**Ethics: The Value of Human Behaviour**

**Course Description**

**Instructor:** Dr. Christopher DiCarlo

**Dates:** May 1 – June 26 (8 sessions, no class May 22)

**Time:** Mondays, 12:30 – 2:30

This course will introduce you to some of the core ideas and schools of thought on ethics, the principles that govern human behaviour. We will examine several fundamental ethical approaches such as divine command theory, cultural relativism, utilitarianism, social contract theory, and more. We will also consider how these various concepts might apply to important social issues, such as abortion, euthanasia, medical research, artificial intelligence (or AI), etc. And we’ll grapple with the question of freedom and responsibility as we explore the future of ethics and its intersection with the law.

Participants will also be introduced to a systematic procedure for assessing and attempting to resolve difficult ethical dilemmas. This course will provide the practical means by which to understand, carefully consider, and work through important ethical aspects that have and will, invariably, affect their own lives at some point.

**Christopher DiCarlo** is a philosopher, educator, and author. He is a past Visiting Research Scholar at Harvard University. Dr. DiCarlo has won several awards including TV Ontario’s *Big Ideas* Best Lecturer in Ontario Award and Canada’s Humanist of the Year.

**Lecture Schedule**

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| Lecture Week |  Lecture Description |
| **Week #1- May 1** | Introduction to Ethics and Critical Thinking. Students will be introduced to the field of ethics and the importance of critical thinking in focusing our thoughts.  |
| **Week# 2 - May 8** | We will consider a number of Ethical Theories and Principles including: Divine Command Theory, Subjectivism, Cultural Relativism, Egoism, Utilitarianism, Virtue Theory, Deontology, Social Contract Theory, Rights and Duties, and Principlism. |
| **Week# 3 - May 15** | Theories and Principles Cont’d: Divine Command Theory, Subjectivism, Cultural Relativism, Egoism, Utilitarianism, Virtue Theory, Deontology, Social Contract Theory, Rights and Duties, and Principlism. |
| **Week# 4 - May 29** | Ethics and the Law: Students will learn about the relationship between ethics and the law as well as how to analyze ethical case studies. This will involve the introduction of a decision-making tool called: The Five Step Procedure for Assessing Ethical Dilemmas. |
| **Week# 5 - June 5** | For the remaining classes, we will consider various ethical issues and case studies while incorporating (where applicable) The Five Step Procedure. The first issue will be Abortion: The history of abortion, its political developments – including Roe v. Wade, Regina v. Morgentaler, the legal/ethical status of the fetus, etc. The second ethical issue is Euthanasia: Its historical origins, development, and use in a Canadian context i.e. Medical Assistance in Dying (or MAID). |
| **Week# 6 - June 12** | Ethical Issues and Case Studies: The New Reproductive Technologies. In this class, we will look at various techniques used in prenatal diagnoses, *in vitro* fertilization, embryonic transfer, ‘designer babies’, surrogacy, etc. We will also consider a number of ethical case studies to utilize the Five Step Procedure for Assessing Ethical Dilemmas. |
| **Week# 7 - June 19** | Ethical Issues and Case Studies: Artificial Intelligence. In this class, we will consider a number of factors such as: The potential for AI Sentience, GPT-3, DALL·E 2, and video Deep Fakes. Many people are concerned with these rapidly-advancing technologies and we will look at their historical development as well as a number of ethical issues that have arisen as a result of their invention and use.  |
| **Week #8 - June 26** | Ethical Issues and Case Studies: Freedom/Autonomy – Political and Metaphysical. In the final class, we will take a deeper dive into the latest research on the capacity for humans to freely make decisions and actions. This is a fascinating field which is currently altering the way in which legislators, courts, laws, etc., make decisions regarding the legal culpability or responsibility a person may have. This class will look at the future of ethics and how it intersects with the law.  |