

In-Depth Study of Moral Scientific Problems (A002392)

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 2026-2027

A (semester 2)	Dutch	Gent	seminar lecture
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Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Accoe, Dorian	LW01	staff member
Van Ginneken, Clemence	LW01	staff member
Segers, Seppe	LW01	lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027

	crdts	offering
Master of Science in Teaching in Arts and Humanities (main subject Moral Sciences)	5	A
Master of Arts in Moral Sciences	5	A

Teaching languages

Dutch

Keywords

Empirical ethics, Social critique, Autobiography, Speculation, Anticipatory ethics, Moral imagination

Position of the course

The course is situated at the intersection of ethics (prescription) and empirical study (description), with special attention to the temporal dimensions (cf. the historical dimension of the so-called 'context problem') and (individual and collective) auto-analysis. The course is firmly situated within the moral scientific approach, put to use by means of contemporary primary texts and timely moral issues. Through advanced study of moral science issues, this course aims to thematize what makes moral science stand out as an approach to ethics, and to support the student in acquiring a specialized moral science (i.e. descriptive, analytical, critical and normative) view on morally relevant topics.

Contents

This course offers an in-depth introduction to the moral scientific specificity, and its focus on empirical study and ethical normativity. To this end, the course is structured in two clusters, in which the relationship between empirical observation and normativity – both in terms of implicit value-laden description and the critical questioning of its moral desirability – is thematized.

The first cluster discusses the relationship 'description-prescription' with regard to current moral issues as well as the value-ladenness of the perspectives taken. The second cluster deals with the 'description-prescription' relationship with regard to the future, in particular the question of speculation, 'anticipatory ethics' and moral imagination.

The content of the first cluster consists of 'current public debate' on the one hand, and a lecture series in which the analytical and critical relationship between description and prescription is examined on the other. The 'current social debate' section encourages students to critically follow current public discussion, at least on the basis of a selection of national and international newspapers. At the latest on the morning before the seminar, students are provided a selection of digital newspapers and asked to read them critically, with an eye to content (information), perspective and value. This serves as a starting point for a (brief) discussion about

concrete socio-moral problems, based on the moral scientific method of testing reported social developments against a set of moral norms. In the lecture series that forms the second part of the first part of the course, we discuss recent ethical academic perspectives on empirical (moral) experience as a starting point for ethical theory. Central to this is Eva Feder Kittay's ethical approach in which personal experiences of 'care' and 'caring about' are examined as a way to further refine the so-called ethics of care. Elements that will be discussed are inclusion and exclusion in moral practice and theory, 'disability & crip ethics', so-called 'alternative' forms of parenting, the role of autobiography in ethical theory, etc. The content of the second cluster consists of a lecture series on the role of speculation/anticipation in ethics, starting from 'how things are now' (or at least the assumptions about it). We discuss the possibility of a conceptual and normative distinction between speculation and anticipation, the moral appropriateness of speculation within applied ethics, and the role of moral imagination. The focus is on normative discussions about which future prospects, on which empirical grounds and with which moral interests, can be considered morally legitimate. This is done on the basis of a selection of currently (socially and academically) relevant illustrations (e.g. artificial placenta technology, in vitro gametogenesis, etc.), a selection of leading theoretical academic articles (both historical and current).

Initial competences

General Humanities and Social Sciences competences at bachelor level.

Final competences

- 1 Being able to construct a moral studies view on a complex topic by integrating results and methods from several disciplines (history, social psychology, sociology of religion, cultural studies, legal studies, ethical analysis, ...)
- 2 Being able, starting from academic literature, to give a sound introductory presentation on a topic to be discussed in the course

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is determined after successful competences assessment

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; guided discussions of scientific articles and theories; weekly discussion of morally relevant topics in public opinion; During the seminars, a chapter of the book is introduced each time by a different pair of student (flipped classroom)

Study material

Type: Handbook

Name: Learning From My Daughter (Eva F Kittay)

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Author : Eva F. Kittay

Online Available : Yes

Type: Slides

Name: Grondige studie van vraagstukken uit de moraalwetenschap

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : Dutch

Available on Ufora : Yes

Online Available : Yes

Type: Reader

Name: Grondige studie van vraagstukken uit de moraalwetenschap

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Available on Ufora : Yes

Online Available : Yes
Available in the Library : No
Available through Student Association : No

References

Cavaliere, G. 2020. Gestation, equality and freedom: ectogenesis as a political perspective. *Journal of Medical Ethics* 46: 76–82.

Johnson, T., Romanis, E.C. The relationship between speculation and translation in bioethics: methods and methodologies. *Monash Bioeth. Rev.* (2023).

Kittay, E.F., *Learning from My Daughter: The Value and Care of Disabled Minds*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019

Lovibond, S., *Realism and Imagination in Ethics*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1983

Course content-related study coaching

Supervision by the lecturer.

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

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

Oral assessment, Participation

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

Oral assessment, Assignment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Skills test

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible in modified form

Extra information on the examination methods

The exam is a conversation with the teacher about topics treated in the course. Non-periodic evaluation is based on active participation during the seminars and the quality of the interventions.

Calculation of the examination mark

Periodic evaluation: 70% oral exam; 30% non-periodic evaluation.

Facilities for Working Students

Facilities:

- 1 Possible exemption from educational activities requiring student attendance on the condition of writing an additional paper.
- 2 Possible to reschedule the exam at another moment in the same academic year
- 3 Feedback can be given by email or other digital communication media.

For more information contact the monitoring service of the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy: <https://www.ugent.be/lw/nl/student/studiestudentenbegeleiding/trajectbegeleiding.htm>