Instructor and course information:

Instructor: Dr. Greg Beckett
Email: gbeckett@uwo.ca
Credit Value: 0.5
Antirequisites: None
Prerequisites: None

Course Description:

This course focuses on anthropological approaches to the study of ethics and morality. We will begin by rejecting the false binary of universal values and moral relativism and focus, instead, on how an ethnographic study of ethics and morality in action offers a new approach to understanding the complexities of moral decisions and ethical reasoning. A key goal of the course will be to show where ethics and morality come from, how they arose historically as part of human social and cultural life, and how ethical and moral values are deeply embedded in even the most banal aspects of social life. We will then explore how such values give rise to historically, socially, and culturally constituted ways of knowing, thinking, and acting, rather than as universal ideals that we contemplate. The examples explored will show how our ideas of the right and the good emerge out of, and are often challenged by, everyday social encounters and interactions.

We will draw on a wide range of ethnographic and historical cases from around the world to provide a range of perspectives on ethics, morality, meaning, and action. We will also explore social encounters in which alternative or competing ethical registers come into contact or conflict. Topics may include the following: virtue, character, and care; gifts and reciprocity; charity, volunteerism, and affective labor; agency and responsibility; rights, dignity, and respect; medical intervention and service-work; and global humanitarianism.

A full course schedule including a week-by-week breakdown of topics and assigned readings will be available on the course’s OWL site before the first day of class.

Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Summarize and discuss key debates in the anthropology of ethics and morality;
- Identify and apply key concepts and theoretical formulations in the anthropology of ethics and morality;
• Analyze ethnographic arguments and identify key terms and theoretical approaches and apply those terms and approaches to other case studies;
• Compare the meanings and values associated with ethics and morality across cultures;
• Explain how ethics and morality are situated in cultural and historical contexts;
• Explain ethical and moral values in relation to other aspects of social, economic, and political life by using key concepts in anthropological theory; and
• Work collaboratively with a group of peers to develop a shared understanding of the course readings and to prepare regular presentations on those themes.

Course Materials:

Readings are available on the course OWL site. The following books are also available for purchase at the Western Bookstore (note, they may be available at lower prices elsewhere):


Evaluation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Quizzes</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Discussion</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response to a reading</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytic Essay</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Take-home Essay</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student evaluation for this course will be based on weekly quizzes on the readings, group discussion leading, a short response to a reading, one short analytical paper on the course material, and a final take-home essay exam.

I expect you to come to class prepared to engage in discussion of the assigned readings. If you must miss a class session you are responsible for getting notes from another student. Lecture notes for missed classes will not be provided and there will be no make-up quizzes.

Students may use laptops during class for taking notes or for accessing the readings. Other devices, including cell phones, music players, etc. must be turned off.

**Weekly Quizzes – 10%**

There will be ten quizzes (weeks 2-11) during the term. Quizzes are to be completed online in OWL before the start of class. They will focus on the main ideas in the readings for the week and are meant to motivate you to complete all the readings before class and to give us all a starting point for discussion. There will be no make-up quizzes, but the lowest two grades will be dropped.
**Group Discussion – 10%**

Students will work in groups to lead discussion twice during the term. Groups will work together to prepare discussion questions and will help lead start/guide the discussion with the rest of the class.

**Response to a Reading– 15%**

Students will write a short response to one of the readings from weeks 1-3. The response will include a brief description of the argument, a reflection or reaction to it, and a response that includes elements from our class discussion. Due date TBD.

**Analytic Essay – 25%**

Students will write a short (1000-word) analytic paper that explores a key theme of the course through a close reading of several of the course readings. Due date TBD.

**Final Take-home Essay Exam – 40%**

Students will write a final take-home essay exam during the examination period that explores key themes, theories, and cases from the course. Students will develop their own thesis and argument based on prompts and suggested topics. Your final essays should be in-depth analyses of the course material and must be based on your own original writing, with citations to course readings. Final essays will be due during the exam period.

More information on writing assignments, including due dates, will be made available to students on the course OWL site.

**Course Specific Conditions Required to Pass this Course:**

In order to pass this course students must submit all writing assignments and receive at least a passing grade on their final take-home essay exam.

**Academic and Accommodation Policies:**

**Late Policy for Assignments**

Unless a student receives accommodation for illness through Academic Counselling, late assignments will be penalized at the rate of 5% of the assignment grade per day late for up to a total of 5 days (including weekends) following the due date. Late assignments will not be accepted after 5 days.

**Policies on Written Work**

All written assignments must be submitted electronically. Essays should be formatted for 8.5x11” paper, have 1” margins on all sides, and by written in a double-spaced, 12-point font. All papers must include your first and last name and a title.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com.

Within this course, students are permitted to use AI tools exclusively for information gathering and preliminary research purposes. These tools are intended to enhance the learning experience by
providing access to diverse information sources. However, it is essential that students critically evaluate the obtained information, exercise independent thinking, and engage in original research to synthesize and develop their own ideas, arguments, and perspectives. The use of AI tools may serve as a starting point for exploring a topic, but **all students are expected to uphold academic integrity by appropriately attributing all sources of information and avoiding plagiarism. Essays and writing assignments should reflect the student’s own thoughts and independent written work.**

**Academic Integrity - Statement on Plagiarism:**

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing. It is also a scholastic offence to submit the same work for credit in more than one course. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence.

**Institutional Statements and Policies**

All students should familiarize themselves with Western's current [Academic Rights and Responsibilities](#) policies in the Academic Calendar. Such items include accommodations for students with disabilities, religious holidays, consideration for medical illness, academic appeals, plagiarism and scholastic offences, and code of student conduct.

**Academic Consideration for Student Absences**

For students who have missed, or will miss, any course work, whether it be for medical related or non-medical related, please read the details and instructions on "[What is Academic Consideration](#)."

No accommodations will be granted retroactively more than 10 days after an assignment's due date or a missed quiz or test. Please see your academic counsellor immediately if you will be seeking accommodations based on medical or compassionate grounds.

PLEASE NOTE: *The evaluation methods described in this course outline are essential requirements for the course.*

**Accessible Education**

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. Please see [Accessible Education](#) for information.

**Religious Accommodation**

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).