



PHIL3056

Contemporary Topics in Philosophy and Ethics

Session 2, In person-scheduled-weekday, North Ryde 2024

Department of Philosophy

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Convenor, Lecturer, and Tutor

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By appointment

Lecturer and Tutor

Mark Alfano

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Lecturer and Tutor

Mianna Lotz

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Credit points

10

Prerequisites

130cp at 1000 level or above

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

This unit provides students with the opportunity to engage with cutting edge areas of research in contemporary Philosophy and Ethics. Topics and readings will be carefully curated by leading researchers in the department. You will have the opportunity to enhance your skills of argument and critical reflection as you are guided through these exciting areas of research.

Topics might include: The Philosophy of Race; Work and the Good Life; Pragmatism; Embodied Cognition; Virtue Theory; Artificial intelligence; Film and Philosophy; Contemporary Critical Theory; Ethical Issues in the use of AI and Machine Learning; Animal Ethics; Ethics of Emerging Technologies including in Healthcare; Contemporary Challenges in Research Ethics; Climate Change and Environmental Ethics. Information about current and upcoming topics will be available on the Philosophy Department's website.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are

available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

ULO1: Identify and critically evaluate core philosophical and ethical concepts from the readings.

ULO2: Produce arguments and analysis of philosophical and ethical positions across the readings.

ULO3: Use your research skills to deepen your knowledge and understanding of the topics.

ULO4: Express yourself clearly and precisely when communicating your argument and analysis.

General Assessment Information

Submission of Assessments

All assessment pieces are to be submitted via Turnitin portals that will be made available the unit's iLearn site. Written assessment pieces will be run through the Turnitin software system which detects unoriginal work.

Special Consideration Extensions and Penalties

All work must be submitted on time unless an extension has been granted. Requests for extensions must be made in writing and will only be considered on serious grounds. Extensions will not be given unless good reasons and appropriate evidence (e.g., medical certificates, counsellor's letters) are presented at the earliest opportunity. Please note that work due concurrently in other subjects is NOT an exceptional circumstance and does not constitute a legitimate reason for an extension.

Late Assessment Penalty

Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, a 5% penalty (of the total possible mark) will be applied each day a written assessment is not submitted, up until the 7th day (including weekends). After the 7th day, a mark of, 0 (zero) will be awarded even if the assessment is submitted. Submission time for all written assessments is set at 11.55pm. A 1-hour grace period is provided to students who experience a technical issue. This late penalty will apply to non-timed sensitive assessment (incl essays, reports, posters, portfolios, journals, recordings etc). Late submission of time sensitive tasks (such as tests/ exams, performance assessments/presentations, scheduled practical assessments/labs etc) will only be addressed by the unit convenor in a Special consideration application. Special Consideration outcome may result in a new question or topic.

Special Consideration Policy

The University classifies a disruption warranting special consideration as serious and unavoidable if it:

- could not have reasonably been anticipated, avoided or guarded against by the student; and
- was beyond the student's control; and caused substantial disruption to the student's capacity for effective study and/or completion of required work; and
- occurred during an event critical study period and was at least three (3) consecutive days duration, and / or
- prevented completion of a final examination.

Students with a pre-existing disability/health condition or prolonged adverse circumstances may be eligible for ongoing assistance and support. Such support is governed by other policies and may be sought and coordinated through Campus Wellbeing and Support Services.

How to submit a Special Consideration Notification

A Special Consideration Notification must be completed and submitted online through www.ask.mq.edu.au within five (5) working days of the commencement of the disruption.

Applying for Special Consideration: 1. Log in at ask.mq 2. Click 'Special Consideration' from the 'Submit' menu on the left 3. Fill in the required fields as prompted. Once you have completed filling out the information, please click on 'Submit'.

Statement concerning the use of AI Tools/Chat GPT

You have undoubtedly heard about ChatGPT and other Generative AI tools that can be used to generate content in relation to prompts. There are many important philosophical and ethical questions arising out of artificial intelligence, which we may discuss. A few warnings are in order, though, about content generated by ChatGPT or similar tools:

- 1. It's not your work, so you can't submit it, or adapt it a bit and then submit it. This will count as a breach of the Academic Integrity Policy. This applies to any assessments.*
- 2. It's not reliable. It gets a lot of things right, but it also gets things wrong, makes up references, etc, and its outputs tend to be shallow and generic.*
- 3. It doesn't count as research. We'll discuss in class what count as good sources for academic work, but using ChatGPT means you don't always have a way to trace and check the sources of the content you're using.*

This unit covers many very interesting and challenging topics. We want you to engage, to think, and we want you to learn. You won't do that if you try to outsource your thinking.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
Participation and engagement	25%	No	Weekly, Ongoing
Reflective writing tasks	35%	No	2024-08-30
Philosophical Essay	40%	No	2024-11-03

Participation and engagement

Assessment Type ¹: Participatory task

Indicative Time on Task ²: 15 hours

Due: **Weekly, Ongoing**

Weighting: **25%**

Contribution to discussion and engagement in activities. Students are expected to be well-prepared and make a constructive contribution.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Identify and critically evaluate core philosophical and ethical concepts from the readings.
- Produce arguments and analysis of philosophical and ethical positions across the readings.
- Express yourself clearly and precisely when communicating your argument and analysis.

Reflective writing tasks

Assessment Type ¹: Reflective Writing

Indicative Time on Task ²: 25 hours

Due: **2024-08-30**

Weighting: **35%**

Reflective writing tasks

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Identify and critically evaluate core philosophical and ethical concepts from the readings.
- Produce arguments and analysis of philosophical and ethical positions across the

readings.

- Use your research skills to deepen your knowledge and understanding of the topics.
- Express yourself clearly and precisely when communicating your argument and analysis.

Philosophical Essay

Assessment Type ¹: Essay

Indicative Time on Task ²: 35 hours

Due: **2024-11-03**

Weighting: **40%**

Philosophical Essay

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Identify and critically evaluate core philosophical and ethical concepts from the readings.
- Produce arguments and analysis of philosophical and ethical positions across the readings.
- Use your research skills to deepen your knowledge and understanding of the topics.
- Express yourself clearly and precisely when communicating your argument and analysis.

¹ If you need help with your assignment, please contact:

- the academic teaching staff in your unit for guidance in understanding or completing this type of assessment
- the [Writing Centre](#) for academic skills support.

² Indicative time-on-task is an estimate of the time required for completion of the assessment task and is subject to individual variation

Delivery and Resources

This unit uses an iLearn website which contains links to the reading material, lecture notes, lecture recordings, and other learning materials such as video clips, weblinks, and images. Students will therefore require access to a computer and a good internet connection in order to access all the material and participate in the unit effectively.

PHIL/PHIX3056 will be delivered using a combination of live lectures and tutorial discussions (in-class tutorials for 'in person scheduled' students; asynchronous online forums for 'online flexible' students). External students will engage in these activities online via dedicated iLearn discussion forums. Lectures are organised around key texts in which fundamental concepts and arguments are introduced and explained.

Lectures

Lectures will take place on Wednesdays 1pm-3pm (12 Second Way, Tutorial Room 407). All lectures will be recorded and made available via Echo360 Online Lecture Recordings shortly afterwards via the iLearn page.

Tutorials

Weekly tutorial classes (for all students) will be conducted commencing from Week 2. Internal students will have on-campus tutorials; external (online flexible and OUA) students will participate via online tutorial discussion forums. Week 1 will be a voluntary Introductory session where students introduce themselves to each other and we discuss any issues relevant to studying this unit.

Weekly Tutorial Discussion Questions will be posted before the Wednesday lecture. Students are required to respond to the Tutorial Discussion Questions and engage each other in discussion responding to issues raised in these responses.

N.B.: Weekly tutorials will begin in WEEK 2 and will continue until WEEK 12 (Week 13 may be left open for a voluntary essay peer review week).

For lecture/tutorial times and classrooms please consult the MQ Timetable website: <https://publish.mq.edu.au/> This website will display up-to-date information on your classes and classroom locations.

Unit Schedule

Part I (Weeks 1-5): Contemporary Philosophy of Film (Prof. Robert Sinnerbrink)

PHIL3056 Contemporary Topics in Philosophy comprises three parts, spanning cutting-edge debates in aesthetics/philosophy of film, philosophy of cognition, and reproductive ethics. In Part I, we examine contemporary topics in the philosophy of film, focusing on the idea of 'film as philosophy' and the question whether film can contribute to philosophical understanding via cinematic means. We will explore the ontology of moving images, theories of cinematic narrative, cognitivist approaches to film, and the role of affect/emotion in cinema.

Week 1: What is Philosophy of Film/Film-Philosophy?

What is "philosophy of film"? Can films "philosophise"? The distinction between philosophy of film and 'film as philosophy' or 'film-philosophy'.

Week 2: Ontologies of the Moving Image

What are 'moving images'? Is the movement we see real or apparent? Andre Bazin's 'ontology of the cinematographic image'. Noel Carroll's critique and alternative definition of moving images.

What about digital images? Do these undermine any claims that moving images can depict reality faithfully?

Week 3: Understanding Film Narrative

How and why do movies makes sense? Cognitivist theories of narrative and narrative comprehension. Carroll's 'erotetic' model of narrative. Critical questions from an aesthetic and phenomenological point of view. Are films just about narrative content or does cinematic style matter too?

Week 4: Cognitivism Goes to the Movies

The 'cognitivist turn' in film theory. What can cognitivist theories offer to philosophy of film? The challenge to cognitivist approaches presented by art cinema. Critical questions for cognitivism and recent cognitivist responses to these critiques. Lars von Trier's films as case study.

Week 5: Affect and Emotion in Cinema

Theories of Affect and Emotion in Cinema. Empathy, sympathy and 'emotional contagion'. The expressive power of the close-up. Emotional contagion and empathy/sympathy/antipathy; the role of the close-up in recent cinema.

Part 2 (Weeks 6-8): Hostile Cognitive Scaffolding (A/Prof. Mark Alfano)

This part of the unit will focus on topics in contemporary philosophy of cognition. In particular we will examine drafts of chapters from David Spurrett's forthcoming book on hostile scaffolding of cognition and decision making. The selected texts start with a discussion of the extended mind. Then we'll focus on the tobacco industry in the second half of the 20th century as a key example of hostile cognitive scaffolding (e.g., making ash trays and matches ubiquitous and free). We'll also consider some further examples illustrating gender differences in scaffolding evident in women's clothing and apparel (e.g. their lack of pockets, wearing high heels, etc.).

Part 3 (Weeks 9-12): Reproductive Ethics (A/Prof. Mianna Lotz)

What ethical issues arise in the procreation in general, and in the opportunities afforded by current developments in assisted reproduction in particular? On what moral grounds can provision and access to assisted reproduction be justified? We explore rights, needs, interests, autonomy, and justice issues relevant to a range of current and prospective reproductive technologies.

Week 9: Framing contemporary reproductive ethics

What are the moral foundations of an ethics of assisted reproduction?

Readings:

McLeod, C. (2017). The medical non-necessity of in vitro fertilisation. *The International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics*, 10(1), 78–102.

Murray, T. (2002) 'What are families for? Getting to an ethics of reproductive technology' *Hastings Center Report* 32, no. 3 (2002): 41-45.

OR

Segers S, Pennings, G and Mertes, H (2019). Getting what you desire: The normative significance of genetic relatedness in parent-child relationships. *Medicine, Healthcare and Philosophy* 22: 487-495

Week 10: Uterus transplantation: Medical need or reproductive preference (and does it matter)?

What ethical issues arise in relation to provision of uterus transplantation, and what is it that people seek when they seek access to this newest reproductive modality?

Readings: Sandman, Lars. (2018). 'The importance of being pregnant: On the healthcare need for uterus transplantation. *Bioethics* 32(8): 519-526.

McTiernan, Emily. (2018). Uterus transplants and the Insufficient value of gestation. *Bioethics* 32 (8): 481-488.

Week 11: Alternatives to uterus transplantation: Are surrogacy and adoption ethically preferable?

How does uterus transplantation compare, morally speaking, with alternative ways in which we might seek to become parents, including gestational surrogacy and adoption?

Readings:

Guntram, L and Williams, J. (2018). Positioning uterus transplantation as a 'more ethical' alternative to surrogacy: Exploring symmetries between uterus transplantation and surrogacy through analysis of a Swedish government white paper. *Bioethics* 32 (8): 509-518.

Lotz, M. (2018). 'Uterus transplantation as radical reproduction: Taking the adoption alternative more seriously'. *Bioethics* 32 (8): 499-508.

Week 12: Artificial Womb Technology: Could ectogenesis and ectogestation be tools for women's liberation? What are the scientific developments and prospective applications

of artificial womb technology? Might these technologies provide a means by which sexual equality, and the liberation of women, might be achieved? What are the possible moral 'costs' of use of AWTs?

Readings:

Mackay, Kathryn. 2020. The 'tyranny' of reproduction: Could ectogenesis further women's liberation? *Bioethics* 34: 346–353.

Smajdor, Anna. 2023. Whole body gestational donation. *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics* 44: 113-124.

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central \(https://policies.mq.edu.au\)](https://policies.mq.edu.au). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- [Academic Appeals Policy](#)
- [Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- [Academic Progression Policy](#)
- [Assessment Policy](#)
- [Fitness to Practice Procedure](#)
- [Assessment Procedure](#)
- [Complaints Resolution Procedure for Students and Members of the Public](#)
- [Special Consideration Policy](#)

Students seeking more policy resources can visit [Student Policies \(https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies\)](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

To find other policies relating to Teaching and Learning, visit [Policy Central \(https://policies.mq.edu.au\)](https://policies.mq.edu.au) and use the [search tool](#).

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: <https://students.mq.edu.au/admin/other-resources/student-conduct>

Results

Results published on platform other than [eStudent](#), (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit ask.mq.edu.au or if you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

Academic Integrity

At Macquarie, we believe [academic integrity](#) – honesty, respect, trust, responsibility, fairness and

courage – is at the core of learning, teaching and research. We recognise that meeting the expectations required to complete your assessments can be challenging. So, we offer you a range of resources and services to help you reach your potential, including free [online writing and maths support](#), [academic skills development](#) and [wellbeing consultations](#).

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

The Writing Centre

[The Writing Centre](#) provides resources to develop your English language proficiency, academic writing, and communication skills.

- [Workshops](#)
- [Chat with a WriteWISE peer writing leader](#)
- [Access StudyWISE](#)
- [Upload an assignment to Studiosity](#)
- [Complete the Academic Integrity Module](#)

The Library provides online and face to face support to help you find and use relevant information resources.

- [Subject and Research Guides](#)
- [Ask a Librarian](#)

Student Services and Support

Macquarie University offers a range of [Student Support Services](#) including:

- [IT Support](#)
- [Accessibility and disability support](#) with study
- Mental health [support](#)
- [Safety support](#) to respond to bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and sexual assault
- [Social support including information about finances, tenancy and legal issues](#)
- [Student Advocacy](#) provides independent advice on MQ policies, procedures, and processes

Student Enquiries

Got a question? Ask us via [AskMQ](#), or contact [Service Connect](#).

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/

[offices_and_units/information_technology/help/](#).

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Changes from Previous Offering

Introduction of three-part structure spanning topics in the philosophy of film, philosophy of cognition, and reproductive ethics.

Changes since First Published

Date	Description
08/07/2024	Assignment due dates specified.

Unit information based on version 2024.04 of the [Handbook](#)