

HURON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
Undergraduate Course Outline 2021-2022

**Phil2700F: Introduction to
Ethics & Value Theory** (section 551)

Fall Term 2021
Mon/Wed 11:30 – 12:30/1:30
Room: V210 (Huron)

Instructor: Emerson Doyle
email: edoyle9@uwo.ca
Office: Lucas House Annex (Wed, 2:00–4:00)

Course Description

Value Theory is the study of how, why, and to what degree human beings value certain things or ideals over others. Traditionally this study has focused upon an understanding of “The Good” and our access to it (whatever *it* is) in the most abstract or broadest sense. More recent work focuses upon understanding our use of *evaluative* language in many contexts: What makes something *better* than something else, or the *worst*? Is *Knowledge* valuable for its own sake, or only for what consequences it brings about? Similarly for *Beauty*, *Truth*, or *Pleasure*? What about *Money* and *Popularity*? Is there a difference in kind between the uses of ‘good’ when I say “*You’re a good person*” versus when I say “*This ice cream is good*”?

Ethics, on the other hand, is concerned to study and recommend principles of right action. What *should* we do in such-and-such a situation? What would be the *moral* thing to do? Many have argued that such principles should have some objective foundation. Others argue that our attitudes toward how to act rightly are determined mainly by circumstance—our cultures, intuitions, evolution, etc.—so that the principles by which we judge action are not absolute. Presumably in either case, such principles will be somehow related to the values people hold in highest regard.

In this course we will examine such issues by considering some of the premier theories of value and of obligation in the Western philosophical tradition. We will also consider more carefully the relationship between ethics and value theory, as well as exploring applications of our analyses to some of the difficult moral questions facing humanity today.

Anti-Requisite(s): GLE2002F/G

Western Foot Patrol: 519-661-3650

Course Objectives & Methods

Students should finish the course with an understanding of some of the most influential and prominent positions on the questions and topics outlined above. This exposure will better equip us to confront and critically evaluate our own attitudes or intuitions toward morality in general and on some difficult practical moral questions in particular. Alongside these reflective efforts, you will have the opportunity to improve your writing, critical analysis, and argumentative abilities.

Important Note: *In this course we will often discuss ideas and scenarios that are difficult, sensitive, disturbing, or otherwise controversial.* Although the course will consist primarily of lectures, class discussion will be of key importance in working through this material. In my experience courses are successful when everyone is engaged and comfortable making contributions—thus you must be an active participant in your education. I commit to doing my best to facilitate a safe and positive atmosphere in the classroom, but it is up to each student to engage our classroom community in good-faith, with an attitude of tolerance, patience, and consideration for classmates.

Texts

- Course readings will be posted on OWL.

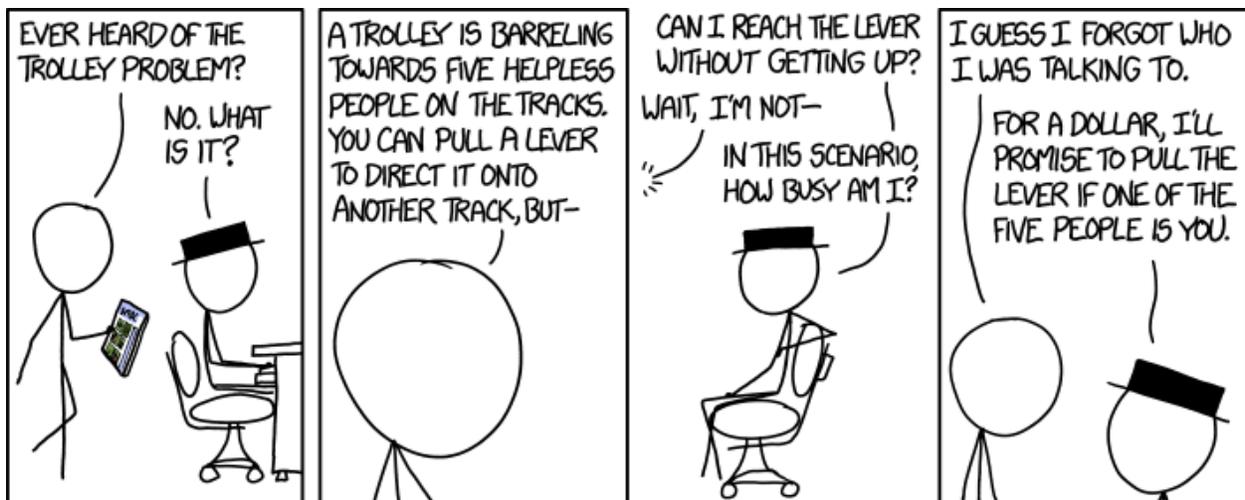
Requirements

- Active Learning: 10% (10 responses each worth 1%)
- Writing Assignments 60% (three assignments, 4–6 pages each)
- Final Exam: 30% (during the Fall exam period)

Active Learning will include group discussions/activities during class, take-home assignments, and contributions to Forum discussions. Something will be offered most weeks—you must complete to a high quality 10 such activities to get full points. If you are participating in the class online due to officially recognized COVID circumstances, equivalents will be made available via the OWL Discussion Forums, but please *speak directly with me as soon as possible*.

Writing Assignments will include two argumentative essays and one analysis piece. Each is worth 20% of your final grade. The assignments will be designed to make you think deeply about the topics and readings we've covered, as well as providing you the opportunity to forward your own ideas and arguments. Late work submitted without arrangement with me **in advance** will be penalized by **5% per day late**, including weekends.

The **Exam** will occur during the Fall exam period. This will be a “take-home” style assignment done over the course of one full week, requiring a demonstration of understanding and a significant synthesis of course content.



Schedule

*Please be advised that the reading list is tentative.

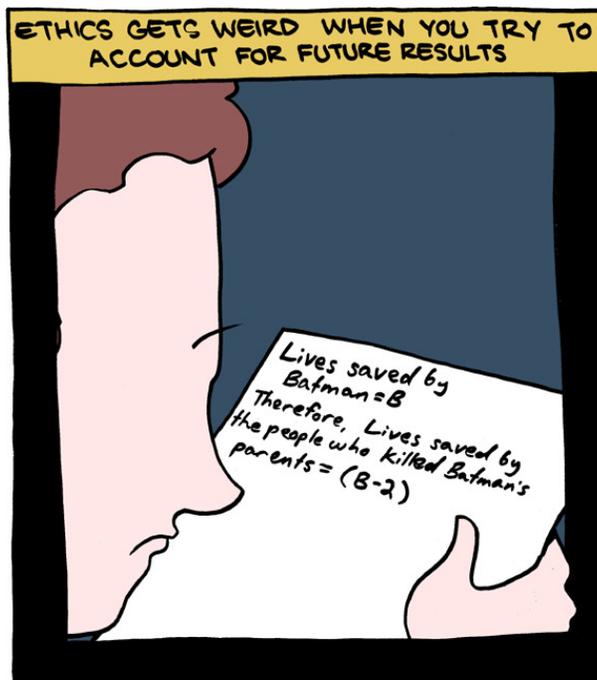
- Week 1 (Sept 9) **Here's One Way to Start...**
- Golding, selection from *Lord of the Flies*
 - Pojman, "On the Nature and Purpose of Morality"
- Week 2 (Sept 14/16) **Ethics & Values: But Just What are We Talking About?**
- J. Rachels & S. Rachels, "What is Morality?"
 - Zimmerman, "Value and Normativity"
- Week 3 (Sept 21/23) **Challenges to Objective Principles—Moral Relativism**
- Waluchow, "It's All Just Relative—Or Is It?"
- Week 4 (Sept 28/30) **Challenges to Objective Principles—Egoism and Moral Skepticism**
- Plato, selection from *The Republic*
 - J. Rachels, "Egoism and Moral Skepticism"
- Week 5 (Oct 05/07) **Well What About Intrinsic Values?**
- Nozick, "The Experience Machine"
 - Parfait, "What Makes Someone's Life Go Best?"
- Week 6 (Oct 12/14) **Moral Principles from Exercising a Good Will**
- Bailey, "Introduction to Kant"
 - Kant, selection from *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*
 - Nagel, "Moral Luck"
- First Writing Assignment (essay) due October 14th — 20%**
- Week 7 (Oct 19/21) **Moral Principles from Considering the Consequences**
- Bailey, "Introduction to Mill"
 - Mill, selection from *Utilitarianism*
 - Le Guin, selection from *The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas*
- Week 8 (Oct 26/28) **Moral Principles from Aspiring Toward Virtue**
- Bailey, "Introduction to Aristotle"
 - Aristotle, selection from *The Nicomachean Ethics*
 - Frankena, "A Critique of Virtue-Based Ethics"
- Week ☹ (Nov 02/04) **No Class — Reading Week!! (whew!)**
- Week 10 (Nov 09/11) **Morals from Relationships and Empathy**
- Noddings, excerpt from "An Ethics of Caring"
 - James, "Engaged Ethics in the Time of COVID: Caring for All or Excluding Some from the Lifeboat?"

Second Writing Assignment (analysis) due November 11th — 20%

- Week 11 (Nov 16/18) **Ethics on the Ground: Triage & Coping During COVID**
- Oxford University *Arts Blog*, “The Philosophy of COVID-19: Is it even possible to do the right thing?”
 - Wasserman, *et. al.*, “Setting Priorities Fairly in Response to Covid-19”
 - Camporesi & Mori, “Ethicists, Doctors and Triage Decisions: Who Should Decide? And on What Basis?”
- Week 12 (Nov 23/25) **Ethics on the Ground: Trust & Expertise**
- Anderson, “Democracy, Public Policy, and Lay Assessments of Scientific Testimony”
 - Origi *et. al.*, “Trust, Expertise and the Controversy over Hydroxychloroquine”
- Week 13 (Nov 30/
Dec 02) **Ethics on the Ground: Is Philosophy Valuable?**
- Goldhill, “Why are so many smart people such idiots about philosophy?”
 - Goldhill, “Bill Nye, the science guy, says I convinced him that philosophy is not just a load of self-indulgent crap”
 - Russell, “The Value of Philosophy”
- Week 14 (Dec 07) **Review & Overflow**

Final Writing Assignment (essay) due December 07th — 20%

Final Exam during Fall Exam Period — 30%



Appendix to Course Outlines: Academic Policies & Regulations 2021 - 2022

Prerequisite and Antirequisite Information

Students are responsible for ensuring that they have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that they have not completed any course antirequisites. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Pandemic Contingency

In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, all remaining course content will be delivered entirely online, typically using a combination of synchronous instruction (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) and asynchronous material (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online at the discretion of the course instructor. In the unlikely event that changes to the grading scheme are necessary, these changes will be clearly communicated as soon as possible.

Student Code of Conduct

Membership in the community of Huron University College and Western University implies acceptance by every student of the principle of respect for the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others and a readiness to support an environment conducive to the intellectual and personal growth of all who study, work and live within it. Upon registration, students assume the responsibilities that such registration entails. While in the physical or online classroom, students are expected to behave in a manner that supports the learning environment of others. Please review the Student Code of Conduct at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/sites/default/files/Res%20Life/Student%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20-%20Revised%20September%202019.pdf>.

Attendance Regulations for Examinations

A student is entitled to be examined in courses in which registration is maintained, subject to the following limitations:

- 1) A student may be debarred from writing the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year.
- 2) Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the Department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of registration.

Review the policy on Attendance Regulations for Examinations here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/attendance.pdf.

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf. The appeals process is also outlined in this policy as well as more generally at the following website: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/appealsundergrad.pdf.

Turnitin.com

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

It is not appropriate to use electronic devices (such as, but not limited to, laptops, cell phones) in the classroom for non-classroom activities. Such activity is disruptive and distracting to other students and to the instructor, and can inhibit learning. Students are expected to respect the classroom environment and to refrain from inappropriate use of technology and other electronic devices in class.

Statement on Use of Personal Response Systems (“Clickers”)

Personal Response Systems (“clickers”) may be used in some classes. If clickers are to be used in a class, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the device is activated and functional. Students must see their instructor if they have any concerns about whether the clicker is malfunctioning. Students must use only their own clicker. If clicker records are used to compute a portion of the course grade:

- the use of somebody else’s clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence
- the possession of a clicker belonging to another student will be interpreted as an attempt to commit a scholastic offence.

Academic Consideration for Missed Work

Students who are seeking academic consideration for missed work during the semester may submit a self-reported absence form online provided that the absence is **48 hours or less** and the other conditions specified in the Senate policy at

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf are met.

Students whose absences are expected to last **longer than 48 hours**, or where the other conditions detailed in the policy are not met (e.g., work is worth more than 30% of the final grade, the student has already used 2 self-reported absences, the absence is during the final exam period), may receive academic consideration by submitting a Student Medical Certificate (for illness) or other appropriate documentation (for compassionate grounds). The Student Medical Certificate is available online at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. **Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.**

Students who have conditions for which academic accommodation is appropriate, such as disabilities or ongoing or chronic health conditions, should work with Accessible Education Services to determine appropriate forms of accommodation. Further details concerning policies and procedures may be found at: <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/>.

Policy on Academic Consideration for a Medical/ Non-Medical Absence

(a) Consideration on Medical Grounds for assignments worth *less than 10%* of final grade: Consult Instructor Directly and Contact Academic Advising

When seeking consideration on **medical grounds** for assignments worth *less than 10%* of the final course grade, and if the student has exceeded the maximum number of permissible Self-Reported absences, the student should contact the instructor directly. The student need only share broad outlines of the medical situation. The instructor **may** require the student to submit documentation to the academic advisors, in which case she or he will advise the student and inform the academic advisors to expect documentation. If documentation is requested, the student will need to complete and submit the [Student Medical Certificate](#). The instructor may **not** collect medical documentation. The advisors will contact the instructor when the medical documentation is received, and will outline the severity and duration of the medical challenge as expressed on the Student Medical Certificate and in any other supporting documentation. The student will be informed that the instructor has been notified of the presence of medical documentation, and will be instructed to work as quickly as possible with the instructor on an agreement for accommodation.

(b) Consideration on Non-Medical Grounds: Consult Huron Support Services/Academic Advising, or email huronsss@uwo.ca.

Students seeking academic consideration for a **non-medical** absence (e.g. varsity sports, religious, compassionate, or bereavement) will be required to provide appropriate documentation where the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence have not been met, including where the student has exceeded the maximum number of permissible Self-Reported. All consideration requests must include a completed [Consideration Request Form](#). Late penalties may apply at the discretion of the instructor.

Please review the full policy on Academic Consideration for medical and non-medical absence at: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf. Consult [Huron Academic Advising](#) at huronsss@uwo.ca for any further questions or information.

Support Services

For advice on course selections, degree requirements, and for assistance with requests for medical accommodation, students should email an Academic Advisor in Huron's Student Support Services at huronsss@uwo.ca. An outline of the range of services offered is found on the Huron website at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/>.

Department Chairs, Program Directors and Coordinators are also able to answer questions about individual programs. Contact information can be found on the Huron website at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/contact/faculty-staff-directory/>.

If you think that you are too far behind to catch up or that your workload is not manageable, you should consult your Academic Advisor. If you are considering reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses, this must be done by the appropriate deadlines. Please refer to the Advising website, <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/academic-advising/> or review the list of official Sessional Dates on the Academic Calendar, available here: <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/SessionalDates.cfm>.

You should consult with the course instructor and the Academic Advisor who can help you consider alternatives to dropping one or more courses. Note that dropping a course may affect OSAP and/or Scholarship/Bursary eligibility.

Huron Student Support Services: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/>

Office of the Registrar: <https://registrar.uwo.ca/>

Student Quick Reference Guide: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/#1>

Academic Support & Engagement: <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/>

Huron University College Student Council: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/beyond-classroom/hucsc/>

Western USC: <http://westernusc.ca/your-services/#studentservices>

Mental Health & Wellness Support at Huron and Western

University students may encounter setbacks from time to time that can impact academic performance. Huron offers a variety of services that are here to support your success and wellbeing. Please visit <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life-campus/student-services/wellness-safety> for more information or contact staff directly:

Wellness Services: huronwellness@huron.uwo.ca

Community Safety Office: safety@huron.uwo.ca

Chaplaincy: gthorne@huron.uwo.ca

Additional supports for Health and Wellness may be found and accessed at Western through, <https://www.uwo.ca/health/>.