

830:421

Advanced Topics in Social Psychology

Fall 2017

Dr. David Wilder 603 or 231 Tillett Hall dawilder@psych.rutgers.edu

Office hours: Wed. 9-11 and by appointment

Text: Shermer, Michael (2004). The Science of Good and Evil. New York: Holt ISBN: 0-8050-7769-3

This class will explore theory and research related to moral beliefs and behaviors. The goal of the course is to (a) survey moral belief systems across time and culture, (b) review classic philosophical explanations of morality, (c) examine past and present psychological theories of moral behavior, and (d) consider how moral beliefs impact behavior, particularly when people confront moral dilemmas. Readings from online sources and material posted at sakai supplement the text chapters.

Evaluation: Course grade will be based on the following:

Class attendance:	25
(1 point for every class you attend; maximum of 25)	
Class assignments:	80
Class presentation and power points:	50
Final exam:	70
Total:	225 points

Class attendance: Classes will focus on discussion of readings. I will supplement that with other material. The topic of moral beliefs is intrinsically interesting and certainly important to our sense of self-identity and how we behave. For the class to function well, you must be prepared to participate

Class assignments: There will be some homework exercises to complete over the course of the semester. These exercises are thought problems and brief questionnaires. Your anonymous responses will be used in class to illustrate some of the issues we discuss in the course. **To receive credit each homework assignment must be brought to class on paper on the date it is due. Email submissions are not acceptable because we will be talking about the assignments during class.**

Class Presentation and Power points : We will be covering a fairly wide range of material. Your assignment is to select some area of moral beliefs and explore it in more detail

than we have time to do in class. Then prepare a 15 minute presentation for the class to be given during one of the days set aside for presentations (see class schedule below). The presentation should be accompanied by a set of power point slides. A copy of your slides must be sent to me on the day of your presentation. Your presentation can be a discussion of a theory of morality; it can be a review of research; it can be a proposal for research. I want to give you as much latitude as possible to pursue a question or topic that interests you.

Final exam : The final will be an essay exam. I will give you a set of questions in advance, so that you can prepare your answers to be written in class on the scheduled day for the final.

Final grade: Your final grade will be based on a possible 225 points. There is no extra credit. The following scale will be used: 203-225 A; 196-202 B+; 180-195 B; 173-179 C+; 158-172 C; 135-157 D

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topics</u>
-------------	---------------

9/6	Overview and class survey (<i>Assignment 1</i>)
------------	--

9/11	Moral behavior: what we believe; universal morals?
-------------	---

For 9/11:

1. Debate.org asks people whether or not there is a universal moral code.

<http://www.debate.org/opinions/is-there-a-universal-moral-code>

Assignment 2a: Read a few pages of opinions and then select the one you find most compelling on each side (one “yes” opinion and one “no” opinion). Make a copy, bring it to class, and be prepared to explain your choices.

2. Gallup polls that examines change in moral beliefs between 2001 and 2015.

<http://www.gallup.com/poll/183413/americans-continue-shift-left-key-moral-issues.aspx>

<http://www.gallup.com/poll/1681/moral-issues.aspx>

<http://www.gallup.com/poll/210917/views-moral-values-slip-seven-year-lows.aspx>

<http://www.gallup.com/poll/210542/americans-hold-record-liberal-views-moral-issues.aspx>

Assignment 2b: Did any of the shifts in moral beliefs surprise you? If so, which ones? Write them down for class discussion.

3. "Moral relativism class" word document at Resources at Sakai

9/13 Religion and Morality

For 9/13:

Youtube video debate on morality and religion:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UisxYorDNr4>

Assignment 3: After viewing above debate, which arguments do you find most convincing? What would you have said that was not said in the "debate"? Bring 1 paragraph response to these 2 questions to class.

9/18-25 Some Western philosophical positions

9/18 Virtue Ethics, Deontology

For 9/18:

1. "Virtue Ethics" word document at Resources

Assignment 4a: Read the story about "Nick and Katie" and prepare a paragraph response; bring it to class.

2. "Kantian Deontology" word document at Resources

Assignment 4b: Read the 3 moral dilemmas and write a few sentences to resolve the dilemma from the perspective of Deontology and from the perspective of Virtue ethics.

9/20 Utilitarianism, Sentiments

For 9/20:

1. "Hume and Morality" word document at Resources
2. "Utilitarian morality" word document at Resources

Assignment 5: Answer the 2 questions in the word file at Resources titled "Sept 20 assignment"

9/25 Existentialism, Moral Objectivism

For 9/25

1. “Existentialist ethics” word document at Resources
2. “What is Objectivism” word document at Resources

Assignment 6: Read Sartre’s dilemma and explain your solution in a paragraph.

9/27 Intuitionist approach: Moral Foundations Theory

For 9/27:

1. Haidt paper: “Emotional dog and rational tail” pdf document at Resources
2. “Five foundations” table word document at Resources

10/2, 4, 9 Guests

10/11 Moral Foundations Theory continued

For 10/11:

Assignment 7: Complete the “Moral Conflict” questionnaire and bring it to class.

10/16 Shermer: The Science of Good and Evil

For 10/16:

1. Shermer chapters 1 and 2

10/18-23 Evil

For 10/18:

1. Shermer chapter 3
2. “Hinckley: Evolution of insanity plea” word document at Resources

Assignment 8 for 10/18: View the “theodicy” youtube video and write a paragraph indicating where you stand on this issue: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AzNEG1GB-k>

For 10/23:

1. “McDonald’s strip search class” word document at Resources

Assignment 9 for 10/23: “McDonald’s homework assignment”

10/25 Free Will

For 10/25:

1. Shermer chapters 4, 5

Assignment 10 for 10/25: Answer the “Free Will questions”

Assignment 11 due 10/25 (but will be discussed on 10/30): Complete the “Personal Hygiene Survey”

10/30 Shermer’s Provisional Morality

For 10/30:

1. Shermer chapters 6, 7, and 8
2. Rozin et al article: “Disgust...handbook of emotions” pdf document at Resources

11/1 Applications to campus and politics

For 11/1:

1. Haidt et al article: “Above and below...” pdf document at Resources
2. Graham et al article: “Ideological differences...” pdf document at Resources
3. “Political views of American professors” pdf document at Resources

11/6-8 Morality and Animals

For 11/6:

1. “Chimpanzees successfully play...” word document at Resources
2. “Human Fairness: Innate or Evolved” word document at Resources
3. “Evolution of Empathy” word document at Resources

4. “Can animals empathize?” word document at Resources

Questions about animals and morality: Do animals show moral behavior? What does animal “morality” have to say that may explain human morality? How should animals be treated? Do they have rights? Class discussion will focus on these and other issues, so come prepared with your thoughts. (No written assignment for these classes)

11/13-15 Moral Development

For 11/13:

1. Summaries of 4 psychological theories of moral development at Resources
Jean Piaget
Lawrence Kohlberg
Elliot Turiel
Carol Gilligan
2. “Gilligan In a different voice” pdf document at Resources

Assignment 12: Two moral dilemmas used by Kohlberg. Come to class prepared to share your responses to each.

11/20 Living in Accord with Moral Beliefs: Applying social psychology

11/27-29 Presentations

12/4-6-11 Presentations

12/13 Wrap up and loose ends

For 12/13:

1. “The social dilemma of autonomous vehicles” word document at Resources

12/22 Friday Final Exam 12-3 pm