

University of North Texas

Ethics in Science (Spring 2026)

PHIL 2600.004

Instructor: Anna Kokareva, she/her
Email: Anna.Kokareva@unt.edu
Class time: T/Th 12:30 – 1:50 pm
Class location: ENV 115
Office hours: by appointment

I. Rationale and course outline:

Human beings are constructing a new world through science and technology. Just consider the rapid changes in medicine, information, transportation, artificial intelligence, materials, energy, food, and much more. In all these cases, we confront questions at the intersection of truth and power, knowledge and justice. The kind of world we create will be decided not simply by the expanding knowledge of science or the increasing powers of technology. It will depend more significantly on our visions about good and bad and right and wrong. In other words, we must think simultaneously of science and ethics.

This course aspires to make you a more informed and astute participant in the conversations that shape our lives at the intersection of science and ethics. We will try to address a variety of philosophical questions: what is the relationship between ethics and science? What do scientists do and assume in their quest for scientific inquiry and knowledge? What makes an inquiry ethical? What are ethical dilemmas in the age of science? And what the social and personal responsibilities of inquirers and practitioners are.

II. Course Outcomes:

By the end of the course students should be able to demonstrate the ability to:

- Define and classify basic concepts in ethics (moral philosophy) and science.
- Identify and categorize the most important issues at the intersection of ethics and science.
- Understand, interpret, analyze, and assess those issues.
- Develop improved reading and critical thinking skills as well as open-minded and respectful dialogue skills.

III. Format and Procedures:

This class will be fully in person with some lecture to introduce, contextualize, and clarify readings. Students should expect to actively engage with the material and class time will focus on small and large group discussion, application exercises, low-stakes in-class projects, and creative activities.

IV. Course Requirements:

Class attendance and communication policies:

Attendance:

Since our class depends on discussion and student involvement, your presence matters! I do not offer unexcused absences in this class. Your attendance counts towards the final grade and you can see how it changes on canvas. There will be no Zoom option for this class. If you are out ill and the CDC guidelines still require that you quarantine, then please ask your peers for lecture notes, or reach out to me with questions.

If you miss a class, you are responsible for class content, assignments missed, and upcoming due dates. If you do not stay for the **entirety of class**, you will be counted absent. You will also be counted absent if you are **wearing earphones** during class without ODA permission; please be aware that you may be asked to leave the classroom if you do not follow these requirements.

Finally, you will be counted absent if you arrive **ten or more** minutes late. If there are circumstances that will result in you late attendance, please email me **before** the start of the class.

In-class devices policy:

I do not allow the use of personal devices in class without ODA permission. These include laptops, smartphones, tablets (e.g. ipads) and earphones.

Communication:

Communication regarding course information will be handled through Canvas announcements. If you have questions or concerns at any point during the term and wish to contact me, please do so via email. Include your name and the course code (PHIL 2600.004). I will do my best to respond via email within 24 hours Monday-Thursday; please do not expect a reply over the weekend and the Spring break. Any issues related to the completion of the course should be communicated ahead of time. Emails pertaining to information that is already available to you on Canvas or on the syllabus may not be responded to at all.

Emergency communications:

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials. If Canvas is not accessible during the emergency, contact me via email for more information.

Course readings:

Required text: Briggie, Adam and Mitcham, Carl. *Ethics in Science: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Other reading selections will be provided as PDF files in Canvas

V. Assessments, Grading Policies and Procedures

Final grades will consist of the following:

Attendance	20%
Weekly Reading Quizzes	20%
Mid-term Exam	30%
Group project	30%

Attendance (20%)

Attendance is mandatory in this class. I will be taking down attendance at the beginning of every class. Unexcused absences will affect your final grade. You cannot get an A if you miss more than 15% of classes. If you are having a family emergency or feeling sick, please contact me as soon as possible – I will mark you present.

Weekly reading quizzes (20%)

Weekly reading quizzes are meant to help you find and pay attention to the argument and the most important concepts of the readings. Reading quizzes for Tuesday are graded automatically and are due **Monday at 11:59 pm**. Reading quizzes for Thursday will take place in class and will include one or two open questions. Thursday quizzes will be graded as complete/incomplete. You can use all the class materials to complete quizzes. Both types of reading quizzes are time sensitive, so I will not be able to give extensions.

Mid-term exam (30%)

This is a mid-term evaluation of your knowledge that will happen in-class. The exam will consist of a combination of multiple choice questions and open questions.

Group project (30%)

This is a collaborative assignment in which, as a group, you will identify a specific case study that highlights the relationship between ethics and science. There are four components in this assignment: (i) topic submission; (ii) group presentation; (iii) individual written reflection; (iv) peer reviews. Detailed instructions will be provided on Canvas. The assignment will be graded using the CORE rubric.

Final course grades will reflect the following scale:

A=90%+ B=80-89% C=70-79% D=60-69% F=0-59%

LATE WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. If something comes up, you must communicate with me ahead of the deadline, and I will determine whether an exception to this policy is warranted.

VI. Academic Integrity

Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a "0" for that particular assignment or exam. Additionally, the incident will be reported to the Dean of Students, who may impose further penalty. According to the UNT catalog, the term "cheating" includes, but is not limited to:

- a. use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations;
- b. dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments;
- c. the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a faculty or staff member of the university;
- d. dual submission of a paper or project, or resubmission of a paper or project to a different class without express permission from the instructor(s); or
- e. any other act designed to give a student an unfair advantage.

The term "plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to:

- a. the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment; and
- b. the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

AI policies

In this course, I want you to engage deeply with the materials and develop your own critical thinking and writing skills. For this reason, the use of Generative AI (GenAI) tools like Claude, ChatGPT, and Gemini is **not permitted**. While these tools can be helpful in some contexts, they do not align with our goal of fostering the development of your independent thinking. Using GenAI to complete any part of an assignment, exam, or coursework will be considered a violation of academic integrity, as it prevents the development of your own skills, and will be addressed according to the [Student Academic Integrity](#) policy.

If you choose to use Grammarly or similar tools for spelling and minor grammar edits, you must submit a clean draft – mistakes and all – as well as a final version that discloses what program you used and how. Given the possibility of false positives, I strongly suggest drafting your work with 'track changes' feature on in word or through a google doc with version history that clearly shows your writing process.

VII. Acceptable Student Behavior

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's

conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at <http://deanofstudents.unt.edu>.

VIII. Accommodations for students with disabilities (ADA statement)

The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the Office of Disability Access website at <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>. You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323.

IX. Inclusivity, chosen names, and pronouns

UNT students represent a variety of backgrounds and perspectives. The professor is committed to providing an atmosphere for learning that respects diversity. In the classroom and online, students are expected to

- share their unique experiences, values and beliefs
- be open to the views of others
- honor the uniqueness of their colleagues
- value each other's opinions and communicate in a respectful manner
- keep confidential discussions that the community has of a personal nature

Chosen Names: A chosen name is a name that a person goes by that may or may not match their legal name. If you have a chosen name that is different from your legal name and would like that to be used in class, please let the instructor know. You can also change your display name in your Canvas account settings.

Pronouns: Pronouns (she/her, they/them, he/him, etc.) are a public way for people to address you, much like your name, and can be shared with a name when making an introduction, both virtually and in-person. Just as we ask and don't assume someone's name, we should also ask and not assume someone's pronouns. You can [add your pronouns to your Canvas account](#) so that they follow your name when posting to discussion boards, submitting assignments, etc.

X. Sexual Assault Prevention

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct. Federal laws and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex as well as sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565-2648. Visit [Title IX Student Information](#) for more resources.

XI. Retention of Student Records

Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Blackboard online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. You have a right to view your individual record; however, information about your records will not be divulged to other individuals without the proper written consent. You are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the university's policy in accordance with those mandates at the following link: <http://essc.unt.edu/registrar/ferpa.html>

XII. Succeed at UNT

UNT endeavors to offer you a high-quality education and to provide a supportive environment to help you learn and grow. And, as a faculty member, I am committed to helping you be successful as a student. Here's how to succeed at UNT: Show up. Find Support. Get advised. Be prepared. Get involved. Stay focused. To learn more about campus resources and information on how you can achieve success, go <http://success.unt.edu/>.

XIII. Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT)

Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT) is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available at the end of the semester to provide you with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught.

XIV. COURSE SCHEDULE

UNIT 1: What is ethics?		
Week 1	Tuesday (T) 1/13	Greetings & Course overview <u>Read:</u> "Critical communities: Intellectual safety and the power of disagreement" by Ashby Butnor, PDF on Canvas.
	Thursday (TR) 1/15	<u>Read:</u> <i>Introduction</i> in Briggie and Mitcham (pp. 1-10). Tasks: Submit syllabus quiz by Sunday January 18, 11:59pm
Week 2	T 1/20	Ethical theories: Kantian ethics (deontology) <u>Read:</u> Chapter 6 "Kantian ethics" in <i>Living Ethics</i> by Shafer-Landau, (pp. 76-85), PDF on Canvas. Tasks: Reading quiz
	TR 1/22	Ethical theories: Utilitarianism <u>Read:</u> Chapter 5 "Consequentialism" in <i>Living Ethics</i> by Shafer-Landau, (pp. 61-65, stop upon the mention of vicarious punishment; continue at pages 70-75), PDF on Canvas. Tasks: In-class quiz
Week 3	T 1/27	Ethical theories: Virtue Ethics <u>Read:</u> Chapter 10 "Virtue Ethics" in <i>Living Ethics</i> by Shafer-Landau, (pp. 137-146), PDF on Canvas. Tasks: Reading quiz
	TR 1/29	Ethical theories: Feminist Ethics <u>Read:</u> "What is feminist ethics?" by Hilde Lindemann, PDF on Canvas. Tasks: In-class quiz
UNIT 2: What is science?		
Week 4	T 2/3	Science and society

		<u>Read:</u> Chapter 3 “Science and its norms” in Briggie and Mitcham (pp. 66-78). Chapter 1 “Scientific knowledge of climate change” in <i>Recipes for Science</i> by Potochnik et al. (pp. 8-15), PDF on Canvas. Tasks: • Reading quiz
	TR 2/5	<u>Read:</u> Continue chapter 1 “Scientific knowledge of climate change” in <i>Recipes for Science</i> by Potochnik et al. (pp. 15-33), PDF on Canvas. <u>Recommended reading:</u> “Coda or values in science” in <i>Why Trust Science?</i> by Naomi Oreskes, PDF on Canvas. Tasks: • In-class quiz
Week 5	T 2/10	Research with human subjects <u>Read:</u> Chapter 5 “Science involving humans” in Briggie and Mitcham (pp. 125-150). Tasks: • Reading quiz
	TR 2/12	<u>Read:</u> Chapter 6 “Trust” in <i>Viral Justice</i> by Ruha Benjamin, PDF on Canvas. Tasks: • In-class quiz
Week 6	T 2/17	Research with non-human subjects <u>Read:</u> Chapter 6 “Science involving animals” in Briggie and Mitcham (pp. 156-173). Tasks: • Reading quiz
	TR 2/19	<u>Read:</u> TBD Tasks: • Fun quiz!
UNIT 3: Science and Technology Studies (STS)		
Week 7	T 2/24	What is technology? What is STS? <u>Read:</u> Chapter 1 “The nature of technology” in <i>Society and</i>

		<i>Technological Change</i> by Rudi Volti, (pp. 3-19), PDF on Canvas. Tasks: • Reading quiz • In-class group work on the final presentation topic
	TR 2/26	Discussion and group work
Week 8	T 3/3	Mid-term exam review Tasks: • Final presentation topic submission on Canvas by 11:59pm
	TR 3/5	MID-TERM PAPER-BASED EXAM IN-CLASS
Week 9	T 3/10	SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS!
	TR 3/12	SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS!
Week 10	T 3/17	Doing science differently: critique of modern western science <u>Read:</u> “Skywoman Falling” and “Mishkos Kenomagwen: The Teachings of Grass” in <i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i> by Robin Kimmerer, PDF on Canvas. Tasks: • Reading quiz
	TR 3/19	Discussion and group work
Week 11	T 3/24	Doing science differently: critique of modern western science <u>Read:</u> Chapter 1. “From the woman question in science to the science question in feminism” in <i>The Science Question in Feminism</i> by Sandra Harding, PDF on Canvas. <u>Recommended reading:</u> “Introduction: Why data science needs feminism” in <i>Data Feminism</i> by Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren Klein, open source: https://data-feminism.mitpress.mit.edu/pub/frfa9szd/release/6?readingCollection=0cd867ef#data-and-power Tasks: • Reading quiz
	TR 3/26	Project team work No readings are due. Tasks: • Come to class and work on your projects!
Week 12	T 3/31	Science and decision-making

		Watch <i>Don't Look Up</i> (2021) in class.
	TR 4/2	Continue watching <i>Don't Look Up</i> (2021) in class.
Week 13	T 4/7	Scientific and technological futures <u>Read:</u> "The collapse of Western civilization: A view from the future," by Oreskes, Naomi and Erik M. Conway. PDF on Canvas. Tasks: • Reading quiz • Discussion of <i>Don't Look Up</i> (2021) in class.
	TR 4/9	<u>Recommended reading:</u> Chapter 5 "Imagining the future" in <i>Imagination Manifesto</i> by Ruha Benjamin, PDF on Canvas. Tasks: • A wrap-up discussion
UNIT 4: Your time to shine: group presentations!		
Week 14	T 4/14	Group presentations
	TR 4/16	Group presentations
Week 15	T 4/21	Group presentations
	TR 4/23	Group presentations
Week 16	T 4/28	Group presentations
	TR 4/30	Group presentations Final in-class exam May 4, 2026, 11:30-12:50 pm

Please note that this schedule is subject to change.