

Moral Psychology
PHIL 180A
Spring 2019
Meets T/Th 1:15-2:40

Prof. Lisa Tessman
Office: Library Tower 1215
Office hours: Tues 2:45-3:45 PM and Thur 8:45-9:45 AM or by appointment
Email: ltessman@binghamton.edu

Course Description:

How do human beings make judgments about what is morally right or wrong? Do our judgments tell us what is “really” morally right or wrong? What if our judgments are biased? Can we improve our moral judgments? What is the role of emotion and what is the role of reasoning in moral judgments? In this course we will try to answer questions like these by studying contemporary work—both philosophical and empirical—in moral psychology.

Course Objectives:

- To survey philosophical and empirical work in moral psychology.
- To have students learn and practice philosophical skills.

This course satisfies the Humanities (“H”) General Education Requirement.

Learning Outcomes: Students in H courses will demonstrate an understanding of human experience through the study of literature or philosophy.

Texts:

*David Sloan Wilson, *Does Altruism Exist? Culture, Genes, and the Welfare of Others*. Yale University Press, 2015.

*C. Daniel Batson, *What’s Wrong with Morality? A Social-Psychological Perspective*. Oxford University Press, 2015.

Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*. Vintage, 2013.

*Diane Jeske, *The Evil Within: Why We Need Moral Philosophy*. Oxford University Press, 2018.

Lisa Tessman, *When Doing the Right Thing Is Impossible*. Oxford University Press, 2017.

*available electronically through the BU Library.

All other readings are available under “Content” on MyCourses. You must always have a copy of the day’s reading with you in class. For readings that are available electronically, either print or bring an electronic device so you can refer to the reading in class.

Course Requirements:

This course is a 4-credit course, which means that in addition to attending and participating in class meetings, students are expected to do at least 9.5 hours of course-related work *outside of class* each week during the semester. This includes time spent

completing assigned readings, taking notes and reflecting on the readings, and reviewing material in preparation for tests or essays.

Class preparation and participation:

Please avoid scheduling travel, appointments, etc., to conflict with class time. Email me before class time if you are ill and will be missing class. More than three absences will result automatically in failure of the course, unless you provide adequate documentation showing that all absences were due to illness or emergency. Do give serious attention to the *quality*—not just the quantity—of your participation in discussions. If you find it difficult to speak in class discussions, please come talk to me about this *during the first week or two of the semester* and we will devise a plan for you to practice this kind of speaking, and for me to grade your participation appropriately.

If I, or your classmates, are pronouncing your name wrong, using the wrong pronouns for you, etc., please correct us! Also please let me know if there is anything I can do to facilitate your learning or accommodate your particular learning style.

Quizzes

There will be 10 quizzes given over the course of the semester. Each quiz is graded on a credit/no credit basis for a total of 10 possible quiz credits. You may refer to your own written notes during a quiz, but you may not refer to the text or use an electronic device. Quizzes may be made up only with a documented excuse (due to illness or emergency) and must be made up within a week of the date for which you have the excuse. Please arrange in advance to come to my office if you need to make up a quiz.

Total quiz credits

10 =	A
9 =	A-
8 =	B+
7 =	B
6 =	B-
5 =	C+
4 =	C
3 =	C-
2 =	D
1 or 0 =	F

Midterm exam:

There will be one exam. If you miss it, it may be made up only with a documented excuse (due to illness or emergency) and must be made up by March 26. You may refer to your own written notes during the exam, but you may not refer to the texts or use an electronic device. The exam will consist of ten short-answer questions.

In-class essays:

There will be two in-class essays. You may refer to your own written notes and to the text during the essays, and you may use an electronic device to access the text if you do not have a hard copy of the text, but you may not use an electronic device for any other purpose. If you miss either of the essays, they may be made up only with a documented excuse (due to illness

or emergency) and must be made up within one week of the date for which you have the excuse.

Grading:

- 25% quizzes
- 25% midterm exam
- 25% in-class essay 1
- 25% in-class essay 2

The final grade may be raised or lowered by a plus or minus (e.g. from a B- to a B, from an A- to a B+, etc) depending on the quality of class participation.

Disability-related equal access accommodations: I am happy to make accommodations (e.g. extended time, quiet environment, etc.) for any student with a documented need for it. Students needing accommodations to ensure their equitable access and participation in this course should register with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office as soon as they're aware of their need for such arrangements. Visit the SSD website for more detailed information. The office is in the University Union, room 119. Phone number 607-777-2686. Students who are already registered with SSD may make an appointment to meet and discuss the implementation of their authorized accommodations.

Academic Honesty: I follow the Philosophy Department policy on academic honesty (see below); furthermore, any student who plagiarizes or commits any other form of academic dishonesty will receive an F for the course. Students are responsible for being familiar with, and abiding by, the Student Academic Honesty Code.

Philosophy Department Guidelines on Academic Honesty

The Philosophy Department considers plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty to be serious breaches of the code of ethics governing academic life. They are also violations of Harpur College and Binghamton University policies.

In order to contribute to a culture of Academic Honesty within both the Department and the University, the Philosophy Department has agreed on the following guidelines:

- 1) Instructors will include a statement describing their policy regarding Academic Honesty on all course syllabi.
- 2) When a student commits an act of academic dishonesty, the instructor will formally bring the violation to the attention of the Harpur College Academic Honesty Committee by either:
 - a. submitting an Admission of Dishonesty Form that has been signed by the student,
 - or*
 - b. initiating a hearing before the Harpur College Academic Honesty Committee.
- 3) When a student commits an act of academic dishonesty, the instructor for the course will not give the student credit for the assignment, whether or not the student re-submits honest work.
- 4) Instructors will decide what further grade consequences are appropriate in response to the dishonesty at their own discretion; the typical consequence is a grade of 'F' for the course.

Schedule

Week 1:

Tues, Jan. 22

Introductions

In class: Frans de Waal, “Moral Behavior in Animals”

https://www.ted.com/talks/frans_de_waal_do_animals_have_morals

Thur, Jan. 24

To do before beginning the reading for this course: Go to www.yourmorals.org, click on “Explore your Morals” and complete the “Moral Foundations Questionnaire.”

Read before class: David Sloan Wilson, *Does Altruism Exist?* chapters 1-2.

Week 2:

Tues, Jan. 29

Read before class: David Sloan Wilson, *Does Altruism Exist?* chapters 3-6.

Thur, Jan. 31

Read before class: David Sloan Wilson, *Does Altruism Exist?* chapters 7-10.

Week 3:

Tues, Feb. 5

Read before class: C. Daniel Batson, *What’s Wrong with Morality?* chapter 1.

Watch before class: Paul Bloom, “Why Empathy Is Not the Best Way to Care” (8 minute video).

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YVCwjT_CVY

Thur, Feb. 7

Read before class: C. Daniel Batson, *What’s Wrong with Morality?* chapters 2-3.

Week 4:

Tues, Feb. 12

Read before class: C. Daniel Batson, *What’s Wrong with Morality?* chapters 4-5.

Watch before class: Daniel Ariely, “Our Buggy Moral Code” (16 minute video).

https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_ariely_on_our_buggy_moral_code

Thur, Feb. 14

Read before class: C. Daniel Batson, *What’s Wrong with Morality?* chapter 6.

Week 5:

Tues, Feb. 19

Read before class: C. Daniel Batson, *What’s Wrong with Morality?* chapter 7-8.

Thur, Feb. 21

Read before class: Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, chapters 1-2.

Week 6:

Tues, Feb. 26

Read before class: Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, chapters 3-4.

Thur, Feb. 28

Read before class: Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, chapters 5-7.

Watch before class: Jonathan Haidt, “The Moral Roots of Liberals and Conservatives” (19 minute video).

https://www.ted.com/talks/jonathan_haidt_on_the_moral_mind

Week 7:

Tues, March 5

Read before class: Jesse Graham and Jonathan Haidt “Sacred Values and Evil Adversaries: A Moral Foundations Approach.” (Available under “Content” on MyCourses)

Thur, March 7

Read before class: Peter Singer, “Ethics and Intuitions.” (Available under “Content” on MyCourses)

Week 8:

Tues, March 12

Read before class: Fiery Cushman, Liane Young, and Joshua Greene, “Multi-system Moral Psychology.” (Available under “Content” on MyCourses)

Thur, March 14

Midterm exam

Week 9: spring break

Week 10:

Tues, March 26

Read before class: Diane Jeske, *The Evil Within*, chapter 1.

Thur, March 28

Read before class: Diane Jeske, *The Evil Within*, chapter 2.

Week 11:

Tues, April 2

Read before class: Diane Jeske, *The Evil Within*, chapter 3.

Thur, April 4

Watch in class:

The Milgram Experiment

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdUu3u9Web4>

Week 12:

Tues, April 9

Read before class: Diane Jeske, *The Evil Within*, chapter 4.

Thur, April 11

Read before class: Diane Jeske, *The Evil Within*, chapter 5.

Week 13:

Tues, April 16

Read before class: Diane Jeske, *The Evil Within*, chapter 6-7.

Thur, April 18

In-class essay 1

Week 14:

Tues, April 23

Read before class: Lisa Tessman, *When Doing the Right Thing Is Impossible*, chapters 1-2.

Thur, April 25

Read before class: Lisa Tessman, *When Doing the Right Thing Is Impossible*, chapter 3.

Week 15:

Tues, April 30

Read before class: Lisa Tessman, *When Doing the Right Thing Is Impossible*, chapters 4-5.

Thur, May 2

Read before class: Lisa Tessman, *When Doing the Right Thing Is Impossible*, chapters 6-7.

Week 16:

Tues, May 7

Read before class: Lisa Tessman, *When Doing the Right Thing Is Impossible*, chapter 8.

Thur, May 9

In-class essay 2