

PHL 402: NEUROETHICS

Univ. of Alabama at Birmingham | Spring 2017

1. BASIC COURSE INFO

Prof. Information:

Prof: Dr. Joshua May

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Office Hours: Wed. 1:30-3:30 (& by appt.)

Lecture Info:

Time: MWF 12:20-1:10pm (sect. 1E)

Location: EB 134

Course Website: Canvas

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Neuroethics studies moral issues arising in connection with the sciences of the mind, particularly research on the brain. This is a relatively new interdisciplinary field covering two main areas. The first is the ethics of neuroscience, which deals with the moral issues that arise from emerging technologies and findings of neuroscience. The second is the reverse: the neuroscience of ethics, which asks what research on the brain tells us about morality.

This course will cover several topics in each area, including the following topics. Moral responsibility and free will: Does unconscious neural activity determine our behavior prior to conscious awareness? Is, e.g., a psychopath morally responsible if the behavior is the result of brain dysfunction? Is addiction a neurological compulsion? Moral cognition: Which areas of the brain are involved in moral thought and action? (Emotional areas? Rational/cognitive areas?) Mind reading: Can neuroscientific technologies determine whether someone is lying? Can brain scan results constitute self-incrimination (thus violating the 5th amendment)? Moral enhancement: Is there something wrong with making oneself a better person (e.g. more caring and generous) by altering one's brain directly (e.g. via pills or deep brain stimulation)?

Students will learn about such topics and evaluate arguments on different sides of the issues.

This course fulfills the Capstone Requirement in Philosophy.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- (1) Understand major theories, cases, methods, and concepts in ethics and neuroscience.
- (2) Critically evaluate ideas and methods in ethics and neuroscience.
- (3) Evaluate and justify one's moral beliefs.
- (4) Clearly and carefully articulate complex ideas in written form.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- (1) *Neuroethics: Challenges for the 21st Century* by Neil Levy, Cambridge University Press, 2007 (ISBN: 978-0521687263). [Available at the book shops or online. Rent the Kindle version for as little as \$25 on Amazon; paperback is about \$70 new, \$63 used].
- (2) Additional readings will be available on the Canvas course page (as PDFs).

ASSESSMENT

(For due dates, see the Canvas site or the Schedule at the end of this syllabus.)

1. **Engagement** 15% of grade [attendance, participation, brief presentation, survey, etc.]
2. **Discussion Piece** 15% of grade
3. **Tests (x4)** 40% of grade
4. **Essay** 30% of grade + Outline [hurdle]

CLASS UPDATES

Important announcements and updates will be made occasionally on the course website in Canvas (<http://uab.instructure.com/>). So do check it frequently or make sure to have it set up to email you each announcement.

MATERIAL COVERED

We will be discussing content primarily from the assigned readings. However, we *may not cover everything in the assigned reading*. Look to the lectures for what we'll be highlighting and what you'll be held accountable for on assignments. [Also: Given that this course covers important cases in medicine and the law, students will be tested on basic details of such cases.]

COURSE MATERIALS: HANDOUTS, LECTURE SLIDES, ETC.

To help students, I will provide handouts, slides, and so on. I hope providing handouts/slides in particular will allow students in class to participate in discussion rather than write down everything I say. Keep in mind, though, the handouts/slides will be rather *barebones*. You will likely want to supplement them with your own *notes* from class.

Copyright Notice: The course materials that I create (e.g. handouts, recordings, exams) are intellectual property. They are for you to use in this class only, during this semester. Course materials are not for others to use (e.g. they're not to be posted on other websites or otherwise shared with others).

BUDDY SYSTEM

Early in the semester, I'll set aside time for you to exchange contact information with some fellow classmates. When needed (e.g. if you have to miss class), get in touch with them to share notes or discuss the course material. (I encourage study groups but *not* copying each other's work, of course.)

NO LAPTOPS, PHONES, ETC. IN CLASS

During class, turn off and put away all computers, phones, and other electronic devices. Texting, instant messaging, web surfing, message checking, e-mailing, are all distractions to you and your fellow classmates. It's becoming so rampant that the best option at this point seems to ban it all during lecture. Think of the class meetings as a "philosophy retreat" where you focus on only philosophy. That's not too much to ask. (Of course, if you have a special need for some such device, do talk with me and we can make exceptions as needed.)

A rationale I endorse:

<http://chronicle.com/blogs/linguafranca/2014/08/25/why-im-asking-you-not-to-use-laptops/>

Penalties: If I catch you during class, I'll ask you to put the device away and you won't be marked as present for that lecture. If the problem persists, you will need to leave.

2. ASSIGNMENTS

ENGAGEMENT

Your Engagement grade will primarily be determined by Attendance and Participation in class discussions (a mix of quantitative and qualitative evaluation). You will also have some miscellaneous assignments, such as: posting a Profile Picture on Canvas, filling out a short online Survey, doing a brief in-class Presentation (about 5 minutes) of your essay outline during the final week of class.

Attendance: Students are expected to regularly attend class meetings and to do so on time. I will do roll call and you'll earn points for being present. This encourages attendance and helps me to learn names. If you're late and miss roll call, you can receive *half the points* for the day, but only if you inform me after class that you were late.

Ultimately, acquiring a couple of unexcused absences isn't extremely detrimental, especially if you contribute well in class. But do note that missing numerous class meetings would likely make it difficult for you to do well in the course overall, simply because you will miss discussion of important material.

Excused absences: These require proper documentation for either jury duty (note from the court), military service (note from military superior), or required university-sponsored activities (documentation from UAB official or supervisor). Remember, students with excused absences are still required to complete work and readings by the required due dates.

Participate in discussion: I'm very interested in what you think of our readings and any light you can shed on them. For example, I encourage you to ask questions in class to *clarify* (e.g. "What exactly is...?") but also to raise *criticism* (e.g. "Couldn't she respond by saying...?"). Speaking up isn't required for getting a good Engagement grade, but it can help it (or hurt it if you're disruptive).

DISCUSSION PIECE

During the first week, you will be assigned one article to briefly summarize and provide some critical questions for discussion in the relevant class meeting. [Note: The article will be one of the PDF readings, not a chapter from the textbook.]

Discussion pieces must be *no more than 500 words* and submitted on the Canvas site by 5pm the day before the relevant meeting. Your piece will be evaluated on the quality of exposition and critical questions raised. You should demonstrate that you've done the reading and spent time thinking about it carefully. These short assignments are meant to provide a springboard for discussion during the relevant class meeting and also to help you prepare for the kind of work required for the essay (exposition and critical evaluation).

TESTS

There will be four and each will be either *multiple choice*, *short answer*, or *short essay* (or some combination). I'll mix it up so there are a number of different testing methods used. So these may involve some essay writing. *No tests can be made up without very special circumstances.*

ESSAY & OUTLINE

Your essay should be about 2500 words (between 9-11 pages if double-spaced) and will require substantial critical evaluation and engagement with the relevant literature.

Outline: You must submit an outline of the essay. You won't receive a grade for the outline, but it's required for passing the essay (a "hurdle requirement").

Outline Presentation: Students will briefly present a version of their outline to the class during the final week of lecture. In about 5 minutes, you will describe your topic, the argument/theory you'll focus on, and the weak points you intend to press on. You'll receive points for this and it will count toward your Engagement grade.

More details on the essay and outline will be provided later in the semester.

LATE PENALTIES & MAKE-UP ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments can be made up or submitted late only if you have very *extenuating circumstances* (e.g. medical, military, jury duty) that you can document. Make sure you let me know as soon as *such special circumstances arise*; otherwise I might not be able to work something out with you. Moreover, make-ups are conditional on our being able to schedule a mutually convenient time for it and a time that is either soon before or after the original assignment occurred. For example, don't expect to be able to take an exam two weeks after (or before) the rest of the class takes it.

What are the late penalties? If I accept a late assignment without an agreed upon extension, a 5% penalty applies for the first day late; 2% per day is applied for the next 13 calendar days after the due date. Assignments won't be accepted after more than 14 calendar days, except in exceptional circumstances and in consultation with the professor. Late penalties are rounded down to the nearest whole point (e.g. one day late on a 10-point assignment yields one whole point off).

CHEATING (INCLUDING PLAGIARISM)

Should students cheat? No, don't cheat. It's both immoral and imprudent. I warn against this at the beginning of every semester, and still nearly every time at least one person gets caught! *I take this extremely seriously.* I will give all cheaters a failing grade and report the incidents to the university.

What counts as cheating? Academic misconduct includes *abetting, collusion, plagiarism, fabrication, and misrepresentation*. But it's *your responsibility* to make sure that your work doesn't violate university policies. (Compare: Ignorance of the law is generally no excuse.)

All UAB students are expected to be familiar with the *UAB Academic Honor Code*, as well as any honor codes that are specific to their schools or disciplines. The code represents a commitment to integrity in the academic community and a respect for an individual's educational endeavors. For your convenience, here is the link to UAB's page on *Academic Integrity*:

<http://www.uab.edu/students/one-stop/policies/academic-honor-code>

If you need any help in understanding the honor code or are in any doubt about whether your work may violate it, check with me well in advance. For a tutorial on plagiarism, see:

<https://www.mhsl.uab.edu/2009/plagiarism/>

How is cheating detected? Various ways. Note, however, that if you take this course you're agreeing to submit your work online, when instructed, to a program called *TurnItIn* that detects cheating (from plagiarism to collusion). Note that TurnItIn will retain an anonymous version of your submission as part of their database so that students who cheat from it can be detected. Because of this program, the vast majority of you who do your own work and cite the sources of

your information properly will not have to compete with students who commit undetected plagiarism.

GRADES

All grades for assignments will be posted on the course website. Canvas automatically calculates your grade based on the weight of the assignments. Using the "What-If Grades" feature, you can see what your final course grade will be if you get a certain score on future assignments. I use a standard conversion from percents to letter grades (A=90-100, B=80-89, C=70-79, etc.). Note: For final grades, UAB only uses A, B, C, D, F (no +/-).

Note Well: The default grade for any assignment is *not* an "A" with points taken away for errors. Rather, the default grade (if we must imagine one) is more like a "C" which is supposed to be the grade for average work meeting minimum expectations. Points are then taken off for doing worse than this or added for doing better.

What if you're unhappy with a grade? Ultimately, not everyone will receive the grade they wanted. But please note that I apply the usual standards in the discipline of Philosophy and I apply them fairly. That means I can't make a special exception for anyone (e.g. "I tried really hard" or "I need to get an A for a scholarship" or "I felt I did really well," etc.). Making special exceptions for some students but not others is unfair. I will amend grades only if I made a calculating error or inadvertently misapplied a standard. I will not change the grading standards or offer extra credit opportunities for only some students.

Do you offer extra credit? Rarely, and when I do the opportunity is open to the entire class. I usually only offer extra credit for attending events relevant to our course, typically only for ones organized by the Philosophy Department. Giving extra credit for events is tricky. Some people can't attend them because they have other obligations, and then they can't take advantage of the opportunity. So it's a bit of a dilemma. It's good to encourage students to support events related to our class topics, but that unfortunately leaves some others out. So what I do is make sure the extra credit isn't especially hefty. That way, for those who can't make it, you're not missing out on an amazing opportunity to radically improve your grade in our class. But it still provides an incentive for people to attend who can make it.

3. STUDENT SUPPORT

OFFICE HOURS

I encourage you all to *talk with me outside of class* (e.g. in office hours). If you are unable to see me during my regular slot or talk to me before or after class, I'm 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's also for those who want to secure an "A" (or whatever your goal is).

EMAILING ME

I'm available to contact by email. I can even answer relatively short and specific questions that way. If you have a more detailed and lengthy question, talk to me in person.

INTERNET RESOURCES

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

(Note: My personal website also has some information and links to several resources for philosophy. But what is particularly useful for this course will be provided on the web page for this course, not my personal website.)

See also the Library's Philosophy Guide: <http://uab.libguides.com/philosophy>

WRITING SUPPORT

I will be expecting you to do *college-level writing* for this course. Your writing should be clear, organized, professional, and so on. Furthermore, writing in philosophy is often very different from writing in other disciplines. Since philosophy requires the clear communication of often difficult and subtle ideas, weak writing renders high level performance impossible. So, if you have any questions, I encourage you to talk to me about your essays (and exams) before the due date.

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.

IF YOU FACE MAJOR DIFFICULTIES

If for any reason you are struggling—due to medical issues 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. But you must get in touch as soon as you know there's a problem. Waiting until the last minute, for example, might mean we can't work anything out. I also recommend getting in touch with UAB's *Office of Student Advocacy, Rights, and Conduct* (<http://www.uab.edu/students/sarc/>).

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you're registered with Disability Support Services (DSS), let me know as soon as possible about requested accommodations. If you have a disability but have not yet contacted DSS, please contact them as soon as possible (<https://www.uab.edu/students/disability/>). Accommodations for students with disabilities are not retroactive. Students must obtain an accommodation letter from DSS at the *beginning* of each semester, get that letter to the instructor, and contact the instructor several days before the accommodation is required.

PHILOSOPHY CLUB

At UAB's Student Fellowship of Philosophy (Phil Club), all are welcome. You don't need to be a Philosophy major or minor to attend meetings, and your friends are welcome too. Meetings each semester are either weekly or biweekly and snacks (often pizza) are typically available. The Club usually either discusses a philosophical topic, watches a video, or organizes events. Early in the semester I'll announce the meeting schedule, but you can also see their Facebook group (search "UAB Philosophy Club").

4. READINGS

WHEN TO READ

Students are expected to do *the assigned reading*. You should aim to do the reading the day it's covered in class—or at least around that time. The point of this is: *don't give up on the reading*. If you didn't get to it before we covered it in class, make sure you do it after. This is especially important because philosophy involves close examination of often fairly dense arguments. However, you aren't expected to have figured it all out before the relevant lecture. That's what we're going to try to do in class. (Notice also that I've provided the page numbers of each reading so you can see the length and plan ahead.)

Mental Fatigue: Don't underestimate this. When reading, if you find that you can't process it, you may be getting mentally exhausted. Try putting the reading down and coming back to it later, even the next day. It's quite likely that you'll find it much easier after a break, especially after you're well rested (and nourished).

Pro Tip: I don't expect you to read the footnotes or endnotes of the articles before coming to class. Just have a quick read to get an overall sense of what the author's main ideas are.

READING LIST

All readings are in the course text, unless marked "**PDF**" (in which case I'll make them available to you online). We'll try to go through these articles following this exact schedule, but it is not set in stone. You'll need to keep up with the class to know where we are exactly.

Notation:

Levy = our text, *Neuroethics* by Neil Levy (2007)

PDF = electronic article on Canvas

pp. = pages (e.g. "pp. 2-3 only"=read pages 2-3 only, while "20pp."=20 pages in length)

PART A: INTRODUCTION

1. Neuroethics and the Mind

1. **PDF:** Roskies, Adina (2002). "Neuroethics for the New Millenium." *Neuron* [3pp.].
2. **Levy:** Ch. 1 "Introduction: Neuroethics...." **1st Part:** pp. 1-8 [8pp.].
3. **Levy:** Ch. 1 "Introduction: Mind and Brain...." **2nd Part:** pp. 8-43 [35pp.] — *skipping pages 44-68*

PART B (PRACTICAL): THE ETHICS OF NEUROSCIENCE

2. Manipulating the Mind

1. **Levy:** Ch. 2 "Changing Our Minds." [18pp.].
2. **PDF:** Glannon, Walter (2009). "Stimulating Brains, Altering Minds" *Journal of Medical Ethics* [8pp.].

3. Enhancement

1. **PDF:** Giubilini, Alberto, & Sanyal, Sagar (2015). "Ethics of Human Enhancement." *Philosophy Compass* [10pp.].
2. **PDF:** Sparrow, Rob (2005). "Defending Deaf Culture" *Journal of Political Philosophy* [18pp.].
3. **PDF:** Kamm, Frances (2005). "Is There a Problem with Enhancement?" *Amer. J. of Bioethics* [19pp.].
4. **Levy:** Ch. 3 "The Presumption Against Direct Manipulation." [45pp.].
5. **PDF:** Persson, Ingmar & Savulescu, Julian (2008). "The Perils of Cognitive Enhancement & the Urgent Imperative to Enhance the Moral Character of Humanity." *Journal of Applied Philosophy* [18pp.].

4. Mind Reading

1. **Levy:** Ch. 4 "Reading Minds/Controlling Minds." [24pp.].
2. **PDF:** Sinnott-Armstrong, Walter et al (2008). "Brain Images as Legal Evidence." *Episteme* [15pp.].

5. Memory & Identity

1. **Levy:** Ch. 5 "The Neuroethics of Memory." [40pp.].
2. **PDF:** Strohminger, Nina & Nichols, Shaun (2015). "Neurodegeneration and Identity." *Psychological Science* [~18pp.].

PART C (THEORETICAL): THE NEUROSCIENCE OF ETHICS

6. Moral Reasoning

1. **Levy:** Ch. 9 "The Neuroscience of Ethics." Pp. 281-299 only [18pp.].
2. **PDF:** Greene, Josh. (2014). "Beyond Point-and-Shoot Morality." *Ethics* [31pp.].
3. **PDF:** Machery, Edouard. (2014). "In Defense of Reverse Inference." *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* [18pp.].
4. **PDF:** Kahane, Guy. et al (2012). "The Neural Basis of Intuitive and Counterintuitive Moral Judgment." *Social Cognitive & Affective Neuroscience* [9pp.].
5. **PDF:** Railton, Peter (in press). "Moral Learning..." *Cognition*. [30 pp.]

7. Self-Control, Addiction, & Responsibility

1. **Levy:** Ch. 6 "The 'Self' of Self-Control." [25pp.].
2. **PDF:** Pickard, Hanna & Pearce, Steve (2013). "Addiction in Context: Philosophical Lessons from a Personality Disorder Clinic." In N. Levy (ed.) *Addiction and Self-Control*. Oxford Univ. Press. [20pp.]
3. **PDF:** Schroeder, Timothy & Arpaly, Nomy (2013). "Addiction and Blameworthiness." In N. Levy (ed.), *Addiction and Self-Control*. Oxford University Press [24pp.].

8. Is Free Will an Illusion?

1. **Levy:** Ch. 7 "The Neuroscience of Free Will." [36pp.].
2. **PDF:** Kelly, Dan & Roedder, Erica (2008). "Racial Cognition and the Ethics of Implicit Bias." *Philosophy Compass* [18pp.].
3. **PDF:** Glenn, Andrea, & Raine, Adrian. (2014). "Neurocriminology: Implications for the Punishment, Prediction and Prevention of Criminal Behaviour." *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* [9pp.].

9. Self-Deception & Rationalization

1. **Levy:** Ch. 8 "Self-deception: The Normal and the Pathological." [23pp.].
2. **PDF:** Batson, Dan (2011). "What's Wrong with Morality?" *Emotion Review* [~10pp.]
3. **PDF:** Mazar, Nina & Ariely, Dan (2015). "Dishonesty in Scientific Research." *Journal of Clinical Investigation* [~8pp.]

SCHEDULE

(Note: Subject to minor revision, but unlikely.)

Wk	Date	Topic	Readings*	Events	Disc. Pc.
1	1/9	Into to the Course	Syllabus		-
	1/11	1.1-2 What is Neuroethics?	Roskies, Levy	Pic	-
	1/13	1.3 Mind-Brain Relationship	Levy	Choose	-
2	1/16	No Class - MLK	-	MLK	-
	1/18	2.1 Changing Minds	Levy		-
	1/20	2.2 Deep Brain Stimulation	Glannon		Ben
3	1/23	3.1 Ethics of Enhancement	Giubilini & Sanyal		-
	1/25	3.2 Enhancement & Disability	Sparrow		Lakshmi
	1/27	Guest: Hyemin Han	Kamm		-
4	1/30	Test 1 in Class	-	Test 1	-
	2/1	3.4 Manipulation & Treatment	Levy		-
	2/3	3.5 Moral Enhancement	Persson & Savulescu		Samantha
5	2/6	4.1 Reading/Controlling Minds	Levy		-
	2/8	4.2 Legal Evidence	Sinnott-Armstrong et al		Aaron
	2/10	5.1 Memory	Levy		-
6	2/13	No lecture – Watch vid on Canvas	PBS's The Brain ep. 2		-
	2/15	Guest Lecture: Neil Sinhababu	-		-
	2/17	5.2 Identity	Strohmingner & Nichols		Josh
7	2/20	Test 2 in Class	-	Test 2	-
	2/22	6.1 Moral Reasoning	Levy		-
	2/24	6.2 Debunking Deontology	Greene		Parita
8	2/27	Catch up Day			
	3/1	6.3 Reverse Inference	Machery		Paul
	3/3	6.4 Contrary Data	Kahane et al		JaVarus
9	3/6	6.5 Moral Learning	Railton		Erin
	3/8	7.1 Self-Control	Levy		-
	3/10	7.2 Addiction w/Responsibility	Pickard & Pearce		Mugdha
<i>Spring Break: 3/13 - 3/17</i>					
10	3/20	7.3 Addiction w/o Responsibility	Schroeder & Arpaly		Celeste
	3/22	Catch up Day	-		-
	3/24	Test 3 in Class	-	Test 3	-
11	3/27	8.1 Free Will	Levy		-
	3/29	8.2 Unconscious Biases	Kelly & Roedder		Hannah
	3/31	How to Write in Philosophy	Handout on Essay		-
12	4/3	Catch up Day	-		-
	4/5	No class – Severe Weather	-		-
	4/7	8.3 Punishment & Psychopaths	Glenn & Raine		Clara
13	4/10	9.1-2 Self-Deception I	Levy, Batson		Ellen
	4/12	9.3 Rationalization & Science	Mazar & Ariely		Kyle
	4/14	Test 4 in Class	-	Test 4	-
14	4/17	Final Thoughts + Presentations	-	Outline	-
	4/19	Outline Presentations	-	Present	-
	4/21	Outline Presentations	-	Survey	-
15	4/24	Essay Due: April 24 th (first day of finals week)			