

# Ethics and the Risk Society (OLM130)

## Study Guide

All meetings take place in Atlas 5.201

April – June 2022

Last updated 30<sup>th</sup> March 2022

### Introduction

We live in a world where we increasingly control and know about the risks imposed on ourselves and others, for example in technological development, global health, the economy and the environment. Yet the increasing interconnectedness of our actions, for example through globalisation, and our dependence on a technological and information commons make it difficult for any one agent to control the net risks to which individuals and particular groups are exposed. Students will develop an ethical risk analysis through the examination of cases such as environmental risk and sustainability, pandemic outbreaks, the nuclear power industry, and terrorist threats linked to new technologies. Students will learn to apply their analyses to new cases through a term paper assignment and presentations.

### Learning Goals

At the end of the course, you should know

- different conceptualisations and applications of risk, in particular for new technologies
- ethical principles governing the imposition of risk and how to critically reflect on these
- psychological principles of risk perception and how to critically reflect on these
- strategies of managing risk
- how to apply these analytical tools to case studies of risk and reach practical recommendations (along with a critical reflection on your own work)
- how to give adequate feedback and implement feedback from others
- how to make a strong line of argument about your work, written in a paper and orally in the oral exam where ‘defend’ your paper.

### Instructors

**Lukas Fuchs**  
Lecturer  
L.fuchs@tue.nl

**Dr. Gunter Bombaerts**  
Responsible Lecturer  
G.bombaerts@tue.nl

## Paper Assignment and Exam

For this course you write a paper and defend it in an oral exam. The assignment is meant to help you achieve the learning goals. Discussing your technology is a way to reflect on your own ideas about ethics, risk and society. You submit your draft at various stages and receive feedback from lecturers and peers.

You will form a feedback group of four on CANVAS. There will be three sessions with your feedback groups. You will hand in your current version, your peers will read it and give feedback.

### ***Research Ideas – Deadline: 4th May, 5pm***

You will start with some *Research Ideas*. Here you describe the following:

- What is your technology?
- What is the societal debate about your technology? Which values conflict?
- Are there solutions to this debate?
- What is your preferred solution and why?
- Are there remaining difficulties?

Make sure the scope is challenging and realistic for a 5 ECTS course. This assignment is meant to get you started; it can be messy and it is not graded. Approximate length: 500-750 words. You may also outline two different technologies and, after receiving feedback, decide which to focus on. Upload on CANVAS and send to your feedback group.

### ***Rough Draft – Deadline: 25th May, 5pm***

The next step is to produce a *Rough Draft*. You can continue to focus on your previous case, or you can change your mind. Focus on the following points:

- Which ethical framework or question do you focus on?
- What is your argument?
- What are some objections to your view? Can you respond to them?

For example, this could be the introduction to your final paper, along with some ideas in bullet points. Approximate length: 1000-1500 words. This assignment is not graded.

Upload on CANVAS and send to your feedback group.

### ***Advanced Draft – Deadline: 10th June, 5pm***

You then turn this into an *Advanced Draft*.

This draft may already have the structure of the Final Paper. Ideally, it already develops your ideas and arguments. This will mean that you can get the best feedback before putting your paper into final form. Approximate length: 3000+ words. This assignment is not graded.

Upload on CANVAS and send to your feedback group.

### ***Final Paper – Deadline: 23rd June, 5pm***

Your *Final Paper* should address the following points:

- What is your technology?
- What is the societal debate about your technology? Which values conflict?
- What is your preferred solution?
  
- Which ethical framework or question do you focus on?
- What is your argument for your solution?
- What is an objection to your view? Can you respond to it?

Indicative word length: 4500 words. You can write more, but make sure every word is useful in your argumentation. You can use less, but make sure you answer all questions sufficiently.

### ***Oral Exam***

During the Oral Exam, you will defend your paper. You will not get reproduction questions about theories that have been treated in class. We can ask how a certain theory adds to or challenges the solutions in your essay. You will get such questions specific to your paper ahead of the Oral Exam. More information will follow.

## **Grading**

Final Essay: 50% of final grade (*Research Ideas*, *Rough Draft* and *Advanced Draft* are not graded)

Oral Exam: 50% of final grade

# Timetable

## Week 1

Wednesday, 27th April *No meeting*

Friday, 29th April, 10.45 - 12.30pm

### **An Introduction to Ethics**

Basic

- Van de Poel & Royakkers. 2011. [Ethics, technology, and engineering: An introduction](#). → Chapter 3: “Normative Ethics”.

Further

- Blackburn. 2002. [Being Good: A short introduction to ethics](#).

## Week 2

Wednesday, 4th May, 1.30 - 3.15pm

### **An Introduction to Risk**

Basic

- Fischhoff & Kadvany. 2011. [Risk: A very short introduction](#). → Chapters 1 - 4.
- Youtube Video: [Ulrich Beck's concept of the Risk Society](#).

Further

- Slovic, Fischhoff & Lichtenstein. 1982. [Why study risk perception?](#)
- Fischhoff & Kadvany. 2011. [Risk: A very short introduction](#). → Chapters 5 - 7.

Wednesday, 4th May, 5pm

1st **DEADLINE:** Research Ideas

Friday, 6th May *No meeting*

## Week 3

Wednesday, 11th May, 1.30 - 3.15pm

### **Risk and Cost-benefit Analysis**

Basic

- Van de Poel & Royakkers. 2011. [Ethics, technology, and engineering: An introduction](#). → Chapter 6 “Ethical Questions in the Design of Technology” and Chapter 8 “Ethical Aspects of Technical Risks”.

Further

- Hansson. 2018. [How to perform an ethical risk analysis \(eRA\)](#).
- Fischhoff. 2015. [The realities of risk-cost-benefit analysis](#).
- Schmidt. 2001. [A place for cost-benefit analysis](#).
- Hansson. 2007. [Philosophical problems in cost-benefit analysis](#).

Friday, 13th May, 10.45 - 12.30pm

**Feedback Session** (feedback by peers and lecturer on your Research Ideas)

## Week 4

Wednesday, 18th May, 1.30 - 3.15pm

### What is Justice?

Basic

- Wenar. [John Rawls](#). → Section 4 “Justice as Fairness: Justice within a Liberal Society”

Further

- Rawls. 1958. [Justice as Fairness](#).
- Sandel. [Justice: What's the Right Thing to do?](#) (12 Youtube lectures).

Friday, 20th May, 10.45 - 12.30pm

### The Moral Limits of Markets

Basic

- Satz. 2010. [Why some things should not be for sale](#).
- Chapter 4 “Noxious Markets” and  
Chapter 5 “Markets in Women’s Reproductive Labor”.  
(If you cannot get hold of the book, watch [this Youtube video](#)).

Further

- Sandel. 2000. [What money can't buy: the moral limits of markets](#).

## Week 5

Wednesday, 25th May, 1.30 - 3.15pm

### The Ethics of Public Entrepreneurship

Basic

- Mazzucato. 2011. [The entrepreneurial state](#).
- Chapter 4 “The US Entrepreneurial State”.

Further

- von Schomberg. 2013. [A vision of responsible research and innovation](#).
- Mazzucato. 2018. [Mission-oriented innovation policies: challenges and opportunities](#).

Wednesday, 25th May, 5pm

2nd **DEADLINE**: Rough Draft

Friday, 27th May *No meeting*

## Week 6

Wednesday, 1st June, 1.30 - 3.15pm

**Feedback Session** (feedback by peers and lecturer on your Rough Draft)

Friday, 3rd June, 10.45 - 12.30pm

**Feedback Session** (feedback by peers and lecturer on your Rough Draft)

## Week 7

Wednesday, 8th June, 1.30 - 3.15pm

### **Autonomy and Technology**

#### Basic

- Van de Poel & Royakkers. 2011. [Ethics, technology, and engineering: An introduction](#).  
→ Chapter 7 “Designing Morality” (by Peter-Paul Verbeek).

#### Further

- Zuboff. 2019. [The age of surveillance capitalism](#).  
→ Chapter 10 “Make them Dance” and  
Chapter 11 “The Right to the Future Tense”.

Friday, 10th June, 10.45 - 12.30pm

### **How to Write**

#### Basic

- Gardiner & Kearns. 2011. [Turbocharge your writing today](#).

#### Further

- Western Sydney University. [Writing Guide](#). → Sections 1 – 3.
- Strunk & White. [Elements of Style](#).

Friday, 10th June, 5pm

3rd **DEADLINE**: Advanced Draft

## Week 8

Wednesday, 15th June, 1.30 - 3.15pm

**Feedback Session** (feedback by peers and lecturer on your Advanced Draft)

Friday, 17th June, 10.45 - 12.30pm

**Feedback Session** (feedback by peers and lecturer on your Advanced Draft)

## Week 9

Wednesday, 22nd June, 1.30 - 3.15pm

**Individual Feedback** (on request)

Thursday, 23rd June, 5pm

4th **DEADLINE**: Final Paper

Wednesday, 29th June; Thursday, 30th June & Friday, 1st July

**Oral Exams**