

ETHICS, LAW, & POLITICS

Winter 2020

Tues/Thurs 12:30 - 1:30

Location: TC 141

E: mmilde@uwo.ca

Instructor: Prof. Michael Milde

Office: UC2220

Office Hours: TBA

Course Description

In our everyday experiences, we are confronted by situations in which we have to decide what we have to make a certain kind of judgment: normative or moral judgment. We ask: what is morally permissible in these circumstances? What is morally obligatory? What is forbidden? The answers that we give are important – they will guide our actions, or we may use them to evaluate the actions of others. Either way, they will determine what counts as a right action, or who is a good person.

Politics and law sometimes generate very similar experiences – we ask ourselves whether an action is legal or illegal, which tax or environmental policy is the best for the country, whether the government has done something to violate our rights, and so on. There are many instances where ethics, law and politics intersect. Recently, Canada made medical assistance in dying (MAID) legally permissible. Previously, any doctor or medical practitioner who participated in medically assisted suicide would have been liable to prosecution and punishment under various provisions of the Criminal Code of Canada. The debates surrounding this controversial topic were (and continue to be) complex. Is MAID ever justifiable? Is it something that people have a right to receive? If it is going to be done, how is to be implemented? What are the limits? Who will pay? And what happens when people fundamentally disagree on some or all of these issues?

In this course, we will consider a number of topics with a view to understanding the ways in which ethics, law and politics intersect, and the ways in which they can sometimes pull in different directions. We will start by having a look at the Canadian Constitution, and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in particular. The Constitution sets the framework in which law and politics are played out – it also embodies and enshrines various values that sound very much like ethical commitments. We will then consider various topics including medical

assistance in dying, freedom of speech, prostitution, food waste, veganism, the issue of

Along the way, we will explore how complexity, pluralism and bias serve to make these topics so controversial and so difficult to resolve, once and for all. And, through in-class discussion, written work, and tutorial assignments we will learn how to engage in clear philosophical analysis, develop and defend multiple perspectives, and provide convincing arguments to support our conclusions.

Final exam (35%)

Will cover all of the lectures, readings and tutorial content.

Will be scheduled by the Registrar in the final examination period (TBA)

Email

Philosophical questions and questions about course content are best asked and discussed in person, during office hours. Email should be reserved for technical questions, or for administrative matters (including requests to meet outside of office hours). To ensure that your email gets priority attention, please use the email address philosophy@uwu.ca. We will respond promptly if you do not get a response within 48 hours, please re-send your message.

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

The <http://uwu.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html> which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://uwu.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation must include a letter from a medical professional, a copy of the student's registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at http://uwu.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

Students who experience an unexpected illness or injury or an extenuating circumstance (48 hours or less) that is sufficiently severe to temporarily affect their performance in the course should contact the Registrar at registrar@uwu.ca or call (519) 885-1200. For more information, see the UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at http://uwu.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf.

Self-Reported Absence portal. This option should be used in situations where the student expects to resume academic responsibilities within 48 hours or less.
The following conditions are in place for self-

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.