Course Syllabus

PSYXXX: Moral Psychology (CRN: XXXXX)

Term, meeting days and times, location of course

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Course description. From the dawn of civilization, philosophers have debated how we ought to behave. More recently, scientists have begun to systematically test how people think they ought to behave, and how they actually behave. Moral psychology is the scientific study of how everyday people determine right from wrong, judge each other as good or bad, punish others for wrongdoing, sacrifice their lives for a stranger, develop their moral convictions throughout their lifespan, and maintain that they are good even as they fail to live up to their own moral standards. In this course, we will explore questions like:

- How do we come to the conclusion that a behavior is *wrong*?
- How do we determine if the stranger we just met is a good or bad person?
- Why do different groups of people come to different conclusions about what is right?
- Why are people willing to sacrifice their time, money, effort, and sometimes even their lives, to help people they have never met, or might not meet again?
- How do we lie, cheat, steal, and hurt others with a clear conscience?

This course is an introduction into moral psychology and therefore assignments do not presume prior knowledge, although prior experience reading psychology research is highly recommended. This course draws heavily from social psychology research, as most topics covered pertain to morality within social contexts, e.g., thinking about, reacting to, and judging the behavior and character of others. However, the course is interdisciplinary in nature, drawing from research in philosophy, behavioral economics, cognitive psychology, developmental psychology, neuroscience, biology, and other social science fields.

Learning objectives. In this course, you will be developing important skills that are transferable outside of the classroom, like introspection, critical thinking, writing, and speaking. You will be developing skills in consuming and evaluating psychology research, collaborating with peers, and communicating scientific research. Additionally, on completion of this course, you will be able to describe and identify important theories and research findings in moral psychology, read novel research in moral psychology from academic journals, and apply moral psychology theory and research findings to novel situations.

Estimated Student Workload. When you complete this course, you will earn 4 credits toward your degree. Four credits is equivalent to 120 hours of work across the term, or 12 hours per week for 10 weeks. You will spend 3 hours in class per week, and the remaining 90 hours will be split evenly between readings, homework assignments, and studying for and taking quizzes and exams.

Required readings. There is no assigned textbook for this course. All readings will be posted on Canvas at the beginning of the course. Readings should be completed before the class date indicated on the schedule.

Grading. Your course grade will be determined by the following assignments:

Midterm exam	100 points
Final paper	100 points
Homework (5 total; 20 points each)	100 points
Quiz 1	20 points
Quiz 2	20 points
Quiz 3	40 points
Participation	20 points

= 400 points

Midterm. There is one, in-person exam for this course, a midterm exam, which is scheduled on *the second day of the sixth week* of the course. The exam will consist of 5 matching, 5 fill-in-the-blank, 30 multiple choice, and 4 short answer questions. You will have the entire class period to complete the exam. You can bring one 8x10 piece of paper of notes to the exam. A study guide will be posted one week prior to the exam, which will help you focus your studying.

Term paper. Your term paper will be due during *finals week*. The recommended page count is 4-6 pages double spaced. You will choose a research question, read relevant research on the topic, and discuss how the research findings answer or fail to answer the research question. You will be working on your term paper slowly throughout the course as homework assignments.

Quizzes. There will be three quizzes throughout the course, each due on Canvas at *11:59pm on Sunday the week the quiz is assigned*. Quiz 1 (end of week 2) will contain material from weeks 1-2, quiz 2 (end of week 5) will contain material from weeks 3-5, and quiz 3 (end of week 10) will contain material from weeks 7-10. The quizzes will test comprehension for reading and lecture material. Since the content is somewhat cumulative, it is important that you keep up with the readings and lectures, and these quizzes are to help keep you accountable. You may use readings, notes, the internet, etc., to succeed on the quiz (but you cannot use another person). The quizzes will be timed. Quiz 1 and 2 will have 10 multiple choice questions (20 minutes, or 2 minutes per question) and quiz 3 will have 20 multiple choice questions (40 minutes, or 2 minutes per question.

Homework. There are five structured homework assignments throughout the course, each due on Canvas at *11:59pm on Sunday the week the homework is assigned*. The assignments are designed to dive deeper into and sometimes extend what we are learning in class. Three out of the five homework assignments will guide you through choosing a research topic from your term paper, writing a draft of your term paper, and reviewing the term paper of a peer.

Participation. Showing up to class, turning in your assignments on time, and actively participating in group and class discussion is incredibly important to succeed in this course, so participation has been given a part of your grade to reflect its importance. Please let me know (via e-mail so that I have a record of it) if you need to miss a class.

The following grid provides the letter grade associated with each percent:

A 93-100%	B 83-86.99%	C 73-76.99%	D 63-66.99%
A- 90-92.99%	B- 80-82.99%	C- 70-72.99%	D- 60-62.99%
B+ 87-89.99%	C+ 77-79.99%	D+ 67-69.99%	F 59.99% or below

Note: Grade cutoffs are set so that there is no "rounding up," although I will round up students who are very close to a grade interval who have exceeded expectations in class discussions or on an assignment. I may assign an "A+" if a student demonstrates exemplary understanding of the material (on assignments and in class discussions).

Late assignment policy. Please reach out to me in advance to a deadline if you need an extension on an assignment, including a timeframe of when you think you can finish the assignment by. I will not ask for a reason or a doctor's note. My standard late penalty is 10% off of the assignment per day, but I will have a conversation with you before that is enforced so that you are not penalized for getting sick or having other out of the ordinary circumstances happen to you.

Special Accommodations. The University of Oregon works to create inclusive learning environments. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation, please notify me as soon as possible. If you have a documented disability, please request that a counselor at the Accessible Education Center (uoaec@uoregon.edu, 541-346-1155) send a letter verifying the type of accommodation that is appropriate. For a list of resources provided by the Accessible Education Center, please see http://aec.uoregon.edu.

Cheating/plagiarism. Any form of academic dishonesty, including getting outside help on assessments and plagiarizing of any kind are not productive to your learning and therefore will not be tolerated in this class. I will follow the procedure to handle misconduct as outlined by the University. This means that instances of suspected cheating or plagiarizing will be reported to the University, and at the very least, you will receive a zero on the assignment. Please familiarize yourself with the University of Oregon's conduct code, found at http://conduct.uoregon.edu. You are responsible for behaving in accordance with this policy and continued enrollment in this class will be considered implicit agreement that you have read and accepted the terms of that policy. If you have questions about what is considered academic dishonesty for this course, please reach out and ask.

Email policy. If you email me, I will get back to you within 24 hours, or 48 hours at the latest. If I do not respond to your email within 24 hours, please resend it because I may have not received it. I recommend attending my office hours (or making an appointment with me) if you have multiple questions, or you would like to brainstorm with me about an assignment, or you would like to go over a past quiz/exam.

Diversity and classroom climate. While studying moral psychology, we are bound to hear from others who do not agree with our moral values. I do not expect to agree with you on everything, and I do not expect you to agree with your classmates on everything. We are a group with diverse backgrounds and experiences. We must therefore make it a priority that everyone in this class (students and instructor) have the opportunity to offer opinions, hear one another's opinions, and make arguments and challenge ideas. This is only possible when we respect each other. Here are a few ground rules that I propose that we follow, and I am open to discussing more:

    (1) Criticize ideas and not people. Instead of "you are wrong and dumb for thinking that," you want to say "let's talk about that – I don't think that theory is supported by the research."

(2) Avoid making assumptions about others. Without complete information about other people, we try to fill in the missing information but fall short. When we sit back and listen, we learn things we could not expect.
(3) Allow others to make mistakes and learn from them. Learn from each other's mistakes. We don't always say what we mean, and we are all learning and growing in this class.
(4) Keep an open mind - don't assume your beliefs are fully formed and that you can't learn from others.
(5) Treat others with respect, even when you disagree. Always treat others how you would like to be treated.

That being said, if you do not feel comfortable participating in a class discussion or believe there is more I could be doing to promote a more effective learning environment, I urge you to come talk to me. I will always listen to your concerns with respect and an open mind and will make adjustments when appropriate.

Weekly Schedule

Week	Topic	Readings	Due
1 defining and measuring morality	Introduction to moral psychology	Syllabus	HW1 due Sunday at 11:59pm
	Defining and measuring morality	Graham et al. (2013); Janoff-Bulman & Carnes (2013)	
2 evolution and development	Evolution of morality	de Waal (2013); Brosnan & de Waal (2014)	QUIZ1 due Sunday at 11:59pm
	Moral development	Kohlberg (1968); Bloom (2010)	
3 moral reasoning	Conscious moral reasoning	Greene et al. (2009); Cushman, Young, & Hauser (2006)	HW2 due Sunday at 11:59pm
	Intuitionism	Haidt (2001); Uhlmann et al. (2009)	
4 character judgment and attribution	Character judgment	Helzer & Critcher (2018); Uhlmann, Zhu, & Tannenbaum (2013)	HW3 due Sunday at 11:59pm
	Attribution of blame and praise	Alicke (2000); Anderson, Crockett, & Pizarro (2020)	
5 moral behavior	Social dilemma games	Dunning et al. (2014); Fehr & Gachter (2002)	QUIZ2 due Sunday at 11:59pm
	Altruism and reputation	Vonasch et al. (2018); Dana, Cain, & Dawes (2006)	
6 unethical behavior	Determinants of dishonesty	Markowitz & Levine (2021); Gino, Ayal, & Ariely (2009)	
	MIDTERM		
7 the moral self	Moral identity	Strohminger & Nichols (2014); Aquino & Reed (2002)	
	Self-concept maintenance	Shalvi et al. (2015); Bandura et al. (1999)	
8 moral emotions	Condemning and praising emotions	Haidt (2003); Lai, Haidt, & Nosek (2014)	HW4 due Sunday at 11:59pm
	Self-conscious and other-suffering emotions	Inbar et al. (2013); Bloom (2013)	
9 religious and otherwise moral convictions	Moral convictions and sacred values	Cazzell & Skitka (2020); Tetlock (2003)	HW5 due Sunday at 11:59pm
	Morality and religion	Brown-Iannuzzi, McKee, & Gervais (2018); Shariff & Norenzayan (2007)	
10 morality and politics	Morality of liberals and conservatives	Graham, Haidt, & Nosek (2009); Waytz et al. (2019)	QUIZ3 due Sunday at 11:59pm
	Political polarization, moral understanding, and moral persuasion	Feinberg & Willer (2019); Schein & Gray (2015)	
11 finals week	Term paper		TBD

Readings

Alicke, M. D. (2000). Culpable control and the psychology of blame. *Psychological bulletin*, 126(4), 556.

Anderson, R. A., Crockett, M. J., & Pizarro, D. A. (2020). A theory of moral praise. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*.

Aquino, K., & Reed II, A. (2002). The self-importance of moral identity. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 83*(6), 1423.

Bandura, A. (1999). Moral disengagement in the perpetration of inhumanities. *Personality and social psychology review, 3*(3), 193-209.

Bloom, P. (2010). The moral life of babies. *New York Times Magazine*.

Bloom, P. (2013). The baby in the well: the case against empathy. *New Yorker*.

Brosnan, S. F., & de Waal, F. B. (2014). Evolution of responses to (un) fairness. *Science*, 346(6207).

Brown-Iannuzzi, J. L., McKee, S., & Gervais, W. M. (2018). Atheist horns and religious halos: Mental representations of atheists and theists. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 147*(2), 292.

Cushman, F., Young, L., & Hauser, M. (2006). The role of conscious reasoning and intuition in moral judgment: Testing three principles of harm. *Psychological science*, 17(12), 1082-1089.

de Waal, V. (2011, November). Moral behavior in animals [Video]. TED Conferences. https://www.ted.com/talks/frans_de_waal_moral_behavior_in_animals?language=en

Dana, J., Cain, D. M., & Dawes, R. M. (2006). What you don't know won't hurt me: Costly (but quiet) exit in dictator games. *Organizational Behavior and human decision Processes*, 100(2), 193-201.

Dunning, D., Anderson, J. E., Schlösser, T., Ehlebracht, D., & Fetchenhauer, D. (2014). Trust at zero acquaintance: More a matter of respect than expectation of reward. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 107(1), 122.

Fehr, E., & Gächter, S. (2002). Altruistic punishment in humans. *Nature*, 415(6868), 137-140.

Feinberg, M., & Willer, R. (2019). Moral reframing: A technique for effective and persuasive communication across political divides. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 13*(12), e12501.

Gino, F., Ayal, S., & Ariely, D. (2009). Contagion and differentiation in unethical behavior: The effect of one bad apple on the barrel. *Psychological science, 20*(3), 393-398.

Graham, J., Haidt, J., & Nosek, B. A. (2009). Liberals and conservatives rely on different sets of moral foundations. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 96*(5), 1029.

Graham, J., Haidt, J., Koleva, S., Motyl, M., Iyer, R., Wojcik, S. P., & Ditto, P. H. (2013). Moral foundations theory: The pragmatic validity of moral pluralism. In *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 47, pp. 55-130). Academic Press.

Greene, J. D., Cushman, F. A., Stewart, L. E., Lowenberg, K., Nystrom, L. E., & Cohen, J. D. (2009). Pushing moral buttons: The interaction between personal force and intention in moral judgment. *Cognition*, 111(3), 364-371.

Haidt, J. (2001). The emotional dog and its rational tail: a social intuitionist approach to moral judgment. *Psychological review*, 108(4), 814.

Haidt, J. (2003). The moral emotions. In R. J. Davidson, K. R. Scherer, & H. H. Goldsmith (Eds.) *Handbook of affective sciences* (pp. 852-870). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Helzer, E. G., & Critcher, C. R. (2018). What do we evaluate when we evaluate moral character? *Atlas of moral psychology*, 99-107.

Inbar, Y., Pizarro, D. A., Gilovich, T., & Ariely, D. (2013). Moral masochism: On the connection between guilt and self-punishment. *Emotion, 13*(1), 14.

Janoff-Bulman, R., & Carnes, N. C. (2013). Surveying the moral landscape: Moral motives and group-based moralities. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *17*(3), 219-236.

Cazzell, A. (Host). (2020, April 28). The Stubbornness of Convictions with Linda Skitka [Audio podcast episode]. https://www.ambercazzell.com/post/msp-ep33-lindaskitka

Kohlberg, L. (1968). The child as a moral philosopher. *Psychology today*, 25-30.

Lai, C. K., Haidt, J., & Nosek, B. A. (2014). Moral elevation reduces prejudice against gay men. *Cognition & emotion, 28*(5), 781-794.

Markowitz, D. M., & Levine, T. R. (2020). It's the Situation and Your Disposition: A Test of Two Honesty Hypotheses. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 1948550619898976.

Schein, C., & Gray, K. (2015). The unifying moral dyad: Liberals and conservatives share the same harm-based moral template. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 41*(8), 1147-1163.

Shalvi, S., Gino, F., Barkan, R., & Ayal, S. (2015). Self-serving justifications: Doing wrong and feeling moral. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 24*(2), 125-130.

Strohminger, N., & Nichols, S. (2014). The essential moral self. *Cognition*, *131*(1), 159-171.

Tetlock, P. E. (2003). Thinking the unthinkable: Sacred values and taboo cognitions. *Trends in cognitive sciences*, 7(7), 320-324.

Uhlmann, E. L., Pizarro, D. A., Tannenbaum, D., & Ditto, P. H. (2009). The motivated use of moral principles. *Judgment and Decision making, 4*(6), 479-491.

Uhlmann, E. L., Zhu, L. L., & Tannenbaum, D. (2013). When it takes a bad person to do the right thing. *Cognition*, 126(2), 326-334.

Vonasch, A. J., Reynolds, T., Winegard, B. M., & Baumeister, R. F. (2018). Death before dishonor: Incurring costs to protect moral reputation. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 9(5), 604-613.

Waytz, A., Iyer, R., Young, L., Haidt, J., & Graham, J. (2019). Ideological differences in the expanse of the moral circle. *Nature communications, 10*(1), 1-12.