

Moral Psychology and Moral Philosophy
PHIL 605B
Spring 2017

Prof. Lisa Tessman
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Office hours: M/W 10:45-11:45 or by appointment
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Course Description:

In this course we'll study empirical work on moral decision making, moral reasoning, and moral emotions and affective states (such as empathy, anger, disgust, shame and guilt) and their connection to motivation and action. We'll read work in moral philosophy that engages with empirical moral psychology. We'll also consider questions about what morality is, what its relationship is to love and care, and in what way normative work does or doesn't depend on facts about human psychology.

Course Objectives:

- To familiarize students with some contemporary work in empirical moral psychology and in moral philosophy.
- To have students develop their own original, critical thinking about the covered topics.
- To have students learn and practice philosophical skills; 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.

Books:

Valerie Tiberius, *Moral Psychology: A Contemporary Introduction*. Routledge. 2015.

C. Daniel Batson, *What's Wrong With Morality*. Oxford University Press. 2016.
AVAILABLE AS AN EBOOK THROUGH THE BU LIBRARY.

Harry Frankfurt, *The Reasons of Love*. Princeton University Press. 2004.

Martha Nussbaum, *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice*. Belknap Press.
2013. AVAILABLE AS AN EBOOK THROUGH THE BU LIBRARY.

All other readings are available electronically (either under "course reserves" on Blackboard, or through a link provided, or as a chapter in an ebook available through the BU library).

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. 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 reading; and
- 2) say one original, interesting thing that is relevant to the day's material and that you think matters.

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 expected 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.

Presentation: Each student will do a 15 minute presentation (give or take one minute) 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. Practice your presentation in advance (I recommend videoing it, and watching the video to see what needs improvement; be sure to get the timing right).

Seminar paper: Seminar papers are expected to draw on required readings and on any further reading that I may recommend depending on your topic. If there are additional materials you would like to draw on, please check with me first. 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 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 (May 9th), 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 May 12th. All papers should be sent to me by email. 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

Tues., Jan. 17

What is morality?

Tues., Jan. 24

Before you do the reading, go to <http://www.yourmorals.org/> and complete several of the questionnaires, including the “Moral Foundations Questionnaire.”

Valerie Tiberius, *Moral Psychology* Part I (chapters 1 & 2).

Jesse Graham, Jonathan Haidt, *et al*, “Moral Foundations Theory: The Pragmatic Validity of Moral Pluralism,” in *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol 47 (2013): pgs. 55-130.

Tues., Jan. 31

Valerie Tiberius, *Moral Psychology* Part II (chapters 3 & 4).

Batson, C. Daniel. 2012. “The Empathy-Altruism Hypothesis: Issues and Implications,” in *Empathy: From Bench to Bedside*, ed. Jean Decety. The MIT Press: pgs. 41-54.

Martin Hoffman. 2000. “Empathy’s Limitations: Over-Arousal and Bias,” chapter 8 in *Empathy and Moral Development: Implications for Caring and Justice*. Cambridge University Press: pgs. 197-217.

“Against Empathy” forum on *Boston Review*.

<http://bostonreview.net/forum/paul-bloom-against-empathy>

Read the “Opening” by Paul Bloom, and browse the “Responses” (Singer, Jamison, O’Connor, Berry, Christov-Moore & Iacoboni, LaFrance, Baron-Cohen, Arpaly, Bruenig, Bontross, Harris, Fried, Prinz, and reply by Bloom).

Jesse Prinz, “Against Empathy,” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* Vol 49 (2011): 214-233.

Tues., Feb. 7

Valerie Tiberius, *Moral Psychology* Part III (chapters 5 & 6; skip chapter 7).

Jesse Prinz. 2006. "The Emotional Basis of Moral Judgments," *Philosophical Explorations* 9(1): 29-43.

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.

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

Tues., Feb. 14

Daniel Batson, *What's Wrong With Morality?* Part One.

Tues., Feb. 21

Daniel Batson, *What's Wrong With Morality?* Parts Two and Three.

Tues., Feb. 28

Valerie Tiberius, *Moral Psychology* chapter 11.

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.

Go to: <<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>>. Click on "Demonstration" and then go to the demonstration tests, and 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.

Tues., March 7

No class – winter recess

Tues., March 14

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.

Graham and Jonathan Haidt. 2012. "Sacred Values and Evil Adversaries: A Moral Foundations Approach," in *The Social Psychology of Morality: Exploring the Causes of*

Good and Evil, edited by Mario Mikulincer and Phillip R. Shaver (Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 2012): 11-31.

Paul Bloom. 2013. "Bodies." Chapter 5 in *Just Babies: The Origins of Good and Evil*. New York: Crown Publishers: 131-157.

Tues., March 21

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

Tues., March 28

Harry Frankfurt. 2004. *The Reasons of Love*. Princeton University Press.

Tues., April 4

Martha Nussbaum. 2013. *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice*. Belknap Press. Chapter 1 and Part II (chapters 5, 6 & 7)

Tues., April 11

No class – spring recess

Tues., April 18

Martha Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*. Chapter 8.

Tues., April 25

Martha Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*. Chapters 10 and 11.

Tues., May 2

Writing workshops / catch-up

Tues., May 9

Presentations.