

Summer School Space Ethics



The Summer School in Space Ethics is designed to equip participants with the knowledge and critical thinking skills necessary to address the ethical challenges posed by humanity's increasing presence in space. The curriculum begins with an introduction to applied ethics, grounding participants in ethical theory and reasoning. This foundation will support exploration of key ethical issues in space.

Core topics covered in the course include:

- **Space Debris:** The growing accumulation of space debris poses significant risks to both space operations and the Earth's environment. Participants will explore the ethical responsibilities of governments and private companies in managing and mitigating space debris, with an emphasis on long-term sustainability.
- **Dual-Use Space Technologies:** Many space technologies have both civilian and military applications. This dual-use nature raises important ethical questions about the militarization of space. The program will engage participants in discussions on how to balance the development of space technology with international security and the peaceful use of outer space.
- **Space Settlement:** With growing interest in space colonization, ethical challenges arise regarding the settlement of other celestial bodies. Topics such as planetary protection, the rights of future generations, and the exploitation of space resources will be explored. Participants will consider the moral responsibilities humanity holds as it extends its presence beyond Earth.
- **Large constellations of Nanosatellites:** The deployment of satellite large constellations has sparked debates over their impact on space traffic management, astronomy, and the environment. The summer school will examine the ethical dimensions of these large constellations, focusing on how to balance technological advancement with the protection of space as a shared resource.

Field Trips and Cultural Immersion

Complementing the academic curriculum, participants will also have the opportunity to engage with Italy's scientific history. A highlight of the program is a field trip to the Asiago Space Observatory, a leading astronomical research facility in Italy. Here, participants will see cutting-edge space research in action and discuss its ethical implications with experts in the field.

The program also includes visits to historical sites associated with Galileo Galilei, the father of modern science. Participants will explore locations where Galileo lived and worked, including the most significant sites tied to his discoveries. These excursions will allow participants to connect the ethical discussions with the historical legacy of space science and exploration.

The Summer School in Space Ethics at the University of Padova offers a unique blend of rigorous academic study and cultural immersion. Participants will engage deeply with the ethical challenges posed by humanity's expanding role in space, while also exploring the rich scientific history of Padova. This program is ideal for students, researchers, and professionals who want to shape the future of space exploration in a thoughtful and responsible manner.

KEY INFO

Dates: 6th July 2026 – 10th July 2026

Target: Bachelor's, Master's and PhD students

Minimum number of participants: 20

Location: Padua and Asiago

ECTS: 3

Fee: 500 euros per week / 20% fee waiver for students of partner universities / 50% fee waiver for Arqus students (including UNIPD students). A maximum number of waivers might apply.

Contact: summerschool@unipd.it

Application dates: 15th November 2025 – 15th March 2026