

# PHILOSOPHY 315

## Contemporary Ethical Theory

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**Instructor:** Glen Baier

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**Office Hours:** Abbotsford: Wednesday 2:00 – 4:00pm  
Friday 2:30-3:30pm

Chilliwack: Tuesday 11:30- 1:00 pm

(e-mail to request appointments outside of office hours)

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**Course Description:** The course is intended to be a comprehensive survey of dominant trends in modern moral philosophy. We will begin with an introduction to the state of ethical theory at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and then work our way through representatives of the major schools of thought in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Some of the thinkers we will examine seek to defend historically significant theories, such as Utilitarianism and Kantian Deontology, whereas others offer a radical departure from previous positions.

**Textbook:** *Ethics: History, Theory and Contemporary Issues* 4<sup>th</sup> Edition  
Steven M. Cahn and Peter Markie (Oxford, 2009). (Required)

**Assignments:** Students will be asked to prepare 4 essays, each essay is worth 25% of the final mark. The essays will be on assigned topics related to the material covered in the readings and in the class. Each essay will be approximately 5 to 7 typed double spaced pages (1000- 1350 words). The essays will be due in class on the assigned days listed below on the syllabus.

*Note: The instructor reserves the right to refuse assignments not handed in on time. If you do not think that you will be able to complete work by the assigned date, please make an effort to contact me in advance.*

**Plagiarism:** Students should be familiar with the institution's plagiarism policy. Here is UFV's plagiarism policy:

“Plagiarism is considered a serious breach of student conduct. Students should be aware that UFV has policies regarding academic dishonesty, including plagiarism and cheating. The policy defines plagiarism as follows: Plagiarism occurs when a student presents work or data as original when part, or whole, was written or composed by someone other than the student. Plagiarism occurs when paragraphs, phrases, sentences, or ideas within the work are taken from another source without referencing or citing the author. When an instructor has evidence of plagiarism or cheating by a student, the instructor is entitled to assign a score of zero with the first incident, and to issue a written notice that any further

incident will result in the student being required to withdraw from the course. With any further incidents of plagiarism or cheating, the student may be required to withdraw formally from the course”.

## SYLLABUS

(All readings are from Cahn and Markie unless noted)

1. September 7<sup>th</sup> **Course Introduction**
2. September 14<sup>th</sup> **Kantian and Utilitarian Ethical Theory**  
Reading: James Rachels “Introduction”, pp. 413- 422; Immanuel Kant *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* pp. 280-318; John Stuart Mill *Utilitarianism* pp. 327-361.
3. September 21<sup>st</sup> **Intuitionism**  
Reading: G.E. Moore *Principia Ethica*, pp. 423-429.
4. September 28<sup>th</sup> **Intuitionism**  
Reading: H. A Prichard “Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake?” pp. 429-439, W.D Ross *The Right and the Good*, pp. 439-448.
5. October 5<sup>th</sup> **Emotivism**  
Reading: A. J Ayer *Language, Truth and Logic*, pp. 449-455, C.L Stevenson “The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms”, pp. 455-465.
6. October 12<sup>th</sup> **Reason in Morality**  
Reading: R.M Hare *Freedom and Reason*, pp. 466-475, Kurt Baier “The Point of View of Morality”, pp. 476-491.
7. October 19<sup>th</sup> **Contractarianism**  
Reading: John Rawls *A Theory of Justice*, pp. 515-537
8. October 26<sup>th</sup> **Contractarianism**  
Reading: David Gauthier “Why Contractarianism ?”, pp. 537-547  
**Utilitarianism**  
Reading: Richard Brandt “Some Merits of One Form of Rule Utilitarianism”, pp. 589-606.
9. November 2<sup>nd</sup> **Utilitarianism**  
Reading: Bernard Williams “A Critique of Utilitarianism”, pp. 606 -622.
10. November 9<sup>th</sup> **Kantianism**  
Reading: Philippa Foot “Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives”, pp. 556-561. Onora O’Neill “Consistency in Action” pp. 562-579.

11. November 16<sup>th</sup> ***Moral Relativism/Moral Realism***  
Reading: Gilbert Harman *The Nature of Morality* pp. 633-643.  
John McDowell *Values and Secondary Qualities*
12. November 23<sup>rd</sup> ***Virtue Ethics***  
Reading: Alisdair MacIntyre *After Virtue* Handout, Martha Nussbaum 'Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach' pp. 704- 723.
13. November 30<sup>th</sup> ***Feminism***  
Reading: Virginia Held "Feminist Transformations of Moral Theory",pp. 724-739.

**\*\*\*Assignment Due Dates - 1<sup>st</sup> Essay – October 12<sup>th</sup> 2011  
2<sup>nd</sup> Essay – November 2<sup>nd</sup> 2011  
3<sup>rd</sup> Essay – November 23<sup>rd</sup> 2011  
4<sup>th</sup> Essay – December 14<sup>th</sup> 2011**