**Moral Psychology (PHIL2550A)**

M/W 10:05-11:25

Carleton University, Winter 2023

Dr. Joshua Shepherd

**Office:** 3A61 **Office Telephone:** 1783

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays, remotely

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**Course Description**

Moral psychology is a rapidly evolving field, and covers a wide range of topics. Moral psychology involves ethics, which is the sub-field in philosophy that involves the study of the sources of value, the nature of right and wrong action, the nature of happiness and well-being, and the nature of moral character, moral judgment, and moral action. Moral psychology often emphasizes the relevance of many sciences to these topics, including evolutionary biology, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and neuroscience. Given the broadness of moral psychology, we will not be able to cover every topic. But you will get a good idea of how science is relevant to ethical inquiry, a good idea of some of the psychological structures that undergird moral cognition and moral behavior, and a close look at some recent interesting research in moral psychology. My hope is that this course raises interesting and important questions regarding who we are as human beings and moral agents, and that these questions stay with you long after the course is done.

**Course Objectives**

I have three main goals for students in this course. First, students will become familiar with central issues in moral psychology. Second, students will develop an understanding of the diversity and breadth of philosophical and scientific inquiry into these issues. Third, students will be given the chance to improve their critical reading and reasoning skills through direct engagement with course texts.

**Course Materials**

There are three main sources of content. First, the readings. These are posted on our course site. Content from the readings will appear in tests. Second, the recorded ‘lectures.’ In previous classes I posted many of these lectures, which cover course content more briefly than in-class discussions. I may do so again this year, but this will depend upon class attendance and on whether I judge that the lectures will be helpful. Material from these lectures primarily reviews what we discuss in class, and what is in the readings. Third, linked videos. These expand upon and in some cases re-present material from the readings. Content from the videos will not appear in tests (unless I discuss a video in class), but the videos will add context, greater perspective, and expand upon course issues.

We will work through the course content section by section. (See the course schedule.) It is a requirement of the course that you read the readings, and attend class.

**Additional materials:**

There are a number of useful and relatively inexpensive introductions to moral psychology. None of these are required, but if you wish to take your learning deeper, you could read any of these.

Alfano, Mark. *Moral Psychology: An Introduction*. Polity Press, 2016.

Doris, John. *The Moral Psychology Handbook*. Oxford University Press, 2012.

Nadelhoffer, Thomas, Nahmias, Eddy, and Nichols, Shaun. *Moral Psychology: Historical and Contemporary Readings.* Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

Tiberius, Valerie. *Moral Psychology: A Contemporary Introduction*. Routledge, 2015., Robert, ed. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

In addition, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, on-line, is a valuable resource (plato.stanford.edu). There are a number of useful articles relevant to our topics, which you can find by searching key terms at the site.

**Technology requirements**

In order to complete and do well in this course, you will need access to a computer, to software that allows reading of pdf files, to software that allows watching of recorded videos, and to the internet. If you wish to meet with me for office hours virtually, you will need video chat technology. I am able to chat over Zoom.

**Office Hours**

The function of office hours is to clarify concepts and answer questions that cannot be easily answered by consulting the syllabus or by sending an e-mail. I will be available to meet in person on Wednesdays after class – 11:30-12:30.

**Course Requirements and Grade policies**

*Grade Schematic*

Tests 45% each, x 2 = 90%

Final assessment 10%

*Tests*

Tests will be offered on-line at specified dates. You will have 3 hours to take the test once you begin – and the tests will be available to begin at 10 am, which is our scheduled class time. (Thus, the tests will take the place of a class meeting on those dates.) In order to cover for people who need longer to take tests, this is 2 times the amount of time I anticipate anyone needing.

The policy regarding these assessments is that you are to take them alone, and you are not to speak to anyone in or outside the class about their content. However, you may consult your notes and readings while taking the tests.

Our final assessment will be a more personal review of the course, in the form of an essay, again conducted on-line.

Our schedule will look like this:

Test 1: (covering, roughly, the first three sections): Feb. 13@10am

Test 2: (covering, roughly, the next two sections): Mar. 29@10 am

Final assessment: April 12@10 am

*Missed test policy*

In the case of a valid excuse, I will assign a make-up essay or test.

**Readings and Course Schedule**

*Weeks One-Two: Evolution, Morality, Altruism*

Readings:

E.O.Wilson, ‘Human decency is animal,’ in the *New York Times*:

<http://www.nytimes.com/1975/10/12/archives/human-decency-is-animal-hawks-and-baboons-are-not-usually-heroic.html>

Emily Esfahani Smith, ‘Is human morality a product of evolution,’ in *The Atlantic*:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2015/12/evolution-of-morality-social-humans-and-apes/418371/>

Curry et al., ‘Is it good to cooperate?’

Amia Srinivasan, ‘Genealogy, epistemology, and worldmaking’

*Weeks Three-Five: Value, Social Norms, Social Cognition*

Readings:

Scott Atran, ‘The Devoted Actor’

Tomasello, ‘The moral psychology of obligation’

Vargas, ‘The philosophy of accidentality’

Smith, ‘Dehumanization, essentialism, and moral psychology’

Johnson, ‘The structure of bias’

*Weeks Six-Seven: Moral Reasoning and Judgment*

Guy Kahane, ‘Sidetracked by Trolleys’

Joshua May, ‘Precis of Regard for Reason in the Moral Mind’

Bertram Malle, ‘Moral judgments’

*Week Eight: Empathy*

Readings:

*Boston Review* Forum on Paul Bloom’s Against Empathy:

<http://bostonreview.net/forum/paul-bloom-against-empathy>

Bloom, ‘Empathy and its discontents’

*Weeks Nine-Ten: Anger*

Readings:

*Aeon*: Martha Nussbaum, ‘There’s no emotion we ought to think harder about than anger’:

<https://aeon.co/essays/there-s-no-emotion-we-ought-to-think-harder-about-than-anger>

Martha Nussbaum, ‘Transitional Anger’

Amia Srinivasan, ‘The Aptness of Anger’

Myisha Cherry, ‘The errors and limitations of our ‘anger-evaluating’ ways’

*Weeks Eleven-Twelve: Revenge vs Forgiveness*

Readings:

SEP: Forgiveness, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/forgiveness/>

Peter French, ‘Virtuous Avengers in Commonplace Cases’

Joshua Gert, ‘Revenge is sweet’

Myisha Cherry, ‘Forgiveness, exemplars, and the oppressed’

**Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2022-23)**

**Assignments:**

Please follow your professor’s instructions on how assignments will be handled electronically. There will be NO hard copies placed in the essay box this coming year.

**Evaluation:**

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

**Deferrals for Term Work:**

If students are unable to complete term work because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control, they should contact their course instructor no later than *three working days* of the due date. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of the term. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.

**Deferrals for Final Exams:**

Students are expected to be available for the duration of a course including the examination period. Occasionally, students encounter circumstances beyond their control where they may not be able to write a final examination or submit a take-home examination. Examples of this would be a serious illness or the death of a family member. If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a take-home examination by the due date, you may apply for a deferral no later than *three working days* after the original due date (as per the University Regulations in [Section 4.3 of the Undergraduate Calendar](https://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulationsoftheuniversity/examinations/#deferred-final-exams)). Visit the [Registrar’s Office](https://carleton.ca/registrar/special-requests/) for further information.

**Plagiarism:**

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of ‘plagiarism’ as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. ([Section 10.1 of the Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations](https://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulationsoftheuniversity/academic-integrity-and-offenses-of-conduct/#academic-integrity-policy))

**Academic Accommodation:**

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term:

* *Pregnancy or religious obligation*: write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the [EDC](https://carleton.ca/edc/teachingresources/administrative-pedagogy/academic-accommodations/) website.
* *Academic accommodations for students with disabilities:* The [Paul Menton Centre](https://carleton.ca/pmc/) for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class test or exam requiring accommodation. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your professor to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.
* *Survivors of Sexual Violence*: As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per [Carleton’s Sexual Violence Policy](https://carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support/).
* *Accommodation for* [*Student Activities*](https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf)*:* Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

**Important Dates:**

Sept. 7 Classes start.

Sept. 20 Last day for registration and course changes for fall term and fall/winter (two-term) courses.

Sept. 30 Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from fall term or two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.

Oct. 10 Statutory holiday. University closed.

Oct. 24-28 Fall Break – no classes.

Nov. 25 Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, before the official examination period.

Dec. 9 Last day of fall term classes. ***Classes follow a Monday schedule***. Last day for academic withdrawal from fall term courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for term work for a fall term course.

Dec. 10-22 Final examinations for fall term courses and mid-term examinations in two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.

Dec. 22 All take-home examinations are due.

Jan. 9 Classes begin.

Jan. 20 Last day for registration and course changes in the winter term.

Jan. 31 Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter term courses or from the winter portion of two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.

Feb. 20 Statutory holiday. University closed.

Feb. 20-24 Winter Break – no classes.

Mar. 15 Last day for academic withdrawal from fall/winter and winter courses

Mar. 29 Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in winter term or fall/winter courses before the official examination period.

Apr. 7 Statutory holiday. University closed.

Apr. 12 Last day of two-term and winter term classes. ***Classes follow a Friday schedule***. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for two-term and for winter term courses.

Apr. 13-14 No classes or examinations take place.

Apr. 15-27 Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.

Apr. 27 All take-home examinations are due.

**Addresses:**

Department of Philosophy:

[www.carleton.ca/philosophy](http://www.carleton.ca/philosophy)

520-2110

Registrar’s Office:

[www.carleton.ca/registrar](http://www.carleton.ca/registrar)

520-3500

Academic Advising Centre:

[www.carleton.ca/academicadvising](http://www.carleton.ca/academicadvising)

520-7850

Writing Services:

<http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/>

520-3822

MacOdrum Library

<http://www.library.carleton.ca/>

520-2735

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