

The University of Western Ontario  
Department of Philosophy  
Graduate Course Outline 2026–27  
Philosophy 9137  
Ethics in 12 Arguments

Term: Autumn 2026  
Class Hours: Wed, 14:30–17:30

Instructor: Anthony Skelton  
Office Hours: Fri, 10:30–11:30  
E-mail: askelto4@uwo.ca

## Course Description

Moral philosophy is the study of theories of right and wrong, and of good and bad, and their application to practical moral issues (e.g., global poverty and abortion). Moral philosophers make progress by clarifying their research questions and by advancing, refining, and raising objections to arguments. This course will focus on identifying, analysing, and evaluating 12 argumentative contributions made to ethics during roughly the last sixty years, including Philippa Foot on the doctrine of double effect, Judith Jarvis Thomson on abortion, Peter Singer on global poverty, Thomas Nagel on war and massacre, Bernard Williams on consequentialism and integrity, John Taurek on moral aggregation, John Rawls on social unity and primary goods, Susan Wolf on moral sainthood, Derek Parfit on well-being, Christine Korsgaard on the right to lie, Gwen Bradford on achievement, and Alyssa Izatt and Kimberley Brownlee on justice for girls.

## Objectives

This course is designed

1. To equip students with some of the skills required for conducting advanced research in moral philosophy, including the identification, analysis, clarification, and evaluation of theses and their supporting arguments.

2. To equip students with some of the skills required for expressing philosophical concepts and arguments clearly and economically in writing and in conversation.
3. To equip students with the skills for carefully reading and fully understanding philosophical texts.
4. To provide students with an in-depth understanding of 12 important contributions to moral philosophy.
5. To provide students with a deeper appreciation of the core topics of moral philosophy from a range of perspectives and their application to pressing moral problems.

## Texts

All texts are available online through our course OWL Brightspace site.

## Course Schedule

Week One (Sept 9): **Organisation and Introduction**

Reading:

- Kagan, *Normative Ethics*, 1–11.
- Tannsjo, *Understanding Ethics*, 4–6.

Week Two (Sept 16): **The Doctrine of Double Effect**

Reading:

- Philippa Foot, “The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect”.
- Elizabeth Anscombe, “Who is Wronged?”.

Week Three (Sept 23): **Abortion**

Reading:

- Thomson, “A Defence of Abortion”.

Week Four (Sept 30): **Global Poverty**

Reading:

- Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”.

Week Five (Oct 7): **War and Massacre**

Reading:

- Nagel, “War and Massacre”.

Week Six (Oct 14): **Autumn Reading Week: No Class**

Week Seven (Oct 21): **Consequentialism and Integrity**

Reading:

- Williams, “Consequentialism and Integrity”.

Week Eight (Oct 28): **Moral Aggregation**

Reading:

- Taurek, “Should the Numbers Count?”

Week Nine (Nov 4): **Moral Sainthood**

Reading:

- Wolf, “Moral Saints”.

Week Ten (Nov 11): **Social Unity and Primary Goods**

Reading:

- Rawls, “Social Unity and Primary Goods”.

Week Eleven (Nov 18): **Well-Being**

Reading:

- Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, 493–502.

Week Twelve (Nov 25): **The Right to Lie**

Reading:

- Korsgaard, “The Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing with Evil”.

Week Thirteen (Dec 2): **Achievement**

Reading:

- Bradford, *Achievement*, 1–131.

Week Fourteen (Dec 9): **Justice for Girls**

Reading:

- Izatt and Brownlee, “Justice for Girls: On the Provision of Abortion as Adequate Care”.

**NOTE: Sit-Down final exam or final essay due on Monday 21 December 2026.**

## Requirements

### 1. 10 Reading Responses

Due date: Tuesday by 17:00 (starting on 15 September)

Number: 10 (on any of the 12 Tuesdays between 15 September and 8 December)

Length: 250–400 words each

Value: 20 percent of final grade; graded pass/fail

### 2. Sit-Down Final Exam or Final Essay (your choice)

Due date: Monday 21 December 2026 (14:30–17:30 if you are writing the final exam)

Length: No more than 4000 words

Value: 70 percent of final grade

Location: 3166 Stevenson Hall

### 3. Class Participation

Value: 10 percent of the final grade

## Regulations

### 1. Submission of assignments

Please submit your assignments electronically. Do not submit paper copies.

In order to submit your assignment, visit the OWL BrightSpace site for this course. A corrected version of your exam or essay will be returned to you through the OWL BrightSpace site.

### 2. Email policy

I am **not** able to respond to philosophical concerns or questions over email. These are to be dealt with in my office hours only. Use email only if you have some brief business or administrative item that you would like to communicate to me.

### 3. Auditing

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

### 4. Incompletes

Incompletes are granted at the exclusive discretion of the Graduate Program Chair, and only on the basis of documented medical or compassionate grounds. If, during the course, you envisage any difficulty completing all of the required work by the completion deadline, consult immediately with the instructor and the Graduate Program Chair.

### 5. MATCHA Software

In this course, we will make use of a MATCHA software for all your writing work, including reading/research, note-taking, and editing (MATCHA has built-in tools for doing all these things).

To learn more about MATCHA, see [here](#).

Make sure to read the Student Guide, which should be considered part of this outline: [MATCH Student Guide](#).

### 6. Generative artificial intelligence (AI) policy

You may not use AI to replace carefully reading required texts, since reading and understanding philosophical texts is a skill we aim to develop in the course.

You may not use AI to write any portion of your reading responses, your final paper or your final exam.

In this course, the use of generative AI (including automatic translation tools, grammar checkers, text-generating AI assistants such as ChatGPT, Claude, and similar) is prohibited. This course uses MATCHA to prevent the misuse of generative AI.