

**DAWSON COLLEGE**  
**HUMANITIES 345- BXH-DW, ETHICAL ISSUES, section 19005**  
**Mondays-Fridays 9-12. Room 3H.10**

**COURSE TITLE:** Cancel culture  
**EFFECTIVE DATE:** Summer 2025  
**WORKLOAD (per class):** 3-0-3  
**PREREQUISITES:** 345-101-MQ; 345-102-MQ  
**INSTRUCTOR'S NAME:** Erica Harris (she/her)  
**TELEPHONE LOCAL:** 4410  
**OFFICE NUMBER:** 4D.10  
**E-MAIL OR OTHER:** Mio (Response time: 2 working days, not including weekends)  
**OFFICE HOURS:** Tuesdays and Thursdays 12-1 p.m.

**STATEMENT OF THE COMPETENCY**

**Learning Outcome:** To apply a critical thought process to ethical issues relevant to the field of study.

**ELEMENTS OF THE COMPETENCY**

**(General Instructional Objectives Common to all Ethical Issues Courses)**

Students who successfully complete the Ethical Issues course in Humanities should be able to:

1. Situate significant ethical issues in appropriate world views and fields of knowledge.
2. Explain the major ideas, values, and social implication of ethical issues.
3. Organize the ethical questions and their implications into coherent patterns.
4. Debate the ethical issues.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND CONTENT:**

What do you do when a figure you admire commits an immoral act or makes art that might be considered to be immoral? Is it our duty to boycott or 'cancel' them, or is it possible to appreciate their work without condoning their behaviour? Is it possible to admire the person while condemning their art? Should we behave differently when it comes to private individuals? This course will examine the circumstances surrounding 6 different individuals whose work or behaviour has been widely considered to be immoral. The goal of the course is to learn to critically examine our own moral intuitions about these issues which may be influenced by contemporary 'cancel culture', which describes the current practice of culturally blocking someone who has been deemed guilty of immoral action from public platforms and/or their chosen careers. Our goal will be to learn to assess the instinct to 'cancel' in relation to six different ethical theories: relativism, social contract theory, utilitarianism, Kantian deontology, and virtue ethics. We will ask: is 'canceling' someone the right way to express our moral outrage and bring about a more ethical society?

**REQUIRED OR RECOMMENDED READING(S):**

All readings will be made available to students **for free** on **Moodle**. Students will be allowed to download PDF copies of the readings and should complete them before coming to class on the days when they are assigned.

**LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND TEACHING METHODS:**

This course will use the **Moodle platform** available through your Omnivox portal. Students are encouraged to download the Moodle app on their phones for calendar reminders for this course. All assignments, instructions, documents, and links will be posted on our Moodle classroom.

Teaching methods will include: short interactive lectures, reading assignments, podcasts, in-class discussions, group work, debates, quizzes, tests, and interactive media and SMART classroom tools.

## EVALUATION TOOLS/ASSIGNMENTS:

Type	Due date	% of final mark
Reading response questions	Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 (2% each)	10%
Ethical Theories Test	Class 8	15%
Application pro-con lists	Classes 9, 10, and 12 (5% each)	15%
Cancel Culture test	Class 15	15%
<b>PROGRAM RELATED PREP &amp; ASSESSMENT</b> <i>Students must obtain an average of 60% on <b>part 3</b> of the program-related assessment parts in order to pass the class.</i>  <i>(Preparation) Part 1: Paper topic</i> <i>(Preparation) 2: Research</i> <i>Part 3: Brainstorm <b>**MUST PASS**</b></i> <i>Part 4: Debate</i>		<b>45% (total)</b>
	Class 2	5%
	Class 11	5%
	<b>Class 12</b>	<b>20%</b>
	Class 13 or 14	15%

## DESCRIPTION OF EVALUATION COMPONENTS

### Reading Response Questions (10%)

At the beginning of classes 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 students will be asked to briefly (1 paragraph) write out an ethical dilemma that they think illustrates the key ideas they encountered in the reading for that day. We will use these dilemmas in class discussion at the end of class.

### Ethical Theories Test (15%)

At midterm, students will write a test on the 5 different ethical theories we discussed in the first part of the term. The test will have 2 parts: Part 1 will be a short-answer section and part 2 will be a long-answer comparison section.

### Application pro-con lists (15%)

At 3 points throughout the term, students will draw up pro-con lists, briefly outlining as many reasons they can think of for why a particular ethical theory would be *in favour* of and *against* a cancellation.

### Program-related preparation and preparation (45%)

**Students must obtain a minimum grade of 60% on the PART 3 of the program-related assessment in order to pass the class.**

Students in this class will prepare a final program-related debate about how to apply the ethical theories we learned to a case of cancellation **related to their own program of study and eventual future careers**. This assessment will be submitted in four parts:

- Preparation Part 1: Topic proposal - 5% - in class (open book)

*In a small pod assigned by the teacher of students in the same (or closely related) program of study, students will identify a case of cancellation related to their future field of work that they wish to debate. Students will be given class time, access to the internet and AI, and access to all class materials to complete this work. Groups will be expected to briefly present their case of cancellation and explain how it relates to their field of study and make 5 slides. Each student will be responsible for one slide of the presentation. The assignment is graded individually but students must work together as a group. Any student who is not seen participating in group work will receive a 0.*

- Preparation Part 2: Research – 5% - in class with AI assistance

*Each student in their group will choose a different ethical theory to “represent” in their debate. They will then read a supplementary research article on their chosen theory provided by the teacher and take notes on it in class. Students will be given access to **Notebook LM** when writing these research notes and will be given guided details about how to use it to help them write their notes. Students will have 1.5 hours to write 2 pages of notes on the article with page number references and a correctly formatted MLA Works Cited Citation. Assignments will be written in the computer lab and submitted on Moodle.*

- Part 3: Brainstorm – 20% - in class, closed book **MUST PASS**

*After the research period, student will brainstorm points they plan to make about how they will apply their chosen ethical theory to the case of cancellation their group chose and how they will respond to the objections they anticipate receiving from other students in the debate. They will be expected to write a minimum of 750 words in this brainstorm session in point form on a computer.*

- Preparation Part 4: Debate – 15% - in class, oral presentation with slides

*The group will begin by briefly reminding the class of their chosen case of cancellation by going over the slideshow from the beginning of the term (Part 1) and leading a short discussion about it. Each student should prepare a discussion question to get the class talking and add it to the slideshow.*

*Each student will then orally present their arguments from the point of view of their ethical theory in answer to the following question: “Do you think cancellation is the correct ethical punishment for the person your group chose?” They will follow their presentation with a rebuttal session where they respond to each other’s arguments to demonstrate their understanding of the agreements/disagreements between the ethical theories we discussed in class. Each student should plan to speak for a **minimum** of 5 minutes.*

### **Cancel Culture test (15%)**

After all the program-related assessment debates are completed, students will take a test about the cases their peers discussed to check that they were in attendance and actively listening. The test will consist of 5 short answer questions (1 paragraph answers each) about the cases of cancellation discussed during the debates and how ethical theories apply to them.

### **PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS AND CRITERIA:**

**All graded components in this class are completed in class.** In order to succeed in this class, therefore, students must regularly attend and actively participate in class meetings by asking questions, completing in-class assignments, and doing group work.

### **MISSED ASSIGNMENT POLICY:**

Any student who misses a class should **declare an absence with the college for that day**. If a student misses an assignment on a day when they were absent, the percentage value of the assignment they missed will be added **either to the value of the Ethical Theories Test (for assignments before midterm) or to the Individual portion of the program-related assessment debate** for anything after midterm. Students who would like a chance to get feedback on a missed assignment are welcome to complete assignments at home and come to present them to the teacher for feedback during office hours. **These will not be graded.**

- **There are no make-ups for missed work in this class except in cases of college-approved absences.**

#### **PASSING GRADE POLICY:**

Students must obtain a total grade of at least 60% in order to pass the course.

**Students must receive a grade of at least 60% for PART 3 of the program-related assignment (also known as Comprehensive Examination for Science students). If the student does not pass the program-related assignment, the maximum grade the student will receive for the course is 50%.**

#### **DEPARTMENTAL LITERACY STANDARD:**

Students enrolled in Humanities courses are expected to have college-level English reading skills and to demonstrate college-level English writing skills.

#### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY:**

According to ISEP, the teacher is required to report to the Sector Dean all cases of cheating and plagiarism affecting a student's grade. (Section V-C) Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated in this course. Students found guilty of their first offence of plagiarism or cheating will receive a zero on the assignment in question and will be reported to the Sector Dean in writing. Any subsequent cases of cheating will result in a student failing the course. Students who are uncertain of what counts as plagiarism should consult the instructor, ISEP, or the Dawson Academic Skills Centre.

**DEPARTMENTAL AI POLICY:** Any unauthorized use of A.I. writing assistance (e.g. ChatGPT) will be construed as academic misconduct. If you are unsure what this means, consult with the teacher. If there is suspicion of A.I. writing assistance, you may be asked to meet with the teacher, who will take steps to investigate whether the work was written by you (for instance you may be verbally quizzed on it in the presence of the teacher, or asked to rewrite all or part of it). In the event that the teacher concludes that unauthorized AI writing assistance was used, this will constitute plagiarism.

#### **DEPARTMENTAL CONTINUING EDUCATION STATEMENT:**

While Continuing Education teachers are committed to supporting their students, most of them are not paid to respond to MIO/email nor to hold office hours despite requests having been made to the College to pay all Continuing Education teachers to provide such support. Consequently, for the vast majority of Continuing Education courses, there are no associated office hours and the teacher has no obligation to respond to student messages. If you would like to express your views on this matter, you are encouraged to contact: Isabelle Carrier (Sector Dean), Lola Ronald (Continuing Education Coordinator), Maeve Muldowney (Dean of Continuing Education and Community Services), and Diane Gauvin (Academic Dean).

#### **STUDENT CONDUCT:**

Everyone has the right to a safe and non-violent environment. Students are obliged to conduct themselves as stated in the Student Code of Conduct and in the ISEP section on the roles and responsibilities of students. (ISEP Section II-D)

#### **ATTENDANCE:**

Students should refer to the ISEP (Section IV-C) regarding attendance.

**INTENSIVE COURSE CONFLICTS:**

If a student is attending an intensive course, the student must inform the teacher, within the first two (2) weeks of class, of the specific dates of any anticipated absences.

**POLICY ON RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES:**

Students observing religious holidays must inform their teachers, in writing, as prescribed in the ISEP policy on Religious Observances, no later than the end of the second week of the impacted semester or term. This applies both to the semester or term, as well as to any final examination period (ISEP section IV-D).

**ISEP:**

The Institutional Student Evaluation Policy (ISEP) is designed to promote equitable and effective evaluation of student learning and is therefore a crucial policy to read and understand. The policy describes the rights and obligations of students, faculty, departments, programs, and the College administration with regard to evaluation in all your courses, including grade reviews and resolution of academic grievance. The ISEP is available on the Dawson website.

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF COURSE CONTENT:

Class	Date	Topic	Readings (on Moodle)	Assessments
1	June 9	Introductions		
2	June 10	What is Cancel Culture? The case of Michael Jackson	Podcast: "Still Processing: M.J."	Program related assignment prep part 1 (5%)
3	June 11	Ethical Theory 1: Relativism (and why it's bad)	Reading 2: Relativism (on Moodle)	Reading response question 1 (2%)
4	June 12	Ethical Theory 2: Social Contract Theory	Reading 3: Social Contract Theory (on Moodle)	Reading response question 2 (2%)
5	June 13	Ethical Theory 3: Utilitarianism	Reading 4: Utilitarianism (on Moodle)	Reading response question 3 (2%)
6	June 16	Ethical Theory 4: Deontology	Reading 5: Deontology (on Moodle)	Reading response question 4 (2%)
7	June 17	Ethical Theory 5: Virtue Ethics	Reading 6: Virtue Ethics (on Moodle)	Reading response question 5 (2%)
8	June 18	Ethical Theories Test		Ethical Theories Test (15%)
9	June 19	Donald Trump & Social Contract Theory	Reading: "Trump's Been Unplugged. Now What?"	Application pro-con 1 (5%)
10	June 20	Buffy Ste. Marie & Utilitarianism	Reading: "Who Is Buffy Sainte Marie?"	Application pro-con 2 (5%)
11	June 23	Amy Cooper & Deontology + Research	Video: Trevor Noah on Amy Cooper	Program related assignment prep part 2 (5%)  Application pro-con 3 (5%)
<b>**NO CLASS JUNE 24 – Fête Nationale du Québec**</b>				
12	June 25	Program-related assessment prep day (2)		<b>Program-related assignment part 3 (20%) **MUST PASS**</b>
13	June 26	Program-related debates		Program-related assessment part 4 (15%)
14	June 27	Program-related debates		Program-related assessment part 4 (15%)
15	June 30	Final test + Final discussion: Social Media Influencers and Virtue Ethics		Final test (15%): Cancel Culture and ethics