

# Course Description

## ***Philosophy 310: Ethics and Public Policy***

**Winter 2007: Friday, 10:00 am-12:50 pm, A252**

**Calendar Description:** Sometimes our ethics are about how we act individually; for example, whether to make a charitable donation for cancer research. Sometimes, our ethics are about our political practices; for example, whether to make our charitable donations tax deductible.

What role should ethics play in our social and political practices? Should our ethics—what we think is right—take into account the realities of politics—of how we collectively make decisions? Should we structure our social and political practices to meet ethical requirements?

In order to pursue these questions about diverse practices such as health care, international relations, business, employment relations, and government, we will look at various approaches to ethics that focus on practical issues of forming, justifying, and implementing political and social solutions.

**PHIL 310** satisfies one of the upper level requirements for the ***Applied Ethical and Political Philosophy*** program at UCFV.

This ***Course Description*** provides routine information, and describes the objectives and methods for the course. Read it carefully, asking questions as needed.

It should be viewed as a **contract** but can be altered for individual students in extraordinary circumstances.

**If I make a special arrangement with you, explain it in a note or e-mail message and ask me to sign or confirm it; show it to me to remind me of our arrangement.**

### Contents

[Contact Information](#) (page 1)

[The Course](#) (page 2)

[Resources](#) (page 6)

[Work and Evaluation](#) (page 9)

### Contact Information

**Instructor: Paul Herman** (residing in Chilliwack, British Columbia, CANADA)

BA, University of California, Santa Barbara; All PhD. work completed except thesis, UBC.

Teaching: UBC; Carleton University; Fraser Valley College & UCFV 1975-present.

### **Telephone & E-mail**

**Abbotsford:** 604-853-7441, local 4320 or through the Receptionist

**Chilliwack:** 604-792-0025, local 2836 or through the Receptionist

**Home:** 604-793-5987

**Voice-mail: Abbotsford:** 854-4500, box 8117, **Chilliwack:** 795-2800, box 2836

**Fax:** 604-792-2388

**E-Mail:** through the *WebCT Course Website* and [paul.herman@ucfv.ca](mailto:paul.herman@ucfv.ca)

The best times to talk to me on the telephone are mornings but you can try me any time from not too early in the morning to not too late in the evening.

Outside of class, I prefer that you ask all questions that are not personal (*i.e.*, any question you don't mind others knowing you are asking) through the *WebCT Course Website* Bulletin Board so that others can also benefit from them.

I usually check my e-mail in the morning and early evening.

Put the course number (PHIL 110) in the subject line whenever you e-mail me at [paul.herman@ucfv.ca](mailto:paul.herman@ucfv.ca). Otherwise, I may fail to deal with your message quickly.

If you have not heard back from me within a day, please try again by e-mail or other means.

I usually check the *Course Website* once a day, typically early afternoon.

### Office Hours

**Abbotsford:** Friday, 9:00-9:30, D3094, and immediately after class.

**Chilliwack:** Thursday, 9:00-9:30, D3094, and immediately after class.

Talk to me during office hours about your problems with an assignment, areas of interest you would like to pursue, my marking of your work, etc. If these times are not convenient for you, we can arrange to meet at other times.

Since I am often out of my office (but usually close to it) or talking to students during the above times, it is best (but not essential) to make an appointment.

### Course Website

1. Open your web browser and go to the following URL: <http://online.ucfv.ca/>
2. From the UCFV Online homepage, click on the appropriate kind of course: Fully Online Courses Or Supplemental Courses.
3. Follow the directions to login to the course you are enrolled in.  
WebCTID login: Your Student Number. Password: Your Student Number
4. You should now be in your MyWebCT page with your course in the upper left section of the page. Click on the course title to go to the home page inside of your course.

If you have technical difficulties contact support at: [online@ucfv.ca](mailto:online@ucfv.ca) or (604) 864-4666.

### The Course

This course is about acting ethically through social institutions such as business, occupations, unions, government to make and implement public policy in fields as diverse as health care, the environment, education, the economy.

The goal is to bring together theories and practices of ethics and politics without presupposing other upper level Philosophy and Politics courses.

**Prerequisites:** 45 credits from Applied or Arts or Science programs, including nine credits in Philosophy or Political Science; or permission of the instructor.

### **Major Areas**

The course will include three major elements:

1. The nature of public policy.
2. Strategies for making collective decisions, especially under conditions of social conflict.
3. Theories of justice that set goals for moral and political action in order to achieve a good society.

In the first one-third of the course, we will do preparatory work in the first two areas.

In the last two-thirds of the course, you will negotiate public policy with each other to implement theories of a good society in policy areas you choose such as health care, income distribution, educational policy, cultural relations.

### **Goals of the Course**

At the end of this course, my intention is that you will:

- be able to describe different positions on the major, general issues noted above.
- communicate orally and in writing your organised, disciplined critical thinking about some of these major, general issues in order to produce and defend your own solution to questions of public policy in specific areas.
- be motivated to use the skills and knowledge from this course as a productive way to think about these issues as you encounter them in everyday life.

### **Standard Operating Procedure**

Throughout the course, we will typically follow this procedure (often called *reflective equilibrium*):

1. You to make some judgments about some specific examples of an issue, either based on your own experience or on some reading.  
We consider your judgments in order to see some of the more general issues they raise.
2. I provide you with some background and reading for the general issues, asking you to consider how they produce general reasons for your specific judgments.
3. We reflect upon the reading and test general reasons by applying them to specific examples.
4. You make some assessment of **your** judgments and general reasons for them.

There is a dialectic between **judgments about specific cases** and **general reasons** for those judgments. Sometimes you may change your specific judgments to fit your general reasons.

Sometimes you may change your reasons to fit your judgments. Or you may adjust both.

In most cases, there is no single correct answer that emerges from this process. However, some answers are not as good as others, e.g., because they do not deal well with the full range and depth of the issues or are not supported by good reasoning.

So, good answers require much more than merely expressing an opinion.

### Co-operative Learning

I make every effort to have **you** do most of the talking and writing during class sessions. Consequently, we shall do a lot of co-operative learning in groups following several formats. You are expected to interact with group mates, share ideas and resources, support each other, explain material and techniques to each other, and hold each other responsible for completing the assignment. If you need help with the assignment, **first** ask your group mates; if you need further assistance with the group assignment, **only the group as a whole** should request help from the instructor.

Co-operative learning has a long history as a major teaching strategy, going back in the West at least to its use by one of Martin Luther's students who became a teacher. It wasn't until teaching became more professionalised that folks began to believe the myth that only teachers can teach.

### Effectiveness

There is a great deal of research supporting the effectiveness of co-operative learning because it:

- enables many people to **learn actively** at the same time: when the instructor lectures, possibly only one person (the instructor) and occasionally a few others (students who ask questions) are active; with groups of two, at least half the class is active at a time;
- conforms to '**the real world**' where we do much of our work in groups such as families, committees, community boards, unions, and we are often judged by the performance of the groups to which we belong;
- requires students to **take responsibility for their own learning** and prepare for **life-long learning**;
- recognizes that students are often better than instructors at teaching each other, and that **the best way to learn is to teach**;
- provides a **community of support** where the skills and material in a course are valued and reinforced. (By working in groups, you will actually get to know—perhaps even to become friends with—other students in the course by working co-operatively at least as often as competitively.);
- makes it possible to **pursue far more and more diverse interests** than could the class as a whole, and to **share our results** as we could not working individually and competitively.

Many research studies have demonstrated that students who learn co-operatively get higher grades than students who try to learn the same material individually. For example, research about why Chinese American students did so well in calculus at Berkeley while members of other minority groups fared poorly, observed that the Chinese students studied together, ate together, hung out together, etc. A math program at the University of Texas based on this research has become a model for math programs throughout the U.S.

Students sometimes object that marking for group work is not always fair. First, I will make every effort to ensure that students are marked both on individual and on group work.

Second, I think the educational benefits are worth the occasional unfairness that may result.

Third, it is not bad to have to deal with this common feature of our world: **you** can do

something to reduce the unfairness. For example, if a member does not contribute to the group's work, then do not put the person's name on group assignments.

## Formats

**Informal co-operative learning groups** are temporary, *ad hoc* groups lasting from a few minutes to one class session. You engage in focused discussions with two or four people before, during, and after a class session.

These groups aim to counter a major problem with lectures: the information passes from the notes of the instructor to the notes of the students without passing through the mind of either. They focus attention on the material, set a mood conducive to learning, help organize in advance the material for a class session, ensure that you are engaged in active learning, and provide closure to a class session.

**Formal co-operative learning groups** last for one class session up to several weeks to complete a specific assignment. You are responsible for maximizing your own learning and that of your group mates.

## **Standard Co-operative Learning Procedures**

1. The instructor gives you instructions and objectives.
2. You are assigned to a group, provided with materials, and perhaps given a specific role in the group.
3. The instructor explains the task, the co-operative structure, and relevant concepts or strategies for completing the assignment.
4. The instructor monitors your group to provide assistance as needed with academic material and co-operative techniques.
5. The instructor evaluates your results by referring to a set of non-competitive criteria, i.e., everyone who meets the criteria does well.

## **Resources: Materials to buy from the [Bookstore](#):**

Paul Herman, *Philosophy 310 Course Pack*

Colin Farrelly, *An Introduction to Contemporary Political Theory*

John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*

Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*: **DO NOT BUY THIS YET.**

## **Other Resources**

**If you are not confident about your background in the basics of moral and political thinking, then I strongly recommend the you *immediately* take a few hours to read a basic primer such as:**

James Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (in the Bookstore or Library).

If you have doubts about your understanding of the nature of philosophy and of methods of reading and writing philosophy then I recommend Jay F. Rosenberg's *The Practice of Philosophy: A Handbook for Beginners*, copies in the **Bookstore** (although it has become ridiculously expensive), **Library**, and **Writing Centres**. Also see [Methods of Inquiry](#) in the *CoursePack*.

If you feel you need additional background on some area, ask me.

The [Library](#) has a respectable philosophy collection, including [The Philosopher's Index](#), a bibliographic database with informative author-written abstracts covering scholarly research in philosophy published since 1940 in journals and books, including anthologies. Library staff are also a great resource.

The **Internet** also has many resources, readings, discussion groups, etc. in philosophy and on a variety of topics that we investigate in this course. Go to the UCFV Library website, “Guides to Research” for religious studies and philosophy ([ucfv.bc.ca/library/religion.htm](http://ucfv.bc.ca/library/religion.htm)).

Two excellent philosophy Web sites are:

Epistemé Links: <http://www.epistemelinks.com/welcome.htm>

philosophy material especially useful for undergraduate students of philosophy such as online encyclopaedias and dictionaries, aides for writing better papers, bibliographies, etc.

Ethics Updates ([ethics.acusd.edu/index.html](http://ethics.acusd.edu/index.html)) is one of the best general resources in ethics. For example, it includes an ethics glossary at [ethics.acusd.edu/Glossary.html](http://ethics.acusd.edu/Glossary.html).

Two very useful sites for policy research are:

Government of Canada Policy Research Initiative:

<http://policyresearch.schoolnet.ca/>

Canadian Social Research Links: <http://www.canadiansocialresearch.net/>

There are many policy research sites covering a spectrum of views, for example:

Fraser Institute: <http://www.fraserinstitute.ca/>

C.D. Howe Institute: <http://www.cdhowe.org/english/mainpage.html>

Canadian Policy Research Networks: <http://www.cprn.org/cprn.html>

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives:

<http://www.policyalternatives.ca/middle.html>

And there are many sites on specific issues, for example:

Gender Policy Review: <http://gender-policy.tripod.com/journal/index.html>

National Anti-Poverty Organisation: <http://www.napo-onap.ca/>

Forest Ethics: <http://www.forestethics.org/html/eng/home.shtml>

David Suzuki Foundation: <http://www.davidsuzuki.org/>

Medicare Economics Group: <http://www.meg.ab.ca/links.html>

### **Help with writing**

Writing help is available through [Writing Centres](#) on each campus (Abbotsford G168, Chilliwack A205, Mission D226a; for more information and resources).

[Paradigm Online Writing Assistant](#) provides help on writing argumentative essays common in philosophy.

This [Microsoft tutorial](#) about writing with a word processor is Microsoft promotional material oriented towards teachers, but it still looks helpful for using a word processor as much more than an automatic typewriter.

### **Help with a disability that may interfere with your learning**

It would be wise to discuss it with me and to see an access advisor at the [Disability Resource Centre](#) (Chilliwack 795-2843, D117a; Abbotsford 864-4609, D207; [www.ucfv.bc.ca/drc/](http://www.ucfv.bc.ca/drc/)) about available services at UCFV.

### Computing Resources: *Criterion DecisionPlus*

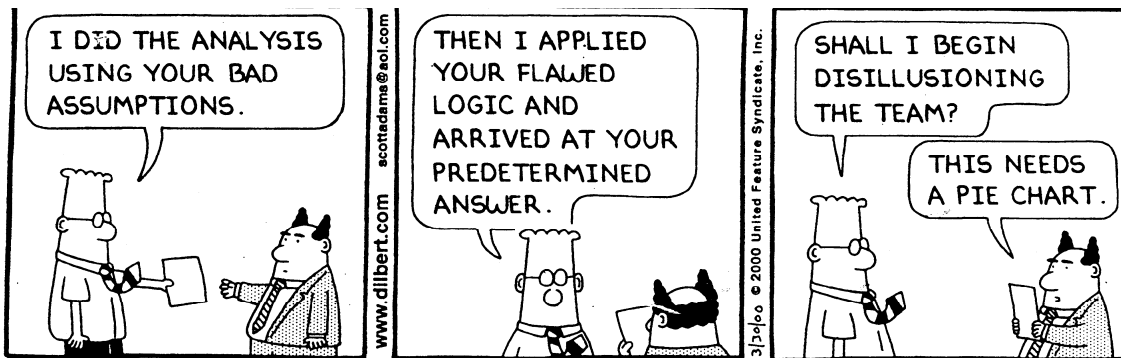
While **no computing is required** in this course, I strongly suggest that you try using this program (*Decision+*) to prepare several of the assignments in *Policy Project*. However, some students in previous versions of this course completed similar assignments without the aid of this program.

*Decision+* helps set goals, build a hierarchy of components of that goal, determine their priority, and then use those components to evaluate a range of alternatives. So far, I have found it easy to use, but it also has depths I have not yet plumbed (and don't think I need to). The *Tutorial* is very good. The *Manual* explains decision-making strategies quite well. *Help* is excellent with great hypertexted explanations. The *Glossary* is also excellent. And there is a good PowerPoint slide show at [www.infoharvest.com/infoharv/sebest.html](http://www.infoharvest.com/infoharv/sebest.html).

You can download a student version of **program** and **tutorial** for **free** at [www.infoharvest.com/infoharv/CDPFreeDownloads.htm](http://www.infoharvest.com/infoharv/CDPFreeDownloads.htm) and install them on **your own computer**, quite easily in my experience. Do make sure that you download the **tutorial** as well as the program.

(If you receive an error message about OLEAUT32.DLL when you attempt to install *Decision+*, read ST\_READMEFIRST.TXT.)

**The only limit to the student version is that decision models are limited to twenty blocks**, so you have to be somewhat careful in setting up component goals and alternatives. But for the level at which we will work, twenty blocks should be enough.



When using *Decision+*, go to **Model/Options** to set those I think are best for our purposes. (However, your experience may indicate otherwise.)

Under **Environment**, the **General** tab, **Brainstorm View**, make sure the following are checked:

- Resize Blocks around Font
- Show Helpful Tips
- Alternatives Visible

Under **Environment**, the **General** tab, **Hierarchy View**, make sure the following are checked:

- Show Helpful Tips
- Show block notes with focus

Show Accumulated Weights  
Show Unrated Blocks  
Show Disconnected Blocks

Under **Model/Options**, **New Model**, **General** tab, make sure **Weights** and **SMART** are checked. (I am pretty sure these settings are best. If you try others, make sure you have saved your work first.)

### Work and Evaluation

See the [Readings and Assignments](#) handouts for assignments and due dates. **It is your responsibility to use these handouts to keep up with course work.** Keep them in your notebook in some organized fashion so that you do not miss readings or assignments. We shall try to proceed at a pace that fosters discussion and understanding of the material and issues, so due dates are subject to change with ample notice.

### **Plagiarism**

**You will not find the final, authoritative answer to a philosophical question in books, encyclopaedias, dictionaries, videos, or cyberspace.** It is essential that you produce and justify your own conclusions, which brings us to the topic of plagiarism.

**Plagiarism is the high crime of intellectual activity;** copying another person's work is a common species. If the question of plagiarism arises, a student should be able to show that a piece of work is the student's own by producing notes and drafts, explaining and defending the work. The minimum consequence for plagiarism is a **NO CREDIT** for that piece of work. More severe penalties, including a **NO CREDIT** for the course, may be imposed. There are many times when you are allowed, encouraged, or required to work together. If you have doubts about when these times are, please ask me for clarification.

Intellectual property rights are still quite unclear on the Internet, and it is very easy to violate even those that are clear. Err on the side of caution. For example, forwarding someone else's e-mail message without permission may violate moral and legal standards.

**Use of course material from this course is permitted only for your personal, non-commercial purposes.**

### **Final Mark**

Your **Final Mark** is based on several activities explained below. You can choose to do more or less work according to your ambitions for a **Final Mark** and the time you have available. You are continuously evaluated on smaller pieces of work so that you can compensate even for the occasional disaster.

Please have some tolerance for flexibility in the assignments since many of these assignment are still in the early stages of evolution.

Your **Final Mark** is calculated on the following basis:

|                                   |     |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Attendance and Class Contribution | 5%  |
| Informal Individual & Co-op Work  | 35% |
| Seminars on Justice               | 20% |
| Policy Project                    | 40% |

Except for *Individual Prep & Co-op Work* assignments, each assignment is marked on the following scale:

|           |           |           |        |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------|
| A+ = 4.33 | B+ = 3.33 | C+ = 2.33 | P = 1  |
| A = 4.00  | B = 3.00  | C = 2.00  | NC = 0 |
| A- = 3.67 | B- = 2.67 | C- = 1.67 |        |

Letter grades for cumulative *Individual Prep & Co-op Work* are assigned by making the top mark an A+, about 50% of the top mark a C-, with the other marks scaled accordingly.

All assignments are marked according to how well the work meets the **criteria** explained in the assignment, not according to a distribution curve (*i.e.*, **not**, for example, 10% As, 20% Bs, etc.).

**Audit Grade** requires attending at least 80% of the course. ([UCFV Calendar](#), p. 22; [UCFV Policy Manual](#))

**Academic Appeal:** Students may appeal academic decisions. See [Academic Appeals Policy](#).

#### **Attendance and Class Contribution (5% of Final Mark)**

Your contribution to class sessions is essential to the success of this course. Please ask questions and contribute to class sessions, especially to your co-op work. Your facility in presenting work to the class also counts towards this part of your mark.

Of course, quality, not mere quantity, of class participation is desirable. However, **it is better to err on the side of boldness than of caution.**

**Each student starts with a C** in this area and adds or subtracts from it. The only way to subtract from it is by being obnoxious in class or by regularly not coming to class.

Otherwise, your *Informal Individual & Informal Co-op Work* mark is a good indicator of attendance and class contribution, unless you make additional significant contributions to sessions of the class as a whole.

**Lack of civility to any members of the class is not tolerated.**

#### **Informal Individual Prep & Co-op Work (35% of Final Mark)**

Do the assigned readings and other preparation assignments; be ready to ask questions, to agree or disagree with the reading, with me, and with others' comments; and participate in co-operative work.

**Typically, each preparatory assignment is marked on a scale from 0 to 4 points.** More demanding assignments may be marked on a multiple of this scale. The success of the course depends upon your individual preparation, so **an assignment may be turned in up to two days late but with a penalty of one point.**

**Seminars on Justice (20% of Final Mark):** [Seminars on Justice](#) in the *CoursePack*.

Groups will conduct seminars to examine several theories of justice.

**Policy Project (40% of Final Mark):** See [Policy Project](#) in the *CoursePack*.

This project continues throughout the term with many smaller assignments that culminate in an extensive report.

**Format and due dates**

**Any formal work** (e.g., a handout for the *Seminar* or the *Policy Project Final Report*) should be **typed** double-spaced on 8.5” by 11” paper with at least one inch margins on all sides, secured with a staple or paper clip.

**Non-sexist language** is expected in your written work. (See [Writing without Gender Bias](#) in the *CoursePack* for further explanation.)

**Formal work is due by midnight of the due date and is not accepted more than one week late. Late work is marked down one mark**, e.g., a B is marked down to a B-. (**Exceptions** are possible in extraordinary circumstances.) Any assignment you do not put into my hands—*e.g.*, that you hand in to Faculty Reception—should be **time stamped**, *e.g.*, by the Faculty Assistant or at Records and Registration; otherwise, I will assume it was turned in when I pick it up.

**Work may also be handed in as an e-mail attachment in either MS Word or .RTF format. If I am unable to download and read your essay** because you forgot to attach it or for other apparently technical reasons that are not my fault, **the work is marked as late**. So, it is wise to submit your work well before the deadline so I can notify you about technical problems before it is marked as late.

**Keep a copy of all formal work you turn in for comments or for marking.**