

Moral Intuitions and Moral Reasoning
PHIL 605B
Fall 2012

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Course Description:

This course will consider the implications of recent empirical work in moral psychology (including neuroscientific moral psychology), which shows a role for both of two cognitive processes in moral decision-making: an automatic intuitive process, and a conscious reasoning process. Questions include: Should the judgments arising from both of these processes count as moral? What happens (and what should happen) when the judgments conflict? What role do emotions play in morality? How well does the methodology of (wide) reflective equilibrium identify what the relationship should be between moral judgments and general moral principles (and moral theories)? What do we mean when we call a judgment or a practice *moral*? What is the relationship between a descriptive account of moral decision-making and prescriptive or normative claims (i.e. can one move from an “is” to an “ought,” and if so, how)? If some of the faculties that allow humans to act morally are shared with other social species, can they, too, be said to practice a form of morality? Does empirical work on how moralities are constructed point toward moral relativism?

Course Objectives:

- To familiarize students with some contemporary work in philosophical ethics and some contemporary interdisciplinary work in moral psychology.
- To have students reflect on historical/canonical work in ethics, in light of recent empirical work in moral psychology.
- To have students develop their own original, critical thinking about the covered topics.
- To have students learn and practice philosophical skills as part of their training to become professional philosophers; these skills include understanding difficult texts; analyzing, constructing, and responding critically to arguments; engaging in conceptual thinking; developing, articulating, and defending their own positions both verbally and in writing; thinking in complex and original, but still disciplined, ways.
- To advance students in their ability to write papers that will be accepted for philosophical conferences and/or publication. Students in this course will get practice in writing either a conference-length or a publication-length paper.

Texts:

There are only two books to buy:

Frans de Waal (ed. Stephen Macedo and Josiah Ober), *Primates and Philosophers: How Morality Evolved*. Princeton University Press. 2006. ISBN: 978-0691141299.

Jesse Prinz, *The Emotional Construction of Morals*, Oxford University Press, 2007.
ISBN: 978-0-19-957154-3.

All other readings are available electronically (under “contents” on Blackboard, unless otherwise indicated).

Course Requirements:

Class preparation and participation: Students are expected to prepare for, attend and participate thoughtfully in ALL seminar meetings. Please avoid scheduling travel (other than for academic conferences), appointments, etc., to conflict with class time. However, if you are ill please do not come to class (or to my office). Do email me before class time if you are ill and will be missing class.

Come to class prepared to:

- 1) explain the day’s required reading; and
- 2) say one original, smart thing that is relevant to the day’s material.

Each student may have one day on which you come unprepared. Tell me at the beginning of class if it is your unprepared day. You are not allowed to speak in class on your unprepared day, but you may benefit from listening to others. You are required to speak in class on all other days. Obviously, it is much better to *not* come unprepared on any day, but do take your one day if you need it. If you are absent, that day counts as your unprepared day.

Readings that are “recommended” rather than “required” will help you particularly if you are planning on writing your seminar paper on the topic. If you do recommended reading and you want to discuss it in class, remember that most people will not have read it – thus, the burden is on you to explain the author’s point(s) in sufficient detail so that those who have not done that reading can understand your comments about it.

Presentation: Each student will do a 10 minute presentation that consists of a rereading of or commentary on one text from the reading list for the MA comprehensive exam in Ethics, in light of course readings. The list includes:

- Plato, *Republic*
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
- David Hume, *An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*
- Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*
- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*
- Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*

In the presentation, students should consider whether recent empirical work in moral psychology serves to challenge, to support, or to complicate (etc.) the moral theory under consideration. More information on this assignment will follow.

Seminar paper: Seminar papers are expected to draw on both required and recommended readings. If you would like to also draw on material not assigned in the class, please check with me first; in any case, the primary focus must be on assigned material. Please choose to write *either* a short paper with a 3,000 word limit intended for conference presentation (i.e. with a

20-minute reading time), or a 6,000-8,000 word paper aimed at publication. If you wish to base your seminar paper on your previous presentation (i.e. the presentation on a text from the MA comps reading list) you may do so, but then you are required to write the 6,000-8,000 word paper. If you choose to write a conference-length paper, it is due on the last day of class, and you will be expected to present your paper (or do a presentation based on your paper) to the class on that day. If you write a longer paper, please turn it in by Dec. 19th. All papers should be sent to me by email—no hard copy needed. The word counts are strict; please include a word count at the top of the first page. I encourage each of you to meet with me several weeks before the paper is due to start discussing your paper topic, and to continue to consult with me throughout the writing process, to whatever extent this is helpful to you. I am not available for meetings after the last day of classes.

Grading:

Presentation on a text from the reading list for the MA comps in Ethics: 25%

Seminar paper: 75%

Do give serious attention to the *quality*—not just the quantity—of your participation in discussions; inadequate participation can lower the final grade by as much as one full grade.

NO INCOMPLETES WILL BE GIVEN UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Schedule

Wed., Sept. 5

In class:

Jonathan Haidt (video):

http://www.ted.com/talks/jonathan_haidt_on_the_moral_mind.html

Jonathan Haidt (video): <http://edge.org/conversation/a-new-science-of-morality-part-1>

Joshua Greene (video): <http://edge.org/conversation/a-new-science-of-morality-part-2>

David Pizarro (video): <http://edge.org/conversation/a-new-science-of-morality-part-6>

Hugo Mercier (video): <http://edge.org/conversation/the-argumentative-theory>

Wed., Sept. 12

Required reading:

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, chapter 1. If you have never read *A Theory of Justice*, read all of chapter 1; if you are already familiar with it, just read pages 11-22, and 34-53 (§3, §4, §7, §8, §9), and concentrate on the discussion of “reflective equilibrium.”

John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, §10 (pgs. 29-32).

Margaret Urban Walker, *Moral Understandings*, chapter 3, “Authority and Transparency,” (pgs. 49-75). [If you are reading the Second Edition of this book, chapter 3 will be pgs. 55-82].

Recommended reading:

John Rawls, “Outline of a Decision Procedure for Ethics,” *The Philosophical Review* 60 (2) (April 1951): 177-197.

John Rawls, "The Independence of Moral Theory," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 48 (1974-75): 5-22. (pgs. 5-10 are the most relevant).

Wed., Sept. 19

Required reading:

Joshua Greene, R. Brian Sommerville, Leigh Nystrom, John Darley and Jonathan Cohen, "An fMRI Investigation of Emotional Engagement in Moral Judgment." *Science* 293 (5537) (Sept. 2001): 2105-2108. No PDF; read as HTML at:
<http://proxy.binghamton.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mnh&AN=11557895&site=ehost-live>

Jonathan Haidt, "The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment." *Psychological Review* 108 (4) (2001): 814-834.

Joshua Greene and Jonathan Haidt, "How (and Where) Does Moral Judgment Work?" *TRENDS in Cognitive Sciences* 6 (12) (Dec. 2002): 517-523.

Joshua Greene, "From Neural 'Is' to Moral 'Ought': What are the Moral Implications of Neuroscientific Moral Psychology?" *Neuroscience* 4 (Oct. 2003): 847-850.

Hugo Mercier. 2011. "What Good is Moral Reasoning?" *Mind & Society* 10 (2): 131-148.

Recommended reading:

Jonathan Haidt and Craig Joseph, "Intuitive Ethics: How Innately Prepared Intuitions Generate Culturally Variable Virtues." *Daedalus* 133 (4) (Fall 2004): 55-66.

Jonathan Haidt, *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom* (2006).

Jonathan Haidt, "The New Synthesis in Moral Psychology." *Science* 316 (2007): 998-1002.

Joshua Greene et. al. "Cognitive Load Selectively Interferes with Utilitarian Moral Judgment." *Cognition* 107 (2008): 1144-1154.

Wed., Sept. 26

No class – Yom Kippur

Wed., Oct. 3

Required reading:

Before you do the reading, go to <http://www.yourmorals.org/> and (unless you object to doing so) take several of the questionnaires, including the "Moral Foundations Questionnaire."

Jonathan Haidt and F. Bjorklund. 2008. "Social intuitionists answer six questions about moral psychology." In W. Sinnott-Armstrong (Ed.), *Moral Psychology, Volume 2: The Cognitive Science of Morality: Intuition and Diversity*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. (2008): Pgs. 181-217. Also read the commentaries by Daniel Jacobson (pgs. 219-232) and Darcia Narvaez (pgs. 233-240), and the response by Haidt and Bjorklund (pgs. 241-254).

Jonathan Haidt and Selin Kesebir. 2010. "Morality." In S. Fiske, D. Gilbert, & G. Lindzey, Eds., *Handbook of Social Psychology, 5th Edition*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. Pgs. 797-832.

Jonathan Haidt. 2012. *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*, chapter 11 "Religion is a Team Sport" (pgs. 246-273).

Recommended reading:

Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, 2006. "Moral Intuitionism Meets Empirical Psychology," in Terry Horgan and Mark Timmons, eds., *Metaethics After Moore*. Clarendon Press of OUP. Pgs. 339-365.

Graham, Jesse, Brian Nosek, Jonathan Haidt, Ravi Iyer, Spassena Koleva, and Peter Ditto, "Mapping the Moral Domain," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 101 (2) (2011): 366-385.

Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (2012).

Christopher Suhler and Patricia Churchland. "Can Innate, Modular 'Foundations' Explain Morality? Challenges for Haidt's Moral Foundations Theory." *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience* 23 (9) (2011): 2103-2116.

Jonathan Haidt and Craig Joseph, "How Moral Foundations Theory Succeeded in Building on Sand: A Response to Suhler and Churchland." *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience* 23 (9) (2011): 2117-2122.

Wed., Oct. 10

Required reading:

(If you are not already familiar with it): Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 1 (3) (Spring 1972): 229-243.

Peter Singer, "Ethics and Intuitions." *The Journal of Ethics* 9 (2005): 331-352.

Joshua Greene. 2008. "The Secret Joke of Kant's Soul." In *Moral Psychology Vol. 3: The Neuroscience of Morality*, ed. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Pgs. 35-79.

Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, Liane Young, and Fiery Cushman. 2010. "Moral Intuitions." In *The Moral Psychology Handbook*, Ed. John Doris. Oxford University Press, (ch. 7): 246-271. Available as an e-book through the BU Library.

Recommended reading:

Fiery Cushman, Liane Young, and Joshua Greene. 2010. "Multi-Systems Moral Psychology." In *The Moral Psychology Handbook*, Ed. John Doris. Oxford University Press, (ch. 2): 47-71. Available as an e-book through the BU Library.

Richard Dean. 2010. "Does Neuroscience Undermine Deontological Theory?" *Neuroethics* 3: 43-60.

Browse <http://www.wjh.harvard.edu/~jgreene/> for additional work by Joshua Greene. Also browse <https://mcl.wjh.harvard.edu/index.html>

Wed., Oct. 17

Required reading:

(If you are not already familiar with it): Bernard Williams, "Ethical Consistency" (chapter 11, pgs. 166-186) in *Problems of the Self*.

Fiery Cushman and Liane Young. 2009. "The Psychology of Dilemmas and the Philosophy of Morality," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 12: 9-24.

(If you are not already familiar with it): Bernard Williams, "Moral Luck" (chapter 2, pgs. 20-39) in *Moral Luck*.

Liane Young, Shaun Nichols, and Rebecca Saxe. 2010. "Investigating the Neural and Cognitive Basis of Moral Luck: It's Not What You Do but What You Know," *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* 1: 333-349.

Fiery Cushman and Joshua Greene. In press. "The Philosopher in the Theater," *Social psychology of morality: The origins of good and evil*, Ed. Mario Mikulincer & Philip R. Shaver, APA Press.

Recommended reading:

Edward Royzman and Rahul Kumar. 2004. "Is Consequential Luck Morally Inconsequential? Empirical Psychology and the Reassessment of Moral Luck," *Ratio* 17 (3):329-344.

Darren Domsky. 2004. "There is no Door: Finally Solving the Problem of Moral Luck," *Journal of Philosophy* 101 (9): 445-464.

David Enoch and Ehud Guttel. 2010. "Cognitive Biases and Moral Luck," *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 7: 372-386.

Wed., Oct. 24

Required reading:

Folke Tersman. 2008. "The reliability of moral intuitions: A challenge from neuroscience," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 86 (3): 389-405.

Neil Levy, "Cognitive Scientific Challenges to Morality." *Philosophical Psychology* 19 (5) (Oct. 2006): 567-587.

Selim Berker, "The Normative Insignificance of Neuroscience." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 37 (4) (2009): 293-329.

Wed., Oct. 31

Required reading:

Philip Tetlock. 2003. "Thinking the Unthinkable: Values and Taboo Cognitions," *Trends in Cognitive Science* 7 (7): 320-324.

Go to: <<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>>. Click on "Demonstration" and then go to the demonstration tests, and (unless you object to doing so) take several of the tests. Do this *before* reading the Gendler article. After you take the tests, you might want to read the sections of the Project Implicit website that discuss implicit bias and explain how the Implicit Association Tests work.

Tamar Szabó Gendler. 2011. "On the Epistemic Costs of Implicit Bias," *Philosophical Studies* 156: 33-63.

Recommended reading:

Philip Tetlock et al. 2000. "The Psychology of the Unthinkable: Taboo Trade-Offs, Forbidden Base Rates, and Heretical Counterfactuals," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 78 (5):853-870.

Alan Page Fiske and Philip Tetlock. 1997. "Taboo Trade-Offs: Reactions to Transactions that Transgress the Spheres of Justice," *Political Psychology* 18 (2): 255-297.

Wed., Nov. 7

Required viewing (watch these videos *before* class):

Frans de Waal (video):

http://www.ted.com/talks/frans_de_waal_do_animals_have_morals.html

Paul Bloom (video): <http://edge.org/conversation/a-new-science-of-morality-part-5>

Required reading:

Patricia Churchland. 2008. "The Impact of Neuroscience on Philosophy," *Neuron* 60: 409-411.

Frans de Waal (ed. Stephen Macedo and Josiah Ober), *Primates and Philosophers: how morality evolved*. Read Part I ("Morally Evolved") by de Waal (pgs. 1-58), the

comments (“Morality and the Distinctiveness of Human Action”) by Christine Korsgaard (pgs. 98-119), and the response (“The Tower of Morality”) by de Waal (pgs. 161-181).

Recommended reading:

Frans de Waal, *The Age of Empathy*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2009.

Patricia Churchland, *Braintrust: What Neuroscience Tells Us About Morality*. Princeton University Press, 2011.

Wed., Nov. 14

Presentations on texts from the reading list for the MA comps exam in Ethics.

Wed., Nov. 21

No class – Thanksgiving

Wed., Nov. 28

Required reading:

Jesse Prinz, *The Emotional Construction of Morals*, “Preamble” & Part I (Chapters 1-4).

Wed., Dec. 5

Required reading:

Jesse Prinz, *The Emotional Construction of Morals*, Part II (Chapters 5-8).

Wed., Dec. 12

Writing workshop/presentations.