

Ethics, Justice, and Economics Syllabus

Department of Economics

ECON 5360, Winter 2026

Dalhousie University operates in the unceded territories of the Mi'kmaw, Wolastoqey, and Peskotomuhkati Peoples. These sovereign nations hold inherent rights as the original peoples of these lands, and we each carry collective obligations under the Peace and Friendship Treaties. Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, recognizes and affirms Aboriginal and Treaty rights in Canada.

We recognize that African Nova Scotians are a distinct people whose histories, legacies, and contributions have enriched the part of Mi'kma'ki known as Nova Scotia for over 400 years.

Course Instructor(s)

Name	Email	Office Hours
Daniel Rosenblum	Daniel.Rosenblum@dal.ca	Wednesdays 2-3PM or by appointment, C22 in the Economics Department (6220 University Ave)
TA: Ambrose Ogwang	aogwang@dal.ca	Mondays, 1:30-2:30PM A1 in the Economics Department

Course Description

In this course, we will critically examine the assumptions of Neoclassical economic theory and its application with a focus on the ethical and distributional consequences of using markets as an allocation mechanism. The first half of the course adds a moral philosophical perspective to standard economic theory. The second half exposes students to the major conceptions of economic justice, including utilitarianism, Rawlsian egalitarianism, Nozickian libertarianism, Sen's capabilities approach, and equality of opportunity.

Course Prerequisites

None

Course Exclusions

ECON 5360, ECON 3360, PHIL 3361

Student Resources

Please see the course Brightspace page for a list of Faculty of Science Student Resources and Support. Your professor and TA will be available during the semester for office hours. If you are unable to meet your professor during regular office hours, please e-mail him to schedule an appointment. Your professor will only respond to e-mails during normal working hours (8:30AM-4:30PM) on weekdays. Your professor will generally respond to e-mails within 1-2 business days.

Course Structure

Course Delivery

In-person lectures.

Lectures

MW 11:35AM - 12:55PM; McCain 2116

Course Materials

Required Textbook: Hausman, D., McPherson, M., & Satz, D. (2016). *Economic analysis, moral philosophy, and public policy*. Cambridge University Press. 3rd edition. (2nd edition is currently available online at the library, however it does not have all the content of the 3rd edition.)

In addition, there are several assigned journal articles and book chapters (see below).

Other *required* assigned readings will be posted to Brightspace.

Additional *optional* readings will be posted to Brightspace. These are for students interested in going beyond the normal required readings and students will not be expected to have read them.

Course Website (Brightspace)

The course will use Brightspace (accessible through my.dal.ca) to post lecture slides, grades, readings, links to readings, and links to topics of interest that may arise over the semester. The course will use Turnitin plagiarism detection software on Brightspace. If you have any concerns or objections to using Turnitin, please contact the professor to discuss it before any assignments are due. Students are responsible to establish whether they have access to all course materials as soon as the term begins and before the ADD/DROP date. *If you do not have access to certain material, inform the instructor as soon as possible. Alternative access methods are not guaranteed.*

Assessment

This is a reading and writing intensive course. Students will be graded on their writing (five short writing assignments and one long final paper) and one presentation of their final paper.

Component	Weight (% of final grade)	Date
5 Short Writing Assignments	50%, lowest grade dropped	Jan 30; Feb 13; March 6, 20, and 27
Final Paper Presentation	10%	March 25, 30; April 1 and 6
Final Paper	40%	April 13

Short Writing Assignments: The short writing assignments (3-4 pages) are your critical responses to the course readings. They will be due approximately every two weeks. The topic of the paper must be on that week and/or the previous two week's readings. For example, Short Paper 3, due March 6, must be on the readings from Weeks 6-8. The papers can refer to other course readings if relevant, but the main argument for the paper should be around at least one of the readings from those three weeks of the course. Lowest assignment grade will be dropped.

Students are free to write about whatever aspect of the readings they find most compelling/challenging/confusing/exciting. However, I will post one example paper topic, which you can use if you are struggling to devise your own idea. In constructing your short papers, *it is important that your ideas draw on and refer to the various assigned chapters/papers*. In considering the various articles you should be mulling some basic questions: Is the topic of the paper(s)/chapter(s) something you deem important? Why? Is the approach they follow convincing? Are the conclusions they draw compelling? Has something critical been left out? The papers should be well-written, have a clear, logical argument, and engage with the course readings. **It should be clear in your papers that you have carefully read the assigned readings that you are writing about.**

The point of the short assignments is to help you think critically about the readings and organize your thoughts in a logical way. **To get a good grade, you need to show me in your paper that you have read and thought critically about the readings. See Paper Grading Rubric to see how the papers will be assessed.** If you think your grade on a short paper is unfairly low, first contact your TA. If you still think your grade is unfairly low after discussing the paper with your TA, then feel free to discuss it with me during my office hours. I will not discuss short paper grades after the last day of classes.

Final Paper: Graduate students are expected to write a substantial final paper (18-20 pages). These longer papers are an opportunity to more deeply explore your thinking about a particular topic/question that relates to the readings. Although you are free to choose any relevant topic, they must be approved by the professor ahead of time. **E-mail the professor your topic by Feb 27th at the latest.** If you are struggling with a final paper topic, please see the professor for assistance. In addition, students of the graduate course are expected to read and incorporate what

they have learned from one relevant book on economics and/or philosophy *in addition to the normal course readings* into their final paper. **This book should be identified by the 3rd week of the semester** and must be approved by the professor. Any of the books from which chapters are included in the course reading list are appropriate. Other **examples** of appropriate books are:

Alexander, Sadie TM (2021). *Democracy, Race, and Justice: The Speeches and Writings of Sadie T.M. Alexander*. Yale University Press.

Carter, Z.D. (2020). *The Price of Peace: Money, Democracy, and the Life of John Maynard Keynes*. Random House.

Cohen, G.A. (1995). *Self-ownership, freedom, and equality*. Cambridge University Press.

Dworkin, R. (2002). *Sovereign virtue: The theory and practice of equality*. Harvard University Press.

Hayek, F. A. (1991). *The fatal conceit*. University of Chicago Press.

Piketty, T. (2017). *Capital in the twenty-first century*. Harvard University Press.

Saez and Zucman (2019). *The Triumph of Injustice*. WW Norton

Sen, A. (2011). *The idea of justice*. Harvard University Press.

Sen, A., Williams, B., & Williams, B. A. O. (Eds.). (1982). *Utilitarianism and beyond*. Cambridge University Press.

Smith, A. (2010). *The theory of moral sentiments*. Penguin.

All papers must be written in 12-point font, double-spaced, 1-inch margins, no title page. Do not forget to put your name, date, and ID number on your papers. All papers must be submitted online via Brightspace.

Final Paper Presentations: Students will present their draft papers in class in the last one or two weeks of the semester. The presentations are meant to help you to organize your thoughts for your final paper and receive feedback from your peers and professor, so it can be appropriately revised before they are due. You do not need to have a complete paper before your presentation. **You should be able to explain your topic/hypothesis, why you think it's an important/relevant topic, and a logical argument in support of and/or against your hypothesis that draws from the course readings.** You can use outside evidence, but it is not required, and the focus of your paper should be related to the course content. You should be able to show that you have thought critically about the course readings and/or that you can apply the concepts from the course to relevant topics.

Conversion of numerical grades to final letter grades follows the

[Dalhousie Grade Scale](#)

A+ (90-100)	B+ (77-79)	C+ (65-69)	D (50-54)
A (85-89)	B (73-76)	C (60-64)	F (0-49)
A- (80-84)	B- (70-72)	C- (55-59)	

Course Policies on Missed or Late Academic Requirements

Doctor's notes and Student Declaration of Absence forms are never required for this course.

If you anticipate delays in submitting your short writing assignments or the final paper for whatever reason, let your professor know as soon as possible, so that accommodations can be made. Unless an extension is approved **before the assignment due date** or there is an emergency, **late work will be given a grade of zero.**

Class Participation:

There is no class participation grade. However, **I strongly encourage students to attend and participate in class.** If you do attend in-person classes, you are expected to pay attention. In particular, **students are not allowed to use phones, tablets, or computers during class** without the permission of the professor. Use of such devices may reduce your course grade.

Classes will **not** be recorded and lecture videos will not be made available to students. PowerPoint slides will be posted to Brightspace after the day of the lecture.

Course Policies related to Academic Integrity

Dalhousie University defines plagiarism as “the submission or presentation of the work of another as if it were one’s own.” All of your papers should be done **individually** and the content of your papers is expected to be your own thoughts and words unless they are cited appropriately. **You are expected to have completed the Writing Centre Academic Integrity Module (link on Brightspace) before writing any papers to ensure you understand what is expected of you.** If you have any questions about whether you may or may not be violating the university’s academic integrity policy, contact your professor before submitting the paper for assistance.

AI/ Large Language Models (LLM): Unless you are told to use an AI/LLM program, such as ChatGPT, as part of the instructions of an assignment, **you are not allowed to use AI/LLM programs to assist you in writing your assignments.**

Learning Objectives

- Demonstrate the ethical/moral philosophical assumptions in economics through written assignments.
- Analyze, evaluate, and compare conceptions of economic justice through written assignments.
- Synthesize knowledge from the course by writing a final paper that evaluates an economic problem through a philosophical lens.

Course Content and Outline (subject to change by the professor)

Week 1 (Jan 7): Introduction

Week 2 (Jan 12 and 14): Writing Centre Workshop and Ethics in Economics

Required: Complete Writing Centre Academic Integrity Module and Academic Integrity Citing Material Seminar (links on Brightspace) if you have not already done so.

Hausman, McPherson, and Satz Chapters 1-2

Week 3 (Jan 21): Rationality and Morality (Title of Book to be Used in Final Paper must be e-mailed to the Professor by 11:59PM on Jan 24)

Hausman, McPherson, and Satz Chapters 3-4

Optional: Samuelson, P. A. (1958). "An exact consumption-loan model of interest with or without the social contrivance of money." *The Journal of Political Economy*, 66(6), 467-482.

Week 4 (Jan 26 and 28): The Role of Morality in Markets **(***Short Paper 1 Due Jan 30***)**

Hausman, McPherson, and Satz Chapters 5-6

Sandel, M. J. (2013). "Market Reasoning as Moral Reasoning: Why Economists Should Re-engage with Political Philosophy." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 27(4): 121-140.

Roth, Alvin E. (2007). "Repugnance as a constraint on markets." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 21(3): 37-58.

Optional: Hahn, F. (1982) Chapter 9 "On Some Difficulties of the Utilitarian Economist" in *Utilitarianism and Beyond* ed. Sen and Williams.

Week 5 (Feb 2 and 4): Utilitarianism, Welfare, and Efficiency

Hausman, McPherson, and Satz Chapters 7-9

Bentham (1781/2000) Chapter 1 in *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*,

Mill (1863/2001) Chapter 2 in *Utilitarianism*

Optional: Hahn, F. (1982) Chapter 9 "On Some Difficulties of the Utilitarian Economist" in *Utilitarianism and Beyond* ed. Sen and Williams.

Week 6 (Feb 9 and 11): Liberty, Rights, Equality, and Justice

(*Short Paper 2 Due Feb 13***)**

Hausman, McPherson, and Satz Chapters 10-12

Winter Break: Feb 16-20: No classes.

Week 7 (Feb 23 and 25): Rawls' *Theory of Justice* (Topic for Final Paper must be e-mailed to the Professor by 11:59PM on Feb 27)

Selected sections from Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*

Cohen, G.A. (1991) "Incentives, Inequality, and Community," The Tanner Lectures on Human Values

Week 8 (March 2 and 4): Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*

(*Short Paper 3 Due March 6***)**

Chapter 7 "Distributive Justice" from Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*

Cohen, G.A. (1977) "Robert Nozick and Wilt Chamberlain: How Patterns Preserve Liberty" *Erkenntnis* 11(1): 5-23

Mankiw, N. G. (2013). "Defending the one percent." *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 27(3), 21-34.

Week 9 (March 9 and 11): Human Capabilities

Sen, Amartya, (1979) "Equality of What?" The Tanner Lecture on Human Values.

Nussbaum, M. (1995) "Human Capabilities, Female Human Beings." Chapter 2 in *Women, Culture and Development: A Study of Human Capabilities* eds. Nussbaum and Glover.

Week 10 (March 16 and 18): Equality of Opportunity (Short Paper 4 Due March 20**)**

Arneson, R. (1989) "Equality and Equal Opportunity for Welfare", *Philosophical Studies*, 56(1): 77-93.

Roemer, J. (2002) "Equality of Opportunity: A Progress Report", *Social Choice and Welfare*, 19: 455-471.

Week 11 (March 23 and 25): How can economists tackle injustice? And Presentations

(Short Paper 5 Due March 27 **)**

March 23:

Bertrand, M. and S. Mullainathan (2004). "Are Emily and Greg More Employable Than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination." *The American Economic Review*. 94(4): 991-1013.

Doyle O., C.P. Harmon, J.J. Heckman, and R.E. Tremblay (2009) "Investing in early human development: Timing and economic efficiency." *Economics and Human Biology*. 7(1): 1-6.

Optional: Almond, D., J. Currie, and V. Duque (2018). "Childhood Circumstances and Adult Outcomes: Act II" *Journal of Economic Literature*. 56(4): 1360-1446.

March 25: Presentations**Week 12/13 (March 30 and April 1 and 6): Presentations of final papers.**

Final Papers due by Monday, April 13 (11:59PM)

University Policies and Statements

Recognition of Mi'kmaq Territory

Dalhousie University would like to acknowledge that the University is on Traditional Mi'kmaq Territory. The Elders in Residence program provides students with access to First Nations elders for guidance, counsel, and support. Visit or e-mail the Indigenous Student Centre at 1321 Edward St or elders@dal.ca. Additional information regarding Mi'kmaq and Indigenous Relations (including the Elders in Residence program, Land Acknowledgements, Understanding Our Roots, and much more) can be found at: <https://www.dal.ca/about/mission-vision-values/mikmaq-indigenous-relations.html>

Internationalization

At Dalhousie, 'thinking and acting globally' enhances the quality and impact of education, supporting learning that is "interdisciplinary, cross-cultural, global in reach, and orientated toward solving problems that extend across national borders." Additional internationalization information can be found at: <https://www.dal.ca/about/mission-vision-values/global-relations.html>

Academic Integrity

At Dalhousie University, we are guided in all our work by the values of academic integrity: honesty, trust, fairness, responsibility, and respect. As a student, you are required to demonstrate these values in all the work you do. The University provides policies and procedures that every member of the university community is required to follow to ensure academic integrity. Additional academic integrity information can be found at: https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/academic-integrity.html

Accessibility

The Student Accessibility Centre is Dalhousie's centre of expertise for matters related to student accessibility and accommodation. If there are aspects of the design, instruction, and/or experiences within this course (online or in-person) that result in barriers to your inclusion, please contact the Student Accessibility Centre (https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/accessibility.html) for all courses offered by Dalhousie with the exception of Truro. For courses offered by the Faculty of Agriculture, please contact the Student Success Centre in Truro (https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/ssc.html).

Conduct in the Classroom – Culture of Respect

Substantial and constructive dialogue on challenging issues is an important part of academic inquiry and exchange. It requires willingness to listen and tolerance of opposing points of view. Consideration of individual differences and alternative viewpoints is required of all class members, towards each other, towards instructors, and towards guest speakers. While expressions of differing perspectives are welcome and encouraged, the words and language used should remain within acceptable bounds of civility and respect.

Diversity and Inclusion – Culture of Respect

Every person at Dalhousie has a right to be respected and safe. We believe inclusiveness is fundamental to education. We stand for equality. Dalhousie is strengthened in our diversity. We are a respectful and inclusive community. We are committed to being a place where everyone feels welcome and supported, which is why our Strategic Direction prioritizes fostering a culture of diversity and inclusiveness (Strategic Priority 5.2). Additional diversity and inclusion information can be found at: <https://www.dal.ca/about/mission-vision-values/equity-diversity-inclusion-and-accessibility/about-office-equity-inclusion.html>

Student Code of Conduct

Everyone at Dalhousie is expected to treat others with dignity and respect. The Code of Student Conduct allows Dalhousie to take disciplinary action if students don't follow this community expectation. When appropriate, violations of the code can be resolved in a reasonable and informal manner - perhaps through a restorative justice process. If an informal resolution can't be reached, or would be inappropriate, procedures exist for formal dispute resolution. The full Code of Student Conduct can be found at:

<https://www.dal.ca/content/dam/www/about/leadership-and-governance/governing-bodies/code-student-conduct.pdf>

