

**PSYD15H3: Current Topics in Social Psychology  
Emotions, Morality & Prosocial Behaviour  
Winter 2014**

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Class Time and Location: Monday 10:00am – 12:00pm, SW316

Website: <https://portal.utoronto.ca/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp>

Office: SY162

Office Hours: Thursday 11am-12pm or by appointment

**Course Description**

How do people arrive at judgments of what is moral and what is immoral? What sorts of factors drive people to act prosocially? And what is the role of emotion in these processes? Philosophers have debated over the role of emotions in morality for centuries – some arguing that our emotions can only lead us astray, whereas others professed that without emotions we would have no motivation to act in any which way. Luckily, psychological science has equipped us with various tools that have allowed us to explore such questions on an empirical level. In this course, we will discuss psychological research that addresses questions related to morality, prosocial behavior, and the way in which emotions shape our behaviors and judgments in moral contexts.

The general **goals and objectives** of the course are to help students:

- a) Learn and gain mastery over basic facts, research findings, terminology, principles, and theories important in the social psychology of morality.
- b) Practice and develop critical thinking skills, written and oral communications skills.
- c) Analyze current issues and controversies in the field of social psychology.

Given the upper level and seminar format of this course, the main objective will be to expose you to new ideas, and to encourage you to develop and expand the way you think about and express your own ideas. In pursuit of these goals, a large portion of class time will be spent discussing ideas with your classmates. These discussions will be supplemented by in-class demonstrations, and activities to promote the learning and application of course material. You should read the assigned papers prior to coming to class and give the material careful thought, as doing so will facilitate our class discussions and your understanding of the material. Asking questions and making comments during class is highly encouraged.

Class Website: Blackboard will be the course website. Here, you can obtain copies of the syllabus, assigned readings, relevant articles and web links. Although any changes in the course schedule or class location will be announced in class, they will also be posted as announcements on Blackboard, and therefore I recommend you check this website frequently, especially if you must miss a class.

Assigned Reading: The readings for this class will be comprised of journal articles, book chapters or news articles that are related to course topics. I will post these articles on the course Blackboard website.

Writing: A main goal of this course is to build on students' competency in academic writing skills and to extend those skills through the instruction of normal writing standards in the discipline of psychology. Written assignments will require coherent, logical, and carefully edited prose. In order to succeed at the writing assignment you will have to demonstrate higher-level critical thinking skills such as analysis and synthesis, rather than mere summarization. Your writing will be graded and commented upon and become part of the assigned grade. I will provide evaluation criteria for the writing assignment during class and on blackboard later in the term. There will be ample time for questions about the evaluation criteria prior to the due date. If you have concerns about your preparedness for the writing demands of this course, please see me during office hours and I will try my best to help you and I will also point you to additional resources that can help you to build your writing skills.

Late Assignments: All discussion questions are due at 10am each Monday, before the beginning of class. The final paper is due at the start of the final class (10am Monday March 31st). Late discussion questions will not be accepted. Late assignments will be accepted with a penalty of 10% for every day (after 12pm Monday morning counts as a day) that the assignment is late.

### **Grade Breakdown**

Class Facilitation – (20%): Once during the semester, you and your group (consisting of 2-3 people) will serve as facilitators of the discussion for the week's assigned readings. Class facilitation will include three components:

- 1) Reading the "optional" reading for that week
- 2) Clearly and concisely describe the main ideas and findings from your articles with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation (7-10 minutes).
- 3) Facilitating the class discussion through discussion questions (these will be provided by your classmates).

Given the size of the groups, these two tasks should be broken down so that each group member shows that they were actively involved with their group and can demonstrate mastery of the material. The discussion leaders will come into class prepared to lead and guide the discussion so that the discussion is fluid, lively, and interesting for all the students in the class. I encourage all leaders to be creative by incorporating class activities (e.g. breaking class into small groups to discuss different perspectives of the readings) and multimedia into their discussions. Though not required, familiarity with other relevant readings will help you develop "expertise" on your topic.

Class Participation and Attendance – (10%): In a seminar-style class, attendance is expected and participation is essential. Your participation grade will depend on quality as well as quantity of participation. I will keep a record of participation throughout the term. Signs of good participation includes: Attendance, punctuality, eagerness to participate, showing respect to others' contributions, paying careful attention to classmates' presentations, and offering constructive feedback, questions, and comments.

Discussion Questions - (10%): In order to facilitate critical thinking about the readings, students are required to submit 2 discussion questions before each class to which readings

are assigned. (Prepare one question for each article). You don't need to do this for all of the classes, only the 5 classes you're most interested in (excluding the week you are leading the discussion. These discussion questions should be thoughtful responses to the readings, not requests for clarifications (although you are welcome to ask clarifications questions in addition to your discussion questions). In forming your discussion questions you may want to consider practical implications of the findings, challenge conclusions, or relate the reading to other topics.

Debate – (20%): On March 17, we will be holding two in-class debates based on two controversial topics in moral psychology that we will be covering. These two topics will be chosen on the first day of class, as will the groups that will be covering each topic, as well as the “side” of each of those topics. There will be approximately 12 people per topic, and 6 people arguing for either side of that topic. More information about the format of the debate, as well as the grading rubric, will be provided later in the term.

Research Proposal: - (40%) The research proposal will involve researching a topic of the students' own interest related to the social psychology of emotions, morality and prosocial behaviour. Specifically, this assignment will entail writing a detailed description of a specific model, theory, or hypothesis, reviewing the literature, and writing a research proposal to further examine that model, theory, or hypothesis. Detailed instructions for the research proposal will be provided in class and a grading rubric will be posted on blackboard later in the term.

Proposal Presentation: - (optional 10%) You will have the option of presenting your research proposal as a 10-minute PowerPoint presentation in front of the class. If you choose this option, 1/3 of your proposal grade will be based on your presentation (i.e. the presentation will be 10% of your final grade, and the written proposal will be 30% of your final grade). Students wishing to do a presentation will need to clearly summarize and present their proposal within a 10-minute presentation. This presentation should entail a brief review of past work that is relevant to your proposed research, rationale for your study, your proposed methodology, as well as anticipated results. Each presentation will culminate with a brief Q&A session where other students (and myself) will have the chance to ask questions of the presenter.

**Final Grade:**

<b>Class Facilitation</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Participation</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Discussion Questions</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Debate</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Research Proposal</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>A+</b>	90-100	
<b>A</b>	85-89	Excellent
<b>A-</b>	80-84	
<b>B+</b>	77-79	
<b>B</b>	73-76	Good
<b>B-</b>	70-72	
<b>C+</b>	67-69	
<b>C</b>	63-66	Adequate
<b>C-</b>	60-62	
<b>D+</b>	57-59	
<b>D</b>	53-56	Marginal
<b>D-</b>	50-52	
<b>F</b>	0-49	Inadequate

## **Classroom Expectations**

**Class Participation:** As a special topics seminar, this class is structured primarily around class discussion. Thus, it is imperative that students actively participate in class discussions, activities, and exercises. This will greatly enhance the classroom experience. It will make learning more interactive, more fun, and more personally relevant.

**Use of Electronics:** Turn off cell phones, digital assistants, mp3 players, and/or any device that makes noise during class. Answering a phone call, text messaging, or sending e-mail during class is inappropriate. Also, if you are bringing a laptop to class, only use it for appropriate activities (e.g. taking notes).

**Classroom Civility:** We hope to create an environment where open discussion can happen about topics in psychology. By virtue of this, there are going to be discussions about sensitive topics that individuals will hold differing opinions on. Please respect the opinions and perspectives of your classmates.

**Emails:** All emails you send should include PSYD15 in their title. I will try my best to respond to all emails within 24 hours (Monday-Friday).

**Disabilities:** Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities who are registered with AccessAbility Services. Students who register and utilize the AccessAbility services will not be identified on their transcript as receiving accommodations. Information disclosed to the service is confidential and is disclosed only with the student's permission. Students in need of disability accommodations should schedule an appointment with me early in the semester to discuss appropriate accommodations for the course. Talking with me well in advance is always better. There is little to nothing that I can do for you after an assignment is due.

**Academic Integrity:** Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences.

**Scholastic Dishonesty:** Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis. In this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask me.

## Course Schedule

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings</b>
<b>January 6</b>	Introduction	No readings
<b>January 13</b>	Do Emotions Drive Our Decisions & Behaviours?	Loewenstein, Weber, Hsee, & Welch, 2001
		Baumeister, Vohs, DeWall, & Zhang, 2007
		Optional: Frank, 2011
<b>January 20</b>	The Biological Basis of Moral Behaviour	Blair, 2007
		Damasio, Everitt, & Bishop, 2001
		Optional: Gu, Zhong, & Page-Gould, 2012
<b>January 27</b>	Emotions & Moral Judgments	Haidt, 2001
		Pizarro & Bloom, 2003
		Optional: Monin, Pizarro, & Beer, 2007
<b>February 3</b>	Dual-Process Theories of Moral Judgment	Greene et al., 2004
		Miller, Hannikainen, & Cushman, in press
		Optional: Greene et al., 2009
<b>February 10</b>	Does True Altruism Exist?	Cialdini et al., 1997
		Batson & Shaw, 1991
		Optional: de Waal, 2008
<b>February 17</b>	<b>Reading week – NO CLASS</b>	
<b>February 24</b>	Moral Mispredictions	Epley & Dunning, 2000
		Teper, Inzlicht, & Page-Gould, 2011
		Optional: Valdesolo & DeSteno, 2008
<b>March 3</b>	Why Do We Behave Badly?	Mazar, Amir, & Ariely, 2008
		Batson & Thompson, 2001
		Optional: Batson, 2011
<b>March 10</b>	Does Moral Behaviour Require Self-Control?	Mead et al., 2009
		Rand, Greene, & Nowak, 2012
		Optional: Zaki & Mitchell, 2013
<b>March 17</b>	Debates	
<b>March 24</b>	Student Presentations	
<b>March 31</b>	Student Presentations	***Research Proposal Due***