



DEPARTMENT Humanities and Social Sciences

COURSE OUTLINE - Fall 2025

PH3330(A2): Professional Ethics - 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 course will examine the roles and responsibilities of professionals, as well as ethical challenges they face. These challenges often involve balancing self-interest, clients' interests, and the public good. At times they involve weighing clients' interests and clients' wishes (and their autonomy.) They may also involve efforts to resolve conflicts between the professional's personal moral beliefs and their perceived duties as professionals. Challenges and issues will be explored through consideration of debates within specific fields (such as accounting, medicine, engineering, journalism and law) - often with relevance across professions. Controversies will also be investigated through study of general discussions of common concerns. Ethical concepts and outlooks will provide assistance in facing the challenges.

PREREQUISITE(S):

None

COREQUISITE(S):

None

REQUIRED MATERIALS: All readings and other course materials (including the instructor's PPTs and handouts) will be made available on myClass.

DELIVERY MODE(S): On-Campus

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

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

1. Students will use **Communication Skills**

- Communicating clearly and concisely employing written and verbal skills appropriate to class assignments and discussion.
- Demonstrating interpersonal skills by listening effectively, establishing a rapport with peers, and monitoring non-verbal signals.
- Expressing awareness of and respect for self and others.

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

- Analyzing theoretical concepts and examining the connections between them.
- Critically assessing philosophical theories and arguments in support of these theories.
- Developing arguments with strong logical inferences between premises and conclusions.

3. Students will use **Ethical Reasoning**

- 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 and apply these theories to current day professional issues.
2. To develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills through the practical application of ethical theories to professional concepts.
3. To examine assumptions, values, goals, principles, and actions as they affect professions and society.
4. To gain an understanding of the effect of individual and professional decisions.
5. To enhance awareness and increase understanding of the nature of professional 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://ww.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%)

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 Professional Ethics?	1	Course Outline and Expectations from Students. What is ethics? What is professional ethics?	Post-Reading: Julia Driver. <i>Ethics: The Fundamentals</i> pp.1-10.	Icebreaker	Wednesday, September 3

			Theodore Gracyk. <i>An Introduction to Professional Ethics: A Duty-Based Approach</i> (pp.1-7)		
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)	Lecture, Group Discussion.	Monday, September 8 Wednesday, September 10
Ethical Frameworks: Utilitarianism	3	What is utilitarianism?	John Stuart Mill. <i>Utilitarianism</i> (excerpts).	Lecture, Student Presentations.	Monday, September 15 Wednesday, September 17
Ethical Frameworks: Deontology	4	What is deontology? What is distinctive of Kantian Ethics? W.D Ross's Pluralist Deontology.	Immanuel Kant. <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> Chs 1 and 2 (excerpts) W.D Ross. 'What Makes Right Acts Right'.	Lecture, Student Presentations, 1 st Quiz on September 24.	Monday, September 22, Wednesday, September 24.
Ethical Frameworks: Virtue Ethics	5	What is virtue ethics? Aristotle and Annas on Virtue.	Aristotle. <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> Books 1 and 2 (excerpts)	Lecture, Student Presentations.	Monday, September 29.

			Julia Annas. "Being Virtuous and Doing the Right Thing"		Wednesday October 1.
Ethical Frameworks: Feminist Care Ethics. Applying Ethics in the Professions	6	An Ethic of Care. What is Special About Professional Ethics?	Virginia Held. "Justice and Utility: Who Cares?" Gracyk, <i>An Introduction to Professional Ethics: A Duty-Based Approach</i> pp.7-35	Lecture, Student Presentations	Monday, October 6. Wednesday, October 8.
The Fiduciary Relationship	7	What is a fiduciary duty? The fiduciary model of professional ethics.	Gracyk pp.36-70	Lecture, 2 nd Quiz.	Wednesday, October 15
The Fiduciary Relationship: Is it the Correct Approach?	8	Challenges to the fiduciary model of professional ethics.	Gracyk pp.70-95	Lecture, Student Presentations.	Monday October 20, Wednesday, October 22
Upholding Client Autonomy	9	What is autonomy? What is its significance for professional ethics?	Gracyk pp.96-138	Midterm Exam on October 27. Lecture, Student Presentations.	Monday, October 27, Wednesday, October 29
Informed Consent and Conflict of Interest	10	What is informed consent, and why is it so important? What are conflicts of interest and what ethical challenges do they pose for professionals?	Gracyk pp.139-174	Lecture, Student Presentations.	Monday, November 3 Wednesday, November 5

Confidentiality and its Limits	11	The ethics of confidentiality. What is whistleblowing and when is it justified?	Gracyk pp.175-203.	Lecture, Student Presentations. 3 rd Quiz.	Monday, November 10 Wednesday, November 12
Justice and Cultural Sensitivity	12	What are the demands of justice and how do these impact the moral obligations of professionals? Cultural sensitivity and the duties of a professional in a pluralistic society.	Gracyk pp.204-254.	Lecture, Student Presentations.	Monday, November 17 Wednesday, November 19
Business Ethics	13	The Shareholder Approach. The Stakeholder Approach. The Market Failures Approach. A Gandhian Trusteeship Approach.	R. Edward Freeman. "A Stakeholder Theory of the Modern Corporation" Joseph Heath. "Business Ethics Without Stakeholders" Balakrishnan, Malhotra and Falkenberg "Multi-Level Corporate Responsibility: A Comparison of Gandhi's Trusteeship with Stakeholder and Stewardship Frameworks"	Lecture, Student Presentations.	Monday, November 24, Wednesday, November 26
Health Care Ethics: A Deeper Dive	14	Ethical issues in medical contexts.	Quill Kukla. "Medicalization, "Normal Function"	Lecture, Student Presentations.	Monday, December 1

			<p>and the Definition of Health"</p> <p>Abigail Gosselin. "Clinician Knows Best? Injustices in the Medicalization of Mental Illness".</p> <p>Hailey Huget. "Care Workers on Strike"</p> <p>Nancy S. Jecker, Roger Yat-Nork Chung "Lessons from <i>Li</i>: A Confucian Inspired Approach to Global Bioethics"</p>		Wednesday, December 3.
<p>Engineering Ethics and the Case of Boeing. Legal Ethics.</p> <p>Wrapping Up</p>	15	<p>An Engineering Ethics Case Study. The Ethics of Legal Representation.</p> <p>What have we learned?</p>	<p>Robert Prentice. "Engineering Ethics and the Boeing Scandal". Martin Peterson. "The Ethical Failures Behind the Boeing Disasters". Richard L. Abel "Are There Causes and Clients Lawyers Should Not Represent?"</p>	<p>Lecture, Group Discussion, 4th Quiz on December 10th.</p>	<p>Monday, December 8,</p> <p>Wednesday, December 10</p>

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.

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:

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.