

Issues in Contemporary Ethical Theory (A000281)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 5.0

Study time 150 h

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2025-2026

A (semester 1)

Dutch

Gent

seminar

lecture

peer teaching

Lecturers in academic year 2025-2026

Van Ginneken, Clemence

LW01

staff member

Segers, Seppe

LW01

lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2025-2026

Master of Science in Teaching in Arts and Humanities (main subject Moral Sciences)

crdts 5

offering A

Master of Science in Teaching in Arts and Humanities (main subject Philosophy)

5

A

Master of Arts in Moral Sciences

5

A

Master of Arts in Philosophy

5

A

Teaching languages

Dutch

Keywords

Ethics, Metaethics, Moral Science, Ethical Theory

Position of the course

This course is structured in two clusters, each thematizing and critically analyzing a fundamental theoretical discussion within ethical theory.

Contents

Cluster 1 thematizes the relationship between moral and non-moral value. This is subsequently discussed and elaborated by questioning the relationship between 'love', 'partiality' and 'morality'.

Cluster 2 thematizes the question of truth and objectivity within the moral domain.

Initial competences

Successfully having finished the course Contemporary Ethics: Anglo-American Tradition (AHP00L00000013), or having gained the competences achieved by this course in another way.

Knowing the core concepts and theoretical frameworks of ethics (B.1.1) Having an orientating insight into the main discussions within (meta)ethics (B.1.4) Showing creativity in ethical-philosophical reflection (B.2.3) Working on different philosophical levels of abstraction (B.2.6) Identifying, analyzing and discerning abstract and concrete ethical problems (B.3.1) Recognizing and applying academically sound forms of reasoning in order to form an opinion in regard to abstract and concrete ethical problems (B.3.2) Communicating verbally and in writing about a personal opinion regarding ethical issues (B.4.1) Completing assignments independently and in collaboration with others (B.4.2) Appreciating the societal (economic, social, cultural) and existential consequences and relevance of knowledge in the philosophical and ethical domain (B.5.1)

Final competences

- 1 Being knowledgeable about concrete debates regarding ethical theories.
- 2 Analyzing complex ethical problems and discussions critically.

- 3 Being able to develop a coherent position regarding fundamental issues in theoretical ethics both independently and in groups, based on primary literature.
- 4 Being able to analyze the structure of complex and controversial ethical problems and being able to develop reasoning and evaluation strategies to found opinions on these problems and to evaluate them.
- 5 Being able to present a personal opinion about a central issue in theoretical ethics in a way that meets academic standards, both in regards to the content and the style.

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is unrestricted: the student takes into consideration the conditions mentioned in 'Starting Competences'

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Group work, Seminar, Lecture, Independent work, Peer teaching

Extra information on the teaching methods

- Lecture for the introduction of both clusters.
- Seminars (flipped classroom and group conversation) for further discussion and debate of the presented clusters and subtopics. Active participation of the students is expected in order to acquire and practice skills.
- Collective reading and discussion of *The Sovereignty of Good* by Iris Murdoch. Through this work, and an individual reading of *The Melancholy of Resistance* the connection is probed between Cluster 1 and Cluster 2.
- An academic paper is written by the students; students provide each other with feedback in the form of academic peer review; students present their article in the form of an academic conference contribution (simulation/microteaching). There is always the possibility of feedback from the teacher.

Study material

Type: Slides

Name: Grondige studie van vraagstukken uit de ethische theorievorming

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : Dutch

Available on Ufora : Yes

Online Available : Yes

Available in the Library : No

Available through Student Association : No

Type: Reader

Name: Grondige studie van vraagstukken uit de ethische theorievorming

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Number of Pages : 200

Available on Ufora : Yes

Online Available : Yes

References

- Frankfurt, H. (1982). The importance of what we care about. *Synthese* 53, 257–272.
- Murdoch, I. (1970/2001). *The Sovereignty of Good*. New York: Oxford.
- Krasznahorkai, L. (1989/2016). *The Melancholy of Resistance*. London: Tuskar Books Press.
- Wolf, S. (1982). Moral Saints. *The Journal of Philosophy* 79, 419–439.
- Nagel, T. (1979). The fragmentation of value. In Nagel, T. *Mortal Questions*, 128–141, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wolf, S. (2015). 'One thought too many': Love, morality, and the ordering of commitment. In Wolf, S. *The variety of values*, 143–162, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Friedman, M. (1998). Romantic love and personal autonomy. *Midwest Studies In Philosophy* 22: 162–181.
- Mackie, J.L. (1977). The subjectivity of values. In Mackie, J.L. *Ethics: Inventing right*

and wrong, 15–49, New York: Penguin Books.

Brink, D.O. (1984). Moral realism and the sceptical arguments from disagreement and queerness, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 62, 111-125

Walker, M.U. (2007). Authority and transparency: The example of feminist skepticism, In Walker, M.U. *Moral understandings*, 55–82, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Course content-related study coaching

Individual appointments with lecturer.

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Participation, Peer and/or self assessment, Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible

Extra information on the examination methods

A concise paper is prepared, provided with peer feedback and finally presented to fellow students (microteaching). For the paper, an issue selected by the student, preferably a topic with practical-moral relevance, is analyzed with explicit attention to the question of whether or not 'moral value' trumps 'non-moral' value. Peer feedback encompasses feedback by/to fellow students. This is supplemented with process evaluation by the lecturer.

The periodical evaluation (exam) is a closed-book, oral examination consisting of open questions which students can prepare beforehand.

Calculation of the examination mark

Periodical (exam): 70%

Paper, presentation and peer-review: 30%

Facilities for Working Students

Facilities:

- 1 Possible exemption from educational activities requiring student attendance
- 2 Possible rescheduling of the examination to a different time in the same academic year
- 3 Feedback can be given during an appointment during office hours

Extra information:

For more information concerning flexible learning: contact the monitoring service of the faculty of Arts and philosophy