

**PSYC GU4672: Moral Psychology**  
**Fall 2016**

PSYC GU4672: Moral Psychology (seminar, 4 points). Fall 2016.  
Tuesdays, 10:10 AM – 12:00 PM. 405 Schermerhorn  
Instructor: Larisa Heiphetz (lah2201@columbia.edu)  
Office hours: By appointment

The best way to reach me is via e-mail, and I typically reply to e-mails within 48 hours. I am happy to meet with you throughout the semester to discuss anything related to the course; please e-mail me to set up an appointment.

- I. Bulletin description
- II. A full description of the content of the course
- III. The rationale for giving the course
- IV. The reading list and weekly syllabus
- V. Course requirements

**I. Bulletin description**

Prerequisites: Two courses in psychology, including at least one course with a focus on social and/or developmental psychology, and permission of the instructor.

Review of theories and current research on moral cognition and behavior. Topics include definitions of morality, the development of moral cognition, the role that other aspects of human experience (e.g., emotion, intentions) play in moral judgments, and the relationship between moral psychology and other areas of study (e.g., religious cognition, prejudice and stereotyping, the criminal justice system).

**II. A full description of the content of the course.**

How do children learn to distinguish right from wrong? Why do some people act more morally than others, and how is it that the same person can make moral decisions in some circumstances but not others? What does it mean to be “moral”?

Questions like these have fascinated scholars and laypeople for centuries. In this seminar, we will discuss a) theories of moral cognition and b) empirical findings on morality in children and adults. The course will focus on recent research, although classic theories and findings will be discussed when appropriate. While focusing on research from psychology, we will also discuss some ideas from philosophy, criminal justice, and other related disciplines.

Students will read and discuss several articles per week and will complete a final project (a literature synthesis or research proposal). To get the most out of this class, students should be comfortable reading empirical psychology research and have some background in social and developmental psychology.

**III. The rationale for giving the course**

In addition to helping students learn about theories and empirical findings within moral psychology, this course will also improve students' written and oral communication skills. Students will write either a literature synthesis or a research summary, which can serve as the foundation for a theoretical/review paper that can be submitted for publication, as the basis for a future empirical project, and/or as the beginning of a grant proposal. Students will also participate in weekly course discussions, lead a discussion on one assigned article, and give a brief presentation of their final project.

This course is an advanced seminar designed for graduate students, for advanced undergraduate psychology majors, and for students participating in the postbac psychology program. It fulfills the following degree requirements:

- For psychology graduate students, Moral Psychology will satisfy the Social Behavior and Contexts seminar requirement of the M.A. degree or may be applied toward one of the seminar electives of the M. Phil. degree.
- For undergraduate psychology majors, Moral Psychology will meet the Group III (Social, Personality, and Abnormal) distribution requirement and the seminar requirement.
- For students in the psychology postbac program, Moral Psychology will fulfill the Group III (Social, Personality, and Abnormal) distribution requirement and the advanced seminar requirement.

#### **IV. The reading list and weekly syllabus**

##### **Week 1 [Sept. 6]: Introduction to class**

Please read this syllabus in preparation for class.

##### **Week 2 [Sept. 13]: What is morality?**

Graham, J., Nosek, B. A., Haidt, J., Iyer, R., Koleva, S., & Ditto, P. H. (2011). Mapping the moral domain. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 101*, 366-385.

Gray, K., Schein, C., & Ward, A. F. (2014). The myth of harmless wrongs in moral cognition: Automatic dyadic completion from sin to suffering. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 143*, 1600-1615.

Janoff-Bulman, R., & Carnes, N. C. (2013). Surveying the moral landscape: Moral motives and group-based moralities. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 17*, 219-236.

##### **Week 3 [Sept. 20]: Are morals facts?**

Goodwin, G. P., & Darley, J. M. (2008). The psychology of meta-ethics: Exploring objectivism. *Cognition, 106*, 1339-1366.

Nichols, S., & Folds-Bennett, T. (2003). Are children moral objectivists? Children's judgments about moral and response-dependent properties. *Cognition, 90*, B23-B32.

Rai, T. S., & Holyoak, K. J. (2013). Exposure to moral relativism compromises moral behavior. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 49*, 995-1001.

##### **Week 4 [Sept. 27]: Morality in infants**

Dunfield, K., Kuhlmeier, V. A., O'Connell, L., & Kelley, E. (2011). Examining the diversity of prosocial behavior: Helping, sharing, and comforting in infancy. *Infancy, 16*, 227-247.

Hamlin, J. K., Wynn, K., & Bloom, P. (2007). Social evaluation in preverbal infants. *Nature, 450*, 557-559.

Sloane, S., Baillargeon, R., & Premack, D. (2012). Do infants have a sense of fairness? *Psychological Science, 23*, 196-204.

Warneken, F., & Tomasello, M. (2006). Altruistic helping in human infants and young chimpanzees. *Science, 311*, 1301-1303.

### **Week 5 [Oct. 4]: Morality in children**

- Chernyak, N., & Kushnir, T. (2014). The self as a moral agent: Preschoolers behave morally but believe in the freedom to do otherwise. *Journal of Cognition and Development, 15*, 453-464.
- Shaw, A., Montinari, N., Piovesan, M., Olson, K. R., Gino, F., & Norton, M. I. (2014). Children develop a veil of fairness. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 143*, 363-375.
- Smetana, J. G. (1981). Preschool children's conceptions of moral and social rules. *Child Development, 52*, 1333-1336.

### **Week 6 [Oct. 11]: Morality and emotion**

- Greene, J. D., Sommerville, R. B., Nystrom, L. E., Darley, J. M., & Cohen, J. D. (2001). An fMRI investigation of emotional engagement in moral judgment. *Science, 293*, 2105-2108.
- Haidt, J. (2001). The emotional dog and its rational tail: A social intuitionist approach to moral judgment. *Psychological Review, 108*, 814-834.
- Inbar, Y., Pizarro, D. A., & Bloom, P. (2012). Disgusting smells cause decreased liking of gay men. *Emotion, 12*, 23-27.

### **Week 7 [Oct. 18]: Morality and intent**

- Cushman, F., Sheketoff, R., Wharton, S., & Carey, S. (2013). The development of intent-based moral judgment. *Cognition, 127*, 6-21.
- Hamlin, J. K. (2013). Failed attempts to help and harm: Intention versus outcome in preverbal infants' social evaluations. *Cognition, 128*, 451-474.
- Young, L., & Saxe, R. (2011). When ignorance is no excuse: Different roles for intent across moral domains. *Cognition, 120*, 202-214.

### **Week 8 [Oct. 25]: Moral character and identity**

- Critcher, C. R., Inbar, Y., & Pizarro, D. A. (2013). How quick decisions illuminate moral character. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 4*, 308-315.
- Heiphetz, L., Strohminger, N., & Young, L. (In press). The role of moral beliefs, memories, and preferences in representation of identity. *Cognitive Science*.
- Newman, G. E., Bloom, P., & Knobe, J. (2013). Value judgments and the true self. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 40*, 203-216.

### **Week 9 [Nov. 1]: Morality and religion**

**Note: Outlines for final projects are due in hard copy at the beginning of class today.**

- Heiphetz, L., Spelke, E. S., & Banaji, M. R. (2014). The formation of belief-based social preferences. *Social Cognition, 32*, 22-47.
- Johnson, M. K., Rowatt, W. C., & LaBouff, J. (2010). Priming Christian religious concepts increases racial prejudice. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 1*, 119-126.
- Shariff, A. F., & Norenzayan, A. (2007). God is watching you: Priming God concepts increases prosocial behavior in an anonymous economic game. *Psychological Science, 18*, 803-809.

## **Nov. 8: Election Day -- University Holiday**

### **Week 10 [Nov. 15]: Morality and intergroup attitudes**

- Branscombe, N. R., Warner, R. H., Klar, Y., & Fernandez, S. (2015). Historical group victimization entails moral obligations for descendants. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 59*, 118-129.
- Effron, D. A., Miller, D. T., & Monin, B. (2012). Inventing racist roads not taken: The licensing effect of immoral counterfactual behaviors. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 103*, 916-932.
- Harris, L. T., & Fiske, S. T. (2006). Dehumanizing the lowest of the low: Neuroimaging responses to extreme out-groups. *Psychological Science, 17*, 847-853.

### **Week 11 [Nov. 22]: Morality and the criminal justice system**

- Alexander, M. (2012). The color of justice. In M. Alexander, *The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness* (pp. 97-139). New York, NY: The New Press.
- Nagel, T. (1979). Moral luck. Reprinted in R. Shafer-Landau (Ed.), *Ethical theory: An anthology* (pp. 322-329). West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Nichols, S., & Knobe, J. (2007). Moral responsibility and determinism: The cognitive science of folk intuitions. *Nous, 41*, 663-685.

### **Week 12 [Nov. 29]: Bringing it all together: Morality in philosophy and psychology (These articles are not eligible for presentations!)**

**Note: Final projects are due today, via e-mail before the beginning of class and in hard copy at the beginning of class.**

- Cushman, F., & Young, L. (2009). The psychology of dilemmas and the philosophy of morality. *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice, 12*, 9-24.
- Kauppinen, A. (2007). The rise and fall of experimental philosophy. *Philosophical Explorations, 10*, 95-118.
- Prinz, J. J. (2010). Empirical philosophy and experimental philosophy. In J. Knobe & S. Nichols (Eds.), *Experimental philosophy* (pp. 189-208). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

### **Week 13 [Dec. 6]: Discussion of students' final projects**

#### **V. Course requirements**

Grades will be determined as follows:

- Attendance/participation (10%)
- Weekly discussion comments (20%)
- Presentation (20%)
- Final project (outline: 15%; paper: 35%)

#### Attendance/participation (10%)

Attendance at each class is mandatory. Because life sometimes throws everyone curveballs, each student is permitted one absence to use in whatever way he/she deems best. Each subsequent absence will result in losing participation points for each class missed (see below for more on participation points). Medical

and family emergencies are excusable with appropriate documentation. In such instances, with my permission, you may write a 3-page paper on a topic of my choice to receive participation credit for that week.

Please arrive in class on time. This is for your own benefit as well as that of the other students, since it can be disruptive for students to arrive during class discussion. If you arrive late, your participation grade will be cut by 50% for that day.

In addition to coming to class, it's important to participate positively (and do other things that alliterate). Positive participation requires a balance between speaking and listening to your classmates. Please speak up if you have a question or thought to share, and please listen to your classmates' ideas and engage with them constructively. It is perfectly acceptable for you to disagree with someone else's comments—in fact, disagreement can make for lively and thought-provoking discussion! Please phrase your disagreements respectfully. If you feel nervous or hesitant about speaking in class for any reason, I'd be happy to discuss your situation with you.

Each week, participation is graded in the following way: 2 points = you were present in class and participated positively; 1 point = you were present but didn't participate positively and/or arrived late; 0 points = you weren't present and you already used your "get out of class free" card (i.e., your one allowed absence).

#### *Weekly discussion comments (20%)*

Each week, you are required to turn in a set of discussion comments on that week's reading. Please e-mail me your comments 24 hours before the beginning of each class. Comments should be included as a .doc or .docx attachment. You are responsible for making sure that you are attaching a) the correct file and b) an uncorrupted file. I will grade the file I have in front of me at the deadline, even if that file is corrupt or contains comments for the wrong set of readings. Files should be named in the following format: YourLastName\_WeekNumber\_DiscussionComments (e.g., Heiphetz\_Week2\_DiscussionComments). Please also type your name at the top of the Word document. Late discussion comments will not be accepted.

For each reading, please include a comment that is about 2-3 sentences long. You do not need to integrate the comments for each article into one cohesive essay; instead, many students find it easiest to include one bullet point or short paragraph per article. **Comments should not summarize the article!** Instead, they should discuss your thoughts about the readings. Some ideas for what you may wish to address in your comments include the following:

- An interesting connection between two or more of the readings. This could involve synthesizing two seemingly disparate areas or highlighting a contradiction between two sets of findings.
- Possible extensions or applications of findings, including interesting policy implications that were not addressed in the paper.
- Comments about a particularly clever, apt, or unusual experimental design and why it affords a unique ability to learn something about the question of interest.
- Reasons why the authors' conclusions do not follow from their results, alternative explanations for their findings, methodological flaws, and other criticisms. Be civil in your critique, and make a good-faith attempt to understand the authors' reasoning. Also, note that authors typically address potential criticisms at the end of an article, often to the reader's satisfaction...so you might want to make sure you get that far. Additionally, **you may not use your comment to offer criticisms that could be made of the vast majority of psychological studies (the sample size is less than a hundred gazillion, the sample was not nationally representative, etc.)**. Comments

that offer these types of criticisms will not receive credit. Instead, if you wish to offer a criticism, focus on something unique to the paper you are criticizing.

- A proposal for a study that could be conducted to clarify the nature of a finding or address an unresolved issue.

Remember: although it is important to maintain a critical eye when reading scientific papers, some of the best discussion comments will be insightfully positive in nature. Weekly comments will receive grades of  $\sqrt{-}$ ,  $\sqrt{}$ , or  $\sqrt{+}$ . Don't be discouraged if you're not getting  $\sqrt{+}$ s right away—this is a learning experience, and there's always room for improvement. **If you submit all required discussion comments (i.e., for every week other than the first week and the last week), I will drop your lowest discussion comment grade.**

### Presentation (20%)

During one class period, you will give a short (10-15 minutes) presentation on one of the assigned readings. You should begin your presentation with a brief (2-3 sentences) summary of the article. Assume that your classmates have read the article and just need to have their memories jogged. Please spend the rest of your presentation supporting and/or critiquing the article.

If you decide to support the article, explain why you think the article is the bee's knees. Why are the findings important? What in particular about the study design was so wonderful? You must include your own ideas rather than just providing a summary of the authors' arguments about the importance of their topic and/or the amazingness of their studies. You must also explain how the paper could be critiqued and offer a rebuttal to those critiques.

If you decide to critique the article, explain what problem(s) you see in the paper and how these issues could be fixed. For example, could follow-up studies provide a solution? If so, what would those studies look like? You must discuss one or more substantial issue(s) that are specific to this paper and that could not be generalized to most psychology articles (same rule as for discussion comments). If the authors attempted to address your concern, why are their attempts unsatisfactory to you?

You may also decide to give your article a mixed review, supporting some aspects and critiquing other aspects.

Since your presentation is so short, you do not need to cover all aspects of the article. Instead, focus on the 1-2 best and/or worst features of the paper. After your presentation, the rest of the class will discuss the article (using your comments as a springboard). You may use your notes during your presentation, but as a general rule, do not bring slides, videos, or anything else that requires technology. Talk with me at least one week prior to your presentation if you would like to request an exception to this general rule.

Please e-mail me by **Wednesday, September 7, at 5:00 p.m.** with a list of your top 5 preferred articles (1=the article you would most like to discuss). You may choose any articles in Weeks 2-11, but note that **the articles from Week 12 (“bringing it all together”) are not eligible.** I will e-mail you before the next class to confirm your article. To make sure that presentations are spread relatively equally across articles and weeks, I may not be able to assign you your first choice, but I guarantee that you will be assigned one of your top 5 choices. If I haven't received your preferences by the deadline, I will assign you an article that no one else has selected.

### Final project (outline: 15%; paper: 35%)

Formatting requirements for final paper: 15 pages, one-inch margins, Times New Roman font, double-spaced. Please include a cover page with your name and the title of your paper. Cover page and references do not count toward the 15 page requirement. An abstract is not required.

For your final project, you may choose one of the following formats:

- *Research proposal.* Describe a phenomenon related to morality that has not previously been studied or that would benefit from additional research. Review relevant literature, design an experiment or experiments to test your ideas, predict results, and discuss the implications of the proposed research. If your proposal has great merit, it could provide the groundwork for your future empirical work (e.g., for a senior thesis or dissertation). If you choose this option, you will be using *new data* (that have not yet been collected) to make a novel argument.
- *Literature synthesis.* Identify two distinct literatures that you think could be fruitfully integrated. Review each area, describe how they could be combined and discuss the insights afforded by such a melding. Your paper should focus on something new that we can learn about morality, but one of the literatures you choose could be in another domain. For example, you could integrate literature on moral development with literature on some other aspect of development to show how development in some other domain might influence moral development. If you choose to write a literature synthesis, you will be using *previously published data* to make a new argument. Although this sometimes seems like an easier option, keep in mind that you will be constrained by what other people have chosen to study; you must use data that are already available to support an argument that is not currently made in either literature.

When creating your outline, please include the following information at the top: a) your name; b) whether your paper will be a research proposal or literature synthesis; and c) a tentative title for your paper. Then, please list the titles of each section you anticipate including in your paper. For a research proposal, this could be Introduction, Participants, Procedure, Expected Results, Discussion, Conclusions. For a literature synthesis, the headings would be more tied to your particular topic. For example, if you wanted to synthesize literature on moral development with literature on the development of theory of mind, your headings might be Introduction, Moral Development, Development of Theory of Mind, Insights on Moral Development from Work on Theory of Mind, Conclusions. (There is already a lot of literature integrating these literatures, so do not write your paper on moral cognition and theory of mind.)

Under each heading, write a brief summary of what you expect to discuss in that section. Please be specific – e.g., if you are writing a research proposal, your sentences should give me a sense of the study/studies that you will be proposing. Sections that will reference prior literature (e.g., the Introduction in research proposal; the two sections describing each separate research literature in the literature synthesis) should include references to at least two specific papers you are planning to cite in your paper and an explanation of how you will use that paper (e.g., “I plan to discuss Hamlin, Wynn, and Bloom, 2007, to highlight the role of moral cognition in infants’ social judgments”). **You may use articles that we have read for class, but you must also include at least two peer reviewed empirical psychology articles that are not on the syllabus.** It is okay if some of your ideas change between the time you submit your outline and the time you write your final paper; the purpose of the outline is for me to get a sense of how you plan to approach your paper and for you to get feedback on your ideas before spending a lot of time and energy on the final paper.

#### **OUTLINES ARE DUE IN HARD COPY AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS ON NOVEMBER 1.**

Late outlines may be e-mailed to me as a .doc or .docx attachment; however, they will be penalized one letter grade for every 24 hour late or portion thereof (e.g., if you were going to get an A and you turn the outline in 15 hours late you will get a B, 36 hours late and you will get a C, etc.). Turning in the outline late may also delay my feedback and prevent you from getting timely comments on your ideas. Talk to me if an emergency prevents you from turning in the outline on time.

#### **FINAL PAPERS ARE DUE ON NOVEMBER 29. PLEASE BRING A HARD COPY TO CLASS WITH YOU AND ALSO E-MAIL ME A .DOC OR .DOCX ATTACHMENT BEFORE THE**

**BEGINNING OF CLASS THAT DAY.** The same late penalty in use for outlines applies to papers; the first 24 hour late period will begin on November 29 at 10:10 AM. Again, please talk to me if an emergency occurs.

I get lonely sitting in my office by myself and would love to meet with you at any point in the semester to discuss the outline and/or final paper. Please just e-mail me to set up an appointment.

***Plagiarism and academic integrity.***

***Plagiarism*** (v.) is the act of taking undeserved or unwarranted credit for something.

***Plagiarism*** (n.) is something represented in a plagiaristic fashion.

*Severe plagiarism* (a.k.a. “copying”) is the most overt and deceptive form of plagiarism. This involves deliberately misrepresenting all or part of another person’s work as one’s own. For example, a student might turn in a paper written by another student in a previous term. Another common example is writing containing chunks of “copy-and-paste” from published articles or online sources such as Wikipedia.

*Irresponsible plagiarism* (a.k.a. “omission”) is the act of paraphrasing or quoting from a source, without giving proper credit to the source. The author does not necessarily explicitly take credit for the idea or materials (but this is nevertheless implied).

*Self-plagiarism* (a.k.a. “recycling”) is the act of representing one’s own previous ideas or materials as new and original. For example, a student might turn in all or part of the same paper for more than one course. This may not seem as bad as stealing another person’s work, but it is *deceptive*, and therefore unacceptable.

***Should I Plagiarize?***

No. You will be caught, and then you will be sad. Assignments that show evidence of academic dishonesty will receive a zero, and any student who submits such an assignment may be referred to the Office of Judicial Affairs and Community Standards.

For more information about academic integrity at Columbia, please see the following sources:

<https://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/integrity-statement>

<https://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/integrity>

*Thanks for reading this far! I am very much looking forward to getting to know you and learning about morality together.*