
Wrapping Up.		How have your moral/political views changed or developed throughout the course? What are your overall (positive or negative) impressions of the field? What will/should the future of moral and political philosophy look like?		Group Discussion, My Philosophy Part II 4 th Quiz	Monday, December 8, Wednesday, December 10

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

Maintain an inclusive and respectful classroom environment, where no student is made to feel unwelcome or uncomfortable. Kindness and civility are not only compatible with spirited intellectual debate about controversial topics, but essential to it. Any student caught violating this policy will be asked to leave the class. Complete all course readings in advance of the session (s) in which we are to discuss



them.

Be an active participant in the course (through contribution to class discussion etc.). My classrooms are all NO PHONE ZONES. I would strongly encourage you develop the habit of not bringing your phone to class at all. If you do bring a phone, you will be asked to turn it completely off and hand it in to me at the beginning of the session (I will provide a bin for this purpose).

Laptops may be used, but if I notice that you are using your laptop for any purpose other than accessing the course material/taking notes, or that you are distracting other students, I will ask you to put your device away.

This course includes a videoconference (VC) section. Students registered in the VC section are able to attend lectures and complete all course components without attendance on campus.

Where disruptions or other technological issues occur with institutional or instructor systems on campus or elsewhere, instructors will ensure that appropriate accommodations are made for VC students.

This course has the requirements listed below for VC students. Failure to meet these requirements may affect attendance and participation grades or result in a grade of zero for supervised assessments (e.g., exams).

Dual camera setup. During the exams/quizzes you must have a webcam showing your face and a camera behind you showing your work surface with your computer. If you are unable to meet the dual camera setup requirement VC students can pay to write the exams at an independent proctor location approved by me. Note: the proctor cannot be a friend/family member, etc. If neither of the above two options work for you, another option is to come to the NWP campus in person and write the exams with the other students during the scheduled time.

Students who are attending the class remotely should be prepared to keep their video on at all times. You must, moreover, be ready to participate in the conversation/respond to questions from the instructor at any time. I will make a point of checking in regularly to ensure that those students who are logged into the session are genuinely present/participating. If for some reason you anticipate that you will be unable to participate in this way during a given session, you must address this with me in advance or you will be marked absent.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:

Academic Misconduct will not be tolerated. For a more precise definition of academic misconduct and its consequences, refer to the Student Rights and Responsibilities policy available at <https://www.nwpolytech.ca/about/polytechnic-leadership/policies-directory>.

**Note: all Academic and Administrative policies are available on the same page.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

NORTHWESTERN POLYTECHNIC



If you require special accommodations for any reason or have any concerns about the classroom environment, please do not hesitate to raise this with me. I am invested in creating a space where every student can flourish, and if there is anything holding you back from fulfilling your potential in my classroom I want to know about it as soon as possible.