

## **Moral Psychology (PHIL2550A)**

Carleton University, Fall 2020

Dr. Joshua Shepherd

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

**Office Hours:** Thursdays, 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 quizzes and tests. Second, the recorded 'lectures.' In these lectures I cover course issues, including content from the readings. Content from the lectures will appear in quizzes and tests. Third, linked videos. These expand upon and in some cases re-present material from the readings. Content from the videos will not appear in quizzes and tests (unless I discuss a video in the lecture), but the videos will add context, greater perspective, and expand upon course issues.

We will work through the readings, lectures, and videos section by section. (See the course schedule.) In addition to recording video lectures for each section, I will record a short video that walks through the material for each section. You may find these videos redundant and useless – but you may find them helpful.

It is a requirement of the course that you read the readings, watch the lectures, and watch the videos.

### **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](http://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. Much of this course will be asynchronous, meaning that you can engage course material at times that suit you best. If you wish to meet with me for office hours, you will need video chat technology. I am able to chat over Zoom, Skype, or Facetime.

### **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. Since ‘office hours’ doesn’t make much sense when the course is delivered on-line, I will be available to talk over some internet platform (Zoom, Skype, or Facetime) every Thursday. If you wish to meet with me, send me an e-mail by Wednesday and suggest two times. I will respond and link up with you at your preferred time, unless the time is already taken, in which case we will move to the second time, or a third, etc.

### **Course Requirements and Grade policies**

#### *Grade Schematic*

Mini-tests	15% each, x 6 = 90%
Participation in the forum	10%

#### *Mini-tests*

Mini-tests are somewhere in between a quiz and a test. They will be offered on-line, and available for 24 hours. You will have 2 hours to take the mini-test once you begin. In order to cover for people who need longer to take quizzes and tests, this is 2-2.5 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 mini-tests.

We will have one mini-test per section. So our schedule will look like this:

Mini-test on Evolution and Morality: October 2 (one week late to allow late enrollers time to catch up)

Mini-test on Value, Social Norms, and Social Cognition: October 16

Mini-test on Moral Reasoning and Judgment: November 6

Mini-test on Empathy: November 13

Mini-test on Anger: November 27

Mini-test on Revenge and Forgiveness: December 11

Mini-tests will be offered on-line, over the course of a day, at our course's website on CULearn. They will cover content discussed in recent classes. There will be one quiz every Friday except for reading week.

### *Missed mini-test policy*

Missed mini-tests cannot be made up. You have all day to take them, so an internet failure late at night is no excuse. In the case of a valid excuse (e.g., a doctor's note explaining why you were unable to take a mini-test on the day it was offered), I will assign a make-up essay.

### *Forum*

I make available a forum for discussion and questions on course material. This forum is primarily for students to help each other out, although if significant confusion arises I will step in to offer advice or clarification. Posing questions or answering questions posed by others are good ways to boost one's participation grade.

## **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'  
Lectures: Taboo trade-offs; Atran

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 2020-21)

### **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](#)). Visit the [Registrar's Office](#) 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](#))

### **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](#) website.
- *Academic accommodations for students with disabilities:* The [Paul Menton Centre](#) 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](mailto: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](#).
- *Accommodation for [Student Activities](#):* 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. 9	Classes start.
Sept. 23	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. 12	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Oct. 26-30	Fall Break – no classes.
Nov. 27	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. 11	Last day of fall term classes. <b><i>Classes follow a Monday schedule.</i></b> 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. 12-23	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. 23	All take-home examinations are due.
Jan. 6	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. 15	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Feb. 15-19	Winter Break – no classes.
Mar. 26	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. 2	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Apr. 9	Last day of two-term and winter term classes. Last day for academic withdrawal from fall/winter and winter 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 two-term and for winter term courses.
Apr. 10	No classes or examinations take place.
Apr. 11-23	Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Apr. 23	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