

## **Syllabus**

The Psychology of Morality (PSYD14H3)

Prof. Yoel Inbar

Fall 2023

Mondays 1-3 PM, MW 264

### **Instructor**

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Office Hours: Thursdays 11-12

### **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 will:

- Understand the primary issues and debates involved in the scientific study of morality.
- Be able to explain the major normative ethical perspectives: deontology, consequentialism, and virtue ethics (character).
- Know how to critically evaluate the primary research literature (i.e. empirical journal articles) and share your perspective with your classmates.
- Have formally presented a research proposal to your peers.
- Have written an in-depth research proposal in APA style, just as you would if you were submitting an empirical article for publication.

### **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 brief orientation to each day’s topic and to guiding discussions where necessary. Each of you will participate in

leading the course by briefly presenting one of the assigned readings to the class once during the semester.

### **Readings**

We will have three readings per week, except the first. 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.

### **Course Website**

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

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 Quercus. 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 are due **the evening before class** (cut-off time 11:59 PM) and should be submitted online, via Quercus.
- You may turn in **only one** reaction paper per week.
- Papers should be 2 double-spaced pages 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, but you may turn in up to seven (in which case only the best five will count toward your grade). What weeks you chose are up to you. Reaction papers will constitute 20% of your final grade.

### **Class Participation and Attendance**

In a seminar-style class, participation is essential, so in-class participation is worth 15% of your grade. Your participation grade will depend on quality as well as quantity of participation. Good participation includes attendance, 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 try 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.

### **Reading Presentation**

Once during the semester, you will give a short presentation to the class on one of the readings for that week. This should not take more than 10 minutes—the purpose is to give an overview of the main points of the reading, not to describe the details of every study. (On the first day, I'll give you an example of what a presentation might look like.) I've made a Google spreadsheet listing all the presentation slots; I'll post the link to Quercus after the first course meeting. Your presentation will be worth 10% of your final grade.

### **Final Paper and 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 the last day of class. 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. You will also give a formal PowerPoint presentation of your proposed research on one of the three presentation days, much in the style of a presentation at a professional conference.

### **Important Dates and Details**

Although it's not mandatory, I encourage you to turn in a draft research idea with a typed reference list (10 references, minimum) by **Nov 6**. Final versions of your paper should contain at least 10 references, conform to APA style, and must be turned in by **December 4** (in class). Papers will constitute 35% 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.
- You may use generative AI (e.g. ChatGPT) to brainstorm and refine ideas, but all writing should be your own. As you write, please save drafts in case you need to show your work (if you use Google Docs, this is done for you automatically).

### **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, 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 will be docked 5% for each day that they're late, up to a week after the due date (it is UTSC policy that I cannot accept papers any later than 1 week after the last day of class).

### **Grading Summary**

Reaction papers—20%  
 Reading Presentation—10%  
 Class Participation—15%  
 Final Paper—40%  
 Final Presentation—15%

### **List of Topics**

**Week 1: Sept 11 Introduction, Background, and Logistics (No Reaction Paper This Week)**

1. How to read journal articles: <http://www.uvm.edu/~dguber/POLS234/articles/read.htm>
2. Pinker, S. (2008). The Moral Instinct. *The New York Times*.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/13/magazine/13Psychology-t.html>

**Week 2: Sept 18      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.
3. Cohn, A., Marachél, M.A., Tannenbaum, D., & Zünd, C. (2019). Civic honesty around the globe. *Science*, *365*, 70-73.

**Week 3: Sept 25      Outrage and Punishment**

1. Pinker, S. (1997). *How the Mind Works*. "Doomsday Machine" (Excerpt from "Hotheads"). W. W. Norton & Company.
2. Fehr, E., & Gächter, S. (2002). Altruistic punishment in humans. *Nature*, *415*, 137-140.
3. Crockett, M. J. (2017). Moral outrage in the digital age. *Nature Human Behaviour*, *1*, 769-771.

**Week 4: Oct 2      Moral Signaling**

1. Dana, J., Cain, D. M., & Dawes, R. M. (2006). What you don't know won't hurt me: Costly (but quiet) exit in dictator games. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *100*, 192-201.
2. Jordan, J.J., Sommers, R., Bloom, P., & Rand, D.G. (2017). Why do we hate hypocrites? Evidence for a theory of false signaling. *Psychological Science*, *28*, 356-368.
3. Schwartz, S. A., & Inbar, Y. (2023). Is it good to feel bad about littering? Conflict between moral beliefs and behaviors for everyday transgressions. *Cognition*, *236*, 105437.

**Oct 9      No class: Fall break****Week 5: Oct 16      Harmless but Wrong?**

1. Haidt, J. (2001). The emotional dog and its rational tail: A social intuitionist approach to moral judgment. *Psychological Review*, *108*, 814-834.
2. Gray, K., Schein, C., & Ward, A. F. (2014). The myth of harmless wrongs in moral cognition: Automatic dyadic completion from sin to suffering. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, *143*, 1600-1615.
3. Rottman, J., Kelemen, D., & Young, L. (2014). *Tainting the soul: Purity concerns predict moral judgments of suicide*. *Cognition*, *130*, 217-226.

**Week 6: Oct 23      Off Due to Power Outage****Week 7: Oct 30      Consequentialism**

1. Singer, P. (1979). *Practical ethics* (Excerpt - "About Ethics"). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2. Everett, J. A., Faber, N. S., Savulescu, J., & Crockett, M. J. (2018). The costs of being consequentialist: Social inference from instrumental harm and impartial beneficence. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 79*, 200-216.
3. Bartels, D. M., & Pizarro, D. A. (2011). The mismeasure of morals: Antisocial personality traits predict utilitarian responses to moral dilemmas. *Cognition, 121*(1), 154-161.

**Week 8: Nov 6          Character**

1. Goodwin, G. P., Piazza, J., & Rozin, P. (2014). Moral character predominates in person perception and evaluation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 106*, 148-168.
2. Uhlmann, E. L., Pizarro, D. A., & Diermeier, D. (2015). A person-centered approach to moral judgment. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 10*, 72-81.
3. Uhlmann, E. L., Zhu, L., & Tannenbaum, D. (2013). When it takes a bad person to do the right thing. *Cognition, 126*, 326-334.

**Week 9: Nov 13        Sacred Values**

1. Roth, A. E. (2007). Repugnance as a constraint on markets. *Journal of Economic Perspectives 21*, 37-58.
2. Tetlock, P. E. (2003). Thinking the unthinkable: Sacred values and taboo cognitions. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 7*, 320-324.
3. Ginges, J., Atran, S., Medin, D., & Shikaki, K. (2007). Sacred bounds on rational resolution of violent political conflict. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 104*, 7357-7360.

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

**Week 10: Nov 20      Morality and Politics**

1. Inbar, Y., & Lammers, J. (2012). Political diversity in social and personality psychology. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 7*, 496-503.
2. 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.
3. Wang, S. Y. N., & Inbar, Y. (2021). Moral-language use by US political elites. *Psychological Science, 32*, 14-26.

**Week 11: Nov 27      Presentation Day 2**

**Week 12: Dec 4        Presentation Day 3**

\*\*\* Note: Final papers are due **Dec 4 in class**.

## UTSC POLICIES

### *University's Plagiarism Detection Tool*

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).

### *Academic Integrity*

The University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences. Potential offences in papers and assignments include using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement, submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor, making up sources or facts, obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment. On tests and exams, cheating includes using or possessing unauthorized aids, looking at someone else's answers during an exam or test, misrepresenting your identity, or falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University.

### *Equity, Diversity and Inclusion*

The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another's differences. U of T does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities. The University of Toronto is a richly diverse community and as such is committed to providing an environment free of any form of harassment, misconduct, or discrimination. In this course, I seek to foster a civil, respectful, and open-minded climate in which we can all work together to develop a better understanding of key questions and debates through meaningful dialogue. As such, I expect all involved with this course to refrain from actions or behaviours that intimidate, humiliate, or demean persons or groups or that undermine their security or self-esteem based on traits related to race, religion, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, disability, receipt of public assistance or record of offences.

### *Accommodations*

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the AccessAbility Services Office as soon as possible. AccessAbility Services staff (located in Rm AA142, Arts and Administration Building) are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate

accommodations 416-287-7560 or email [ability.utscc@utoronto.ca](mailto:ability.utscc@utoronto.ca). The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

### *Recording of Classroom Material by Students*

Recording or photographing any aspect of a university course - lecture, tutorial, seminar, lab, studio, practice session, field trip etc. – without prior approval of all involved and with written approval from the instructor is not permitted.

## DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY POLICY ON MISSED TERM WORK

For missed term work (assignments and term tests) due to illness, emergency, or other mitigating circumstances, please follow the procedure outlined below.

### **Procedure:**

1. Complete the [Request for Missed Term Work Accommodations Form](#) ("MTW Form").
2. Email **BOTH** your MTW Form and Supporting Documentation to [yoel.inbar@utoronto.ca](mailto:yoel.inbar@utoronto.ca) according to the instructions specified below.

### **Supporting Documentation Requirements and Deadlines:**

Reason for Missed Work	Documentation required for a <b>first absence</b> in the term	Documentation required for <b>subsequent absences</b> in the term	Deadline for submitting MTW form and supporting documentation
Illness or Injury	<a href="#">ACORN</a> Absence Declaration	<a href="#">UofT Verification of Illness Form</a>	<b><u>WITHIN 2 BUSINESS DAYS</u></b> of the missed work
Bereavement	<a href="#">ACORN</a> Absence Declaration	A death certificate or funeral announcement	<b><u>WITHIN 2 BUSINESS DAYS</u></b> of the missed work
University-sponsored athletic or artistic obligation at the varsity/provincial/national level	<a href="#">ACORN</a> Absence Declaration	A note from a university staff member (advisor, coach, residence staff, etc.) who can substantiate the obligation, sent directly to the course email	<b><u>10 BUSINESS DAYS IN ADVANCE</u></b> of the missed deadline
Disability-related reasons for students registered	For missed <b>TERM TESTS</b> , - <b>Contact your AccessAbility consultant</b> and have them write to		<b><u>PREFERABLY IN ADVANCE OF THE MISSED</u></b>



with AccessAbility Services	<p>the course email detailing the accommodations needed.</p> <p>For missed <b>ASSIGNMENTS</b>,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If your desired accommodation is <b>within the scope</b> of your Accommodation Letter (e.g. your letter includes “extensions of up to 7 days” and you need 3 days), send your <b>Accommodation Letter</b> to the course email and specify how many days extension you are requesting.</li> <li>- If your desired accommodation is <b>outside the scope</b> of your Accommodation Letter (e.g. your letter includes “extensions of up to 7 days” but you need more time than that), <b>contact your AccessAbility consultant</b> and have them write to the course email detailing the accommodations needed.</li> </ul>	<b><u>WORK, OR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE</u></b>
Academic Conflict (e.g. two midterms at the same time)	Screenshot from Quercus demonstrating the conflict.	<b><u>10 BUSINESS DAYS IN ADVANCE</u></b> of the
Religious Conflict	None required	missed work

**Notes:**

- The following reasons are not considered sufficient for missed term work: social activities, recreational travel, technological issues, avoidance of assessments or deadlines, work commitments
- [Missed Final Exams](#) are handled by the Registrar’s Office and should be declared on eService.
- For ACORN absence declarations, the date you declare the absence is required to fall within the seven-day declaration period (i.e.) the absence cannot be submitted proactively or retroactively.
- Instructors cannot accept term work any later than five business days after the last day of class. Beyond this date, accommodations are only possible via the Registrar’s Office [petition process](#).
- If you are unable to submit your request within the specified number of business days, you must still email your instructor within that window to explain the nature of the delay. Exceptions to the deadlines are made only under exceptional circumstances.
- Multiple assignments due on the same day are not considered academic conflicts. Students are expected to manage their time effectively to meet assignment deadlines.

- Back-to-back tests/quizzes are not considered academic conflicts. Only overlapping activities are conflicts.
- Students are responsible for keeping their course timetables conflict-free. Students who register in two courses with overlapping lecture/tutorial/lab schedules will not be accommodated.

### **Next Steps:**

After submitting your documentation, you will receive a response from your instructor or TA. The course instructor reserves the right to decide what accommodations will be made. Failure to adhere to any aspect of this policy may result in a denial of your request. **You are responsible for checking your official U of T email and Quercus course announcements daily**, as accommodations may be time-critical.

For missed assignments, **do not wait for the instructor's response to resume work on your assignment.** Extensions may be as short as one business day, depending on the nature of the illness/emergency. Complete your assignment as soon as you're able, and email it to your instructor.

If an accommodation is granted but a continued illness/emergency prevents you from meeting its requirements, you must repeat the missed term work procedure to request additional accommodations. **Please make it clear in your subject line that you are requesting a second accommodation.** Examples: If you were granted an extension for a paper but are still unable to meet the new deadline, or if you miss a make-up term test, you must submit *another* MTW form and supply documentation according to the "subsequent absences" column in the chart above. \*Note: In the case of a missed make-up test, an opportunity to write a second make-up test may not necessarily be provided.