

Empirical Ethics (A005602)

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

Credits 9.0

Study time 270 h

Course offerings in academic year 2025-2026

A (Year)

English

Gent

Lecturers in academic year 2025-2026

Provoost, Veerle

LW01

lecturer-in-charge

De Proost, Michiel

LW01

co-lecturer

Offered in the following programmes in 2025-2026

[Research Master of Arts in Philosophy](#)

crdts

9

offering

A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

Empirical research; Empirical (bio)ethics; research question development; study design; critical assessment of empirical studies; attitude studies; attitude scales, moral reasoning; moral decision-making; value studies; survey; survey questionnaire construction, moral experiments; qualitative research, interview study, interview guide construction; Socratic questioning; elicitation techniques for moral reasoning; auditing; interdisciplinary data analysis; focus groups, moral dilemma deliberation; narrative analysis; grounded theory; thematic analysis; NVivo; Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis; quantitative research, statistics, data analysis; SPSS; StatXact; integration of empirical research data in normative argumentation.

Position of the course

This course is one of the eighteen research seminars that constitute the core of the master programme. Depending on initial qualifications, students enrol for three or five such research seminars.

Contents

This seminar focuses on empirical research in the field of ethics and involves setting up, implementing, interpreting empirical research and integrating empirical evidence in a normative analysis. Based on the lecturer's experience of different types of empirical research (mainly related to (bio)ethical issues), the students are taught how they can develop an empirical research question and to select an appropriate method that is suitable for collecting empirical data on, for example, moral reasoning or attitudes relating to moral issues. Students are trained to critically assess the quality and value of empirical studies. Finally, the course will provide insight in methods for the integration of empirical research data in normative argumentation and in the debate about (the need for) methods for empirical ethics.

The course will take into account the discipline specific background of the students and provides an opportunity to conduct a small-scale empirical study about a discipline specific moral question.

The students are guided in research tasks related to their study, e.g. the design of the study, the design of a survey questionnaire, the construction of an interview guide for qualitative research on moral decision-making, collection of online data, data analysis, the interpretation of results, a critical reflection about the value and limitations of the study.

Every student has to 1) write a research proposal for an empirical study or write a paper based on an empirical study on a topic of choice (moral sciences) they conducted over the course of the year; 2) present their study (in its final phases) for an audience of scholars. Students will prepare drafts and/or shorter oral presentations about their work to obtain feedback from the lecturer and/or peers. According to needs and the progress in the work of the students (and the Covid19-situation), meetings will be held online or on campus meetings.

Initial competences

Knowledge of Empirical research for ethics and bioethics at intermediate level.

Competent in philosophical writing and argumentation

Final competences

- 1 The student is able to formulate original and innovative research problems based on the duly founded insight into the internationally recognised state-of-the-art relating to the topic of study and the domain of empirical research for ethics.
- 2 The student has the ability to work out original solutions to the selected research problems, and argue for them clearly and convincingly.
- 3 The student has the ability to deepen their knowledge of this domain independently.
- 4 The student has the ability to choose a suitable research method compatible with the research question.
- 5 The student is able to conduct research and to critically assess other scholars' work according to the rules relating to scientific integrity and research ethics, both with regard to research participants (in actual forms of participating or via their contributions to data that is used as secondary data) and to the way personal data is collected, stored, and analysed.
- 6 The student is able to choose and apply compatible methods for interdisciplinary collaboration next to the chosen method(s) for data analysis.
- 7 The student is able to report on research designs and outcomes both in writing and orally (for academic peers) in a clearly-understood manner.

Conditions for credit contract

This course unit cannot be taken via a credit contract

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

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

Study material

Type: Handouts

Name: Collection of methodological papers, examples of studies, slides, online resources and instructions.

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Available on Ufora : Yes

Online Available : No

Available in the Library : No

Available through Student Association : No

Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : intensive

Usability and Lifetime within the Study Programme : one-time

Usability and Lifetime after the Study Programme : occasionally

References

Reference list on Minerva

Course content-related study coaching

The lecturer offers individual supervision: via face-to-face meetings and e-mail contact.

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

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

Assignment

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

Assignment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Skills test, Participation, Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

not applicable

Extra information on the examination methods

Permanent evaluation: oral presentation of research results, participation in discussions during (online) seminars.

End-of-term evaluation: paper assignments, written research reports, presentation.

Feedback on the exercises will be provided immediately following the sessions or through (online) individual progress discussions (appointment).

Calculation of the examination mark

Permanent evaluation: 40%

End-of-term evaluation: 60%

Facilities for Working Students

Given the small group, classes and meetings are scheduled with input of all students. Feedback is possible outside office hours.