

Phil 137: Moral Psychology

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Office Hours: Weds 2-4

Location: HSS 1128A
Office: HSS 8073

Course Description:

This course will examine a number of fundamental issues in moral psychology. As you will learn, moral psychology isn't really about ethics per se (the theory of what is morally correct). It's also not a field within psychology. It's not a science at all. Instead, moral psychology is a distinctive, interdisciplinary field that is concerned with the central *normative* issue of how our practices ought to be governed given the known facts about the kind of creatures we are. In other words, it's about how our actual nature as psychological agents intersects with our normative concerns, values, and practices. We will examine a series of topics over the quarter, often looking to what our currently best science tells us about ourselves to help guide us.

Required Texts:

All readings will be made available through the course TritonEd site.

Course Mechanics:

TritonEd: *All* handouts, slides, homework assignments, study guides, and readings will be made available through this site. It is your responsibility to check this site regularly.

Lectures and discussion: I (most) often use slides in class. The slides will be used to focus discussion and organize complex material; *they are not a substitute for the readings*. The slides will be made available on TritonEd a few days after lecture. Students are expected to take careful notes and will be held responsible for the material discussed in class not found on the slides or in the readings. There is no separate time devoted to discussion; please (politely) interrupt at any time with comments or questions.

Reading Assignments: Students are expected to read each selection prior to class (preferably more than once). You should take notes while reading, keeping track of questions or issues that arise. You will be required to write one detailed question on one of the readings each week and submit it to the class blog on TritonEd.

Grading:

This course will involve writing three short essays, one of which will count as your final exam, due on the day and time of your officially assigned exam. Participation can make a difference in borderline cases when assigning final grades.

Assignments	Value	Due Date
Essay 1	30%	Fri, Oct 26th
Essay 2	30%	Fri, Nov 30th
Essay 3	30%	Dec 10th, 2:30pm

Learning Goals

1. Be able to fully understand philosophical arguments and positions
2. Be able to critically assess the importance and relevance of empirical studies on normative claims
3. Be able to state a clear, original thesis and defend it with argument and evidence
4. Become familiar with notions of moral responsibility and mitigation, freedom of the will, the self, emotions, and the basics of rationality.

Course Policies:

To avoid penalties for late assignments, students must provide official documentation explaining why the assignment could not be handed in on time. Late homework without documentation will not be accepted. Late papers without documentation will receive a late penalty of 1/3 letter grade for each day a paper is late, including weekend days (no exceptions).

Electronics Policy: To be discussed in class.

Turnitin: Students agree that by taking this course all required papers will be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism (via the TritonEd interface). All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site.

Academic Integrity: You will be held accountable for high standards of academic integrity. Violations will be handed over to AIO for investigation and will result in a course grade of F.

Tentative Reading Schedule (subject to change):

Part 1: Free Will and Moral Responsibility

- **Week 0**

Fri 28th: Course Introduction

Part 1: Moral Responsibility and the Will

- **Week 1: The landscape of Moral Responsibility**

Mon 1st: Frankfurt “Freedom of the will and the concept of a person”

Weds 3rd: Nelkin, “Accountability and Desert”

Fri 5th: Nelkin, continued

- **Week 2: Brains and Freedom of the Will**

Mon 8th: Wegner, “Precis of *The Illusion of Conscious Will*”

Weds 10th: Wegner, continued

Fri 12th: BBS Replies to Wegner (read any 5)

Part 2: Persons and Selves

- **Week 3: What is the Self?**

Mon 15th: William James, “Selections from Principles of Psychology”

Weds 17th: James Continued

Fri 19th: Dennett, “Where am I?”

- **Week 4: Narrative Selves**

Mon 22nd: Schechtman, Personhood and Personal Identity

Tues 24th: Continued

Fri 26th: Schechtman, “Narrative Selves”

Part 3: Situational Influences on Behavior

- **Week 5: The situation made me do it**

Mon 29th: Doris, “Persons, Situations, and Virtue Ethics”

Weds 31st: Nelkin, “Freedom, Responsibility and the Challenge of Situationism”

Fri 2nd: Situations, Continued

Part 5: Moral Perception

- **Week 6: Seeing Values**

Mon 5th: McGrath, "Moral knowledge by Perception"

Weds 7th: Cullison, "Moral Perception"

Fri 9th: Continued

Part 6: Lying and Self-Deception

- **Week 7: The first lie was to yourself**

Mon 12th: NO CLASS VETERANS DAY

Weds 14: von Hippel and Trivers, "The evolution and psychology of self-deception"

Fri 16: von Hippel and Trivers continued

Part 7: Emotions

- **Week 8: James-Lange Theories of emotion**

Mon 19: William James, "What is an Emotion?"

Weds 21: James, Continued

Fri 23: No Class THANKSGIVING

- **Week 9: Constructivist emotions**

Mon 26th: Barrett, "Are emotions Natural kinds?"

Weds 28th: Barrett, Continued

Fri 30th: Tappolet, "Emotion, motivation and action: The case of fear"

Part 8: Rationality and Science

- **Week 10: Better decisions through science**

Mon 3rd: Bishop and Trout, The Pathologies of SAE

Weds 5th: Bishop and Trout, Continued

Fri 7th: Bishop, "Fast and Frugal Heuristics"