

## **Syllabus**

Current Topics in Social Psychology: The Psychology of Morality (PSYD15H3)

Prof. Yoel Inbar

Fall 2015

Thursdays 12:00-2:00 AA206

### **Instructor**

Dr. Yoel Inbar

Office: SW569

Email: yoel.inbar@utoronto.ca

Office Hours: Mondays 11:00 – 12:00

### **Course Description**

Thinking about good and evil seems to come naturally to human beings. We write poems, novels, and comic books about right and wrong, and make movies and TV shows about ‘good guys’ and ‘bad guys.’ Where does this moral sense come from? Is any of it innate? How much depends on socialization? Why do some people disagree so strongly about what is right and wrong? Are there any moral rules that are agreed upon across cultures?

In recent years there has been a resurgence of interest in the science of human morality. The goal of this course is to offer an introduction to the research in this field. We will read articles from a variety of disciplines including philosophy, animal behavior, neuroscience, economics, and almost every area of scientific psychology (social psychology, developmental psychology, evolutionary psychology, and cognitive psychology). By the end of the course you should be well versed in the primary issues and debates involved in the scientific study of morality.

### **Course Structure**

This course is designed to not only introduce you to much of the important theory and research in the psychology of morality, but also to develop your skills as critical thinkers and as sophisticated consumers of science; this will help you regardless of what you pursue in your future. I’ve designed this course to maximize meaningful learning and to minimize the memorize-and-regurgitate kind of style that we all get enough of in undergraduate courses. Lecturing will be minimal. On most days, I will try to limit my own talking to a fairly brief orientation to each day’s topic and to guiding discussions where necessary. The course will mainly consist of discussions aimed at fostering meaningful understanding of the material. The success of this seminar depends on everyone’s preparation, and everyone’s preparation will depend on carefully completing the readings and weekly reaction papers.

### **Readings**

The number of readings will vary per week. Readings will mostly be original scientific research, i.e., peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters. Reading a journal article carefully takes time; you should expect to spend an hour or more per article. All readings are posted in the course website (see below). Please remember that all readings are mandatory.

### **Blackboard and Course Website**

I will use Blackboard to communicate with you (i.e. to make announcements) and to host the course discussion forum (see below). However, readings will NOT be posted on Blackboard.

The course website is <http://yoelinbar.net/psychofmorality/>. This is where I will post course documents and readings (in PDF format).

### **Discussion Forum**

To help foster communication between students, I've created a discussion forum on Blackboard. This forum should also be the first place you go when you have questions about course material. Please feel free to use this space as our virtual classroom and post requests for clarification on the reading; these posts are valuable because they may echo many people's concerns. Remember, however, to respond to questions as well as this will enhance the classroom experience and create a self-sustaining internet community. The discussion forum is also the place to participate online. If you are shy and have a hard time speaking up in class, you can earn credit for participation by posting commentary, thoughts, and questions on the discussion forum. To keep pace with class, however, you need to make sure that you participate online regularly, at least once per week.

### **Reaction Papers**

To foster thoughtful, exciting, and worthwhile discussion, I ask that you prepare reaction papers to the weekly readings. This request is designed to get you thinking about the readings, while ensuring that everyone has something to contribute during class discussion. You have some freedom in deciding how to complete this assignment. Spend some time highlighting the main points of the readings, but most of your paper should do other things: e.g., connect these main points, critique a study or its findings (or the authors' interpretation of the findings), consider/discuss/develop new ideas, and/or propose a new study. Your goal should be to show me that you really understand the material. To this end, I also encourage you to bring in relevant material from other courses. Details are as follows:

- Papers should be **turned in at the start of class**.
- Papers should be 1-2 double-spaced pages (500 words max) and follow APA style.
- Papers will be graded on a scale ranging from 5 (excellent) to 0 (fail).

You are required to turn in **five** reaction papers, though what weeks you chose are up to you. Also, you may turn in more than five reaction papers, and only the best five will count toward your grade. Reaction papers will constitute 25% of your final grade.

### **Class Participation and Attendance**

In a seminar-style class, attendance is expected and participation is essential. Therefore, these will make up part of your grade: Participation is worth 10% of your grade and attendance 5%. Your participation grade will depend on quality as well as quantity of participation. Good participation includes punctuality, eagerness to participate, showing respect to others' contributions, facilitating discussion, paying careful attention to classmates' presentations, and offering constructive feedback, questions, and comments. Note that I do not want class

discussions monopolized by the same 3 or 4 people. That means that people should make an effort to talk enough, but not too much. I will keep a record of participation throughout the term, but to make sure I (and you) keep track of all your class participation, *you should keep a participation log* (noting what questions you answered or asked, what comments you made, etc.). I will collect these from time to time. As mentioned above, you also have the option of participating online on the discussion forum. If you are shy and have a hard time speaking up in class, the discussion forum is the place for you to get your participation credits. To earn top marks online, remember to post regularly, at least once a week. If you think you are participating enough in class, you don't need to participate online.

### **Final Paper and Poster Presentation**

You will form into groups of two and each group will submit an 8-10 pages, typed, double-spaced experimental research proposal in which you review a body of literature, describe new research hypotheses based on this literature, and propose a study (or studies) which will test these hypotheses. Which literature you focus on is up to you, though it must relate to morality (from a social psychological perspective). You should consult with me when choosing your topic, and as your paper progresses. *I must approve all paper topics*. Note that your paper is just a research proposal; no data needs to be collected. Details of the assignment will be specified later, but you should start thinking about the topic as early in the semester as possible.

This paper is due Thursday, December 3. I encourage you to use this paper as an opportunity to apply the social psychological methods that you will learn to a topic in psychology about which you care deeply. On the last day of class (November 26), you will also give a formal poster presentation of your proposed research, much in the style of a poster presentation at a professional conference.

### **Important Dates and Details**

To make sure you are making good progress on your final papers, we will devote parts of two classes to in-class group discussions of your hypotheses and paper ideas (Oct 8) and paper outlines (Nov 5). Although not mandatory, I encourage you to turn in brief descriptions of your paper idea by Oct 8, and a refined research idea with a typed reference list (10 references, minimum) by Nov 5. Final versions of your paper should contain at least 10 references, conform to APA style, and must be turned in by December 3. Papers will constitute 40% of your final grade and posters 15%. More details about this assignment will be discussed in class.

### **Guidelines for Written Assignments**

- Use APA style.
- All works that are referred to (directly or otherwise) must be cited in the text, and in a reference page at the end of your work.
- Omit needless words. Good writing is concise.
- Avoid quotes, especially lengthy ones.
- Spelling, grammar, and sentence structure are important and figure into the grading.

### **Email Policy**

My policy is to respond to emails within 2 working days of receipt (which means that if you email me on a Friday you might not get a response till Tuesday). Often, the best way to get an

answer to your question is to talk face-to-face, so I encourage you all to visit me during office hours (Mondays, 11:00-12:00, SW569) even if it's just to have a casual chat.

### **Late Papers**

As you have a choice of turning in your reaction papers on any of five topic weeks, late reaction papers will not be accepted. Late final papers (due Dec 3rd, 5:00pm) will be docked 5% for each day that they're late.

### **Grading Summary**

Reaction papers—25%  
Class Attendance—5%  
Class Participation—15%  
Final Paper—40%  
Poster Presentation—15%

### **List of Topics and Readings**

#### **Week 1: Sept. 3      Introduction, Background, and Logistics**

No official reading, but I suggest this article on how to read journal articles: <http://www.uvm.edu/~dguber/POLS234/articles/read.htm>

#### **Week 2: Sep 10      Helping and Cooperation**

1. Bloom, P. (2009). *Descartes' Baby: How the Science of Child Development Explains What Makes Us Human* (Excerpt - "Good and Evil"). Basic Books.
2. Warneken, F., & Tomasello, M. (2006). Altruistic helping in human infants and young chimpanzees. *Science*, 311, 1301-1303.

#### **Week 3: Sep 17      Trust, Cheating, and the Moral Self**

3. Mazar, N., Amir, O., & Ariely, D. (2008). The dishonesty of honest people: A theory of self-concept maintenance. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 45, 633-644.
4. Dunning, D., Anderson, J.E., Schloesser, T., Ehlebracht, D. & Fetchenhauer, D. (2014). Trust at zero acquaintance: More a matter of respect than expectation of reward. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 107, 122-141.

#### **Week 4: Sep 24      Revenge and Punishment**

5. Pinker, S. (1997). *How the Mind Works*. "Doomsday Machine" (Excerpt from "Hotheads"). W. W. Norton & Company.
6. Fehr, E., & Gächter, S. (2002). Altruistic punishment in humans. *Nature*, 415, 137-140.
7. Greene, J., & Cohen, J. (2004). For the law, neuroscience changes nothing and everything. *Philos Trans R Soc Lond B Biol Sci*, 359, 1775-1785.

**Week 5: Oct 1            Thanksgiving—University Closed**

**Week 6: Oct 8            Moral Intuitions**

8. Haidt, J. (2001). The emotional dog and its rational tail: A social intuitionist approach to moral judgment. *Psychological Review*, 108, 814-834.
9. Pizarro, D. A., & Bloom, P. (2003). The intelligence of the moral intuitions: A comment on Haidt (2001). *Psychological Review*, 110, 193–196.
10. Wheatley, T., & Haidt, J. (2005). Hypnotic disgust makes moral judgments more severe. *Psychological Science*, 16, 780-784.

\*\*\* Note: Non-mandatory brief descriptions of research topic due this week

**Oct 15                    No class: Reading week**

**Week 7: Oct 22        Harm and Consequences**

11. Singer, P. (1979). *Practical ethics* (Excerpt – “About Ethics”). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
12. Greene, J. D., Cushman, F. A., Stewart, L. E., Lowenberg, K., Nystrom, L. E., & Cohen, J. D. (2009). Pushing moral buttons: The interaction between personal force and intention in moral judgment. *Cognition*, 111, 364-371.
13. Cushman, F., Gray, K., Gaffey, A., & Mendes, W. B. (2012). Simulating murder: The aversion to harmful action. *Emotion*, 12, 2-7.

**Week 7: Oct 29        Character**

14. Anscombe, G. E. (1958). Modern moral philosophy. *Philosophy*, 1-19.
15. Uhlmann, E. L., Pizarro, D. A., & Diermeier, D. (2015). A person-centered approach to moral judgment. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 10, 72-81.
16. Uhlmann, E. L., Zhu, L., & Tannenbaum, D. (2013). When it takes a bad person to do the right thing. *Cognition*, 126, 326-334.

**Week 8: Nov 5        Sacred Values**

17. Tetlock, P. E. (2003). Thinking the unthinkable: Sacred values and taboo cognitions. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 7, 320-324.
18. Baron, J., & Spranca, M. (1997). Protected values. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 70, 1-16.
19. Roth, A. E. (2007). Repugnance as a constraint on markets. *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 21, 37-58.

\*\*\* Note: Non-mandatory refined research idea with 10 references due this week

**Week 9: Nov 12      Moral Heuristics and Biases**

20. Sunstein, C. R. (2005). Moral heuristics. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 28, 531-541.
21. Ditto, P. H., Pizarro, D. A., & Tannenbaum, D. (2009). Motivated moral reasoning. *Psychology of Learning and Motivation*, 50, 307-338.

**Week 10: Nov 19      Morality and Politics**

22. Inbar, Y., & Lammers, J. (2012). Political diversity in social and personality psychology. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 7, 496-503.
23. Graham, J., Haidt, J., & Nosek, B. A. (2009). Liberals and conservatives rely on different sets of moral foundations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96, 1029-1046.
24. Inbar, Y., Pizarro, D., Iyer, R., & Haidt, J. (2012). Disgust sensitivity, political conservatism, and voting. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 3, 537-544.

**Week 11: Nov 26      Poster Presentations**

**\*\*\* Note: There is no class on Thursday, Dec 3. However, final papers are due Dec 3 by no later than 5:00pm!**