

PHIL 134: MORAL PSYCHOLOGY

BASIC COURSE INFO

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

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Office Hours: Tues. & Thurs. 2-3pm

COURSE INFORMATION

Time: Tues. & Thurs. 9:30am-10:45am
Location: Girvetz 2108
Web page:
www.uweb.ucsb.edu/~jdmay/phil/teach/courses/w09-phil134.htm
Term: Winter 2009, UCSB

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Moral Psychology is a field of study in both philosophy and psychology in which people study phenomena that are both psychological and ethical in nature—such as altruism and egoism, moral judgment, praise and blame, moral responsibility, practical deliberation, intentional action, virtue and vice, character, moral development, and so on. To explain these things, the moral psychologist must answer a number of particularly difficult questions about the nature of our actions and the way we do and should evaluate them.

There are a multitude of topics one could cover in moral psychology. In this course, we will concentrate on the following issues:

Egoism and Altruism: Are we all just ultimately egoistic or can we act altruistically—that is, with an irreducible concern for the benefit of someone other than ourselves?

The Humean Theory of Motivation: Are we ever motivated to act by anything other than our desires, passions, or inclinations?

Motivational Internalism and Externalism: Are moral judgments necessarily motivating? Can someone have an entirely correct set of moral views (judgments or opinions) while having no motivation to act morally?

Weakness of Will and Akrasia: What is it to exhibit weakness of will? Is it to fail to do what one judges to be the best course of action? Is this even possible?

Strength of Will: What is it to exhibit will power or strength of will? Does it involve being able to act contrary to one's own inclinations?

Freedom of the Will: When, if ever, is an intentional decision or action free? What is it to do something of one's own free will? What is it to have a will that isn't free? Does freedom of will simply consist in being able to do what you want to do?

Moral Responsibility: When is it appropriate to praise or blame people or to hold them responsible for what they have done? Is one responsible for an action even if one couldn't have done anything else? Can one be praised or blamed for doing something that resulted largely from luck? If we live in a deterministic world, would anyone be responsible for anything?

Given the interdisciplinary nature of the field of moral psychology, we will look to both empirical and non-empirical work that addresses these issues.

REQUIRED TEXT

Reader: a packet of readings is available at the bookstore in the UCen.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|---|-------------------------|
| 1. Midterm (in class) | 20% of grade | Date: Thurs. Jan. 29 th | [4 th week] |
| 2. Paper (6-8 pages) | 40% of grade | Due: Tues. Feb. 24 th | [8 th week] |
| 3. Final exam (in class) | 40% of grade | Date: Wed. Mar. 18 th , 8-11am | [11 th week] |

PREREQUISITES

Philosophy 4 or 100A; and Philosophy 100B or 100C or 100D or 100E.

READING & ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to attend all class meetings. Attending class meetings, however, is not mandatory. But failure to do so will likely adversely affect your performance on assignments.

Students are also expected to do the appropriate reading prior to class. This is especially important because philosophy involves close examination of often fairly dense arguments. However, you are not expected to have figured it all out before you walk in the door. That's what we're going to try to do in class.

CHEATING

Don't cheat (this includes *plagiarism*). I warn against this at the beginning of every quarter, and still nearly every quarter at least one person gets busted! *I take this extremely seriously*: I will prosecute any offenses, seeking penalties that can range up to expulsion from the university.

Furthermore, it's *your responsibility* to make sure that your work does not violate university policies about plagiarism and other academic cheating. If you need any help in understanding these standards or are in any doubt about whether your work for this course violates them, check with me. For your convenience, here is the link to UCSB's page on academic dishonesty:

<http://hep.ucsb.edu/people/hnn/conduct/disq.html>

Note that if you cut something from a web document and paste it into your paper, you are plagiarizing (even if you mix up the wording a bit). The paper you will be asked to write is not a research paper. Just read the material required for class and take your time thinking it through. There is no need to look at anything else (including things on the Internet); but if you do, you must diligently cite and quote all consulted sources.

NO EXTRA CREDIT

All students are expected to meet the same standards to pass the course. Doing additional assignments for extra credit or catch-up grades is not an option.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

In general, assume you *cannot* turn assignments in late. However, of course, if you have special circumstances, exceptions may be made. But you must let me know *as soon as such special circumstances arise*; otherwise I may not be able to work something out with you.

STUDENT SUPPORT

OFFICE HOURS

I encourage you all to talk with me outside of class in office hours. If you are unable to see me during my regular slot, I will be happy to schedule a mutually convenient time. Talking to me about the material, especially in preparation for an upcoming assignment, is not just for those who fear failing the course; it is also for those who want to secure an “A” (or whatever your goal is).

EMAIL

I'm available to contact by email. I can even answer relatively short and specific questions via email. If you have a more detailed and lengthy question, come to my office hours.

WEBSITE

The web page for this class has some links that may prove useful in the course.

(Note: The rest of my website also has some information and external links to several resources for philosophy. However, browse at your own risk. What is particularly useful for this course will be provided on the web page for this course.)

READING PAPER DRAFTS

In general, I am happy to discuss with you drafts of your papers before they are turned in. However, I will *not* accept emailed or dropped off drafts. Instead, you are welcome and encouraged to bring your drafts into office hours (or make an appointment) to discuss them.

I will be expecting you to write *college-level papers* for this course, so I will be expecting few errors in the areas of spelling, grammar, professional academic style, and so on. Furthermore, writing in philosophy is often very different from writing in other disciplines. I encourage everyone to talk to me about their paper before they turn it in, regardless of whether you have written for a philosophy class before. (More details on requirements for papers will be provided later on in the course.)

WRITING SUPPORT

Strong writing skills are indispensable for success in philosophy. Since philosophy requires the clear communication of often difficult and subtle ideas, weak writing renders high level performance impossible. In addition to any support I can offer you, I encourage you to avail yourself of the help available from the Campus Learning Assistance Services writing tutors.

IF YOU FACE MAJOR DIFFICULTIES

If for any reason you face major difficulties—medical or otherwise—get in touch with me *as soon as possible*. I'm happy to work with you to find the best course of action and, if possible, to help you complete the course successfully.

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Part 1: Motivation

A. <i>Biology and Egoism vs. Altruism</i>	
01. Edward. O. Wilson (1975) "Human Decency is Animal"	01
02. Simon Blackburn (1998) "The Self and Biology"	11
B. <i>Psychology and Egoism vs. Altruism</i>	
03. C. Daniel Batson & Laura L. Shaw (1991) "Evidence for Altruism"	23
04. C. Daniel Batson (2000) "Unto Others: A Service... and a Disservice"	43
05. Elliott Sober & David Sloan Wilson (2000) "Morality and Unto Others"	49
C. <i>Humeanism vs. Anti-Humeanism</i>	
06. Michael Smith (1987) "The Humean Theory of Motivation"	57
07. R. Jay Wallace (1990) "How to Argue about Practical Reason"	87
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08. Michael Smith (1994) "The Externalist Challenge"	121
09. Adina Roskies (2003) "Are Ethical Judgments Intrinsically Motivational?"	163

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A. <i>Freedom and the Will</i>	
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13. Gary Watson (1975) "Free Agency"	279
B. <i>Akrasia / "Weakness of Will"</i>	
10. Donald Davidson (1969) "How is Weakness of Will Possible?"	181
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11. Richard Holton (2003) "How is Strength of Will Possible?"	213

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A. <i>Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility</i>	
14. Harry Frankfurt (1969) "Alternative Possibilities and Moral Responsibility"	299
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15. Thomas Nagel (1979) "Moral Luck"	313
C. <i>Experimental Philosophy and Moral Responsibility</i>	
16. Kwuame Anthony Appiah (2007) "The New New Philosophy"	329
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