Phil 891- Moral Psychology
Fall 2015
Course #26427

Monday, Wednesday, Friday, 3pm-3:50pm
Room: Biddle 200
Instructor: Dr. Derek Leben
leben@pitt.edu

office hours: MWF, 12pm-1pm, and by appointment 223B Biddle Hall

Course Description:

This seminar will discuss the key debates and recent work within the field of moral psychology. The course is broken down into four units: (I) The Causes of Moral Judgments, (II) The Features of Moral Concepts, (III) Character and Responsibility Attributions, (IV) Justifying or Debunking Moral Beliefs. The topics will include:

I: Moral Judgments: Are moral judgments caused by rational inference or unconscious cognitive or emotional systems? Are these psychological systems unified or distributed? Are they innate or learned? What is the function of a moral judgment, both in evolutionary history and contemporary usage?

II: Moral Concepts: Does the definition of ‘morally right/wrong/permissible’ appeal to inherent motivation, objective truth, and universal authority?

III: Moral Character and Responsibility: Do stable ‘moral’ personality traits exist? Does free will exist? Are either of these required for attributions of moral responsibility?

IV: Justifying Moral Beliefs: Is moral psychology relevant to the justification or undermining of moral beliefs?

Textbook
- Moral Psychology (available at the bookstore)

Requirements:

- Attendance and Participation (10%)
- Presentations (20%)
- Paper 1 (30%)
- Paper 2 (40%)

Note: The “total points” tally on courseweb does NOT take these weights into account. If you want to keep track of your grade, take the percent signs off all the numbers above and multiply your percentage on each assignment by that number, then add those numbers up and divide by 100 (or the current total possible points, whichever is lower).
Attendance and Participation:
- Attendance is required
- Texting in class will be penalized with a half point taken off participation
- Students are expected to come to class with the assigned readings completed
- Outstanding preparation and participation will be taken into account when grading borderline cases

Paper:
- Paper must be emailed to: lebenphilosophy@gmail.com
- Late papers will be assessed a one-third-grade penalty per day (a B+ will become a B, a B will become a B-, etc.). In special circumstances, a student may – prior to the due date – request an extension.
- It is the responsibility of students to understand what constitutes plagiarism and what its consequences are. If you’re in doubt, please ask. Plagiarists will be dealt with harshly.
- Try to avoid referring to your own attitudes or using the term: “I feel.” Here is a list of 101 expressions to use instead of “feels:”
  - http://people.umass.edu/klement/100/101.html

Rubric for Papers:
A: Clear support, research, examples, objections, and replies are presented to the arguments
B: Arguments are presented that are relevant and effective
C: Material is presented accurately and without error
D: Paper is complete
F: None of the above

Grading Standards

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<th>Grade</th>
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Students with disabilities and special needs:
If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Office of Health & Wellness (OHW), G-10 Student Union Building, (814) 269-7119 to schedule an appointment as early as possible in the term. OHW will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.
Readings
Readings marked (Txt) are in the Textbook, otherwise they are provided by the instructor on courseweb
Readings in Italics are Optional

Week 1) Introduction: Moral Psychology and Moral Theories
- Introduction
  The Editors (Txt)
- The Trolley Problem
  J.J. Thompson (Txt)

I: The Causes of Moral Judgments

Week 2) Reason vs. Passion
- Enquiries Concerning the Principles of Morals
  David Hume (Txt)
- An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue
  Francis Hutcheson (Txt)
- Groundwork on the Metaphysics of Morals
  Immanuel Kant (Txt)
- The Claim to Moral Adequacy of a Highest Stage of Moral Judgment
  Lawrence Kohlberg (Txt)
- Moral Judgment as a Natural Kind
  Kumar, 2015

Week 3) Dual Process Theory
- An fMRI Investigation of Emotional Engagement in Moral Judgment
  Greene et al., 2001
- The Secret Joke of Kant’s Soul
  Josh Greene
- Beyond Point and Shoot Morality
  Greene, 2015
- Disgust as Embodied Moral Judgment
  Schnall et al, 2009
- Manipulations of Emotional Context Shape Moral Judgment
  Valdesolo and Desteno, 2006
- The Neural Basis of Economic Decision-Making in the Ultimatum Game
  Sanfey et al., 2003

Week 4) Moral Foundations Theory
- Moral Foundations Theory: the pragmatic validity of moral pluralism
  Graham et al, forthcoming
- The Emotional Dog and its Rational Tail
  Jonathan Haidt (Txt)
- Liberals and Conservatives Rely on Different Sets of Moral Foundations
  Graham et al, 2009

Week 5) Moral Grammar Theory
- The Elements of Moral Cognition (excerpts)
  John Mikhail, 2012

Week 6) Dyadic Theory
- Mind Perception is the Essence of Morality
  Gray, Young & Waytz, 2012
- Disconfirming MFT on its Own Terms
  Gray & Keeney, in press
• The Myth of Harmless Wrongs in Moral Action  Gray et al., 2012

Week 7) The Function of Moral Judgments
• The Evolution of Reciprocal Altruism  Trivers, 1971
• The Evolution of Morality (ch.1)  Joyce, 2006
• Unto Others (excerpts)  Sober and Wilson (Txt)

II: Moral Concepts

Week 8) Objectivity and Universality
• The Moral Problem  Michael Smith (Txt)
• The Perceived Objectivity of Moral Beliefs  Goodwin & Darley, 2010
• Folk Moral Relativism  Sarkissian et al., 2012
• Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong (ch.1)  J.L. Mackie

Week 9) Inherent Motivation
• A Cognitive-Developmental Approach to Morality  Robert James Blair (Txt)
• Individuals with Sociopathic Behavior Caused by Frontal Damage Fail to Respond Autonomically to Social Stimuli  Damasio et al., 1990
• Is Moral Internalism Supported by Folk Intuitions?  Strandberg & Bjorklund, 2012
• Pushing the Intuitions Behind Moral Internalism  Leben and Wilckens, 2014

Week 10) Moral Influence on Non-Moral Concepts
• Intention, Intentional Action, and Moral Considerations  Knobe, 2004
• Moral Judgments and Intuitions about Freedom  Phillips and Knobe, 2009
• The Concept of Happiness  Knobe and Phillips, 2009
• The Rise and Fall of Experimental Philosophy  Kauppinen, 2007

III: Character and Responsibility

Week 11) The Deep Self
• The Deep Self Model and Asymmetries in Folk Judgments About Intentional Action  Sripada, 2010
• Beliefs About the True Self Explain Asymmetries Based on Moral Judgment  Newman et al., 2015
• Moral Internalism and the True Self  Leben, unpublished
• The Essential Moral Self  Strohminger and Nichols, 2014

Week 12) Lack of Character
• Nichomachean Ethics (excerpt)  Aristotle (Txt)
• Behavioral Study of Obedience  Milgram (Txt)
• The Person and the Situation  Ross and Nisbett (Txt)
Week 13) Agency and Responsibility

- Essays on the Active Powers of Man  
  Thomas Reid (Txt)
- Beyond Freedom and Dignity  
  BF Skinner (Txt)
- Apparent Mental Causation  
  Wegner & Wheatley (Txt)
- Agency, Authorship, and Illusion  
  Nahmias (Txt)
- Free Will in Scientific Psychology  
  Baumeister (Txt)
- Scientific Skepticism about Free Will  
  Mele (Txt)

IV: Justifying or Undermining Moral Beliefs

Week 14) Process Debunking Arguments

- Framing Moral Intuitions  
  Sinnott-Armstrong, 2008
- The Normative Insignificance of Neuroscience  
  Berker, 2009
- Does Neuroscience Really Undermine Deontological Theory?  
  Dean, 2010
- When Psychology Undermines Beliefs  
  Leben, 2012
- In Defense of Best-Explanation Debunking  
  Hricko and Leben, unpublished

Week 15) Evolutionary Debunking Arguments

- A Darwinian Dilemma for Realist Theories of Value  
  Street, 2006
- The Evolution of Morality (excerpt)  
  Joyce, 2006
- Ethics and Intuitions  
  Singer, 2005

Week 16) Defenses of Moral Intuitionism

- Moral Intuitionism Meets Empirical Psychology  
  Sinnott-Armstrong (Txt)