

830:421

Advanced Topics in Social Psychology

Summer 2019

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Office hours: 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 philosophical and psychological explanations of morality, (c) examine current work on what occurs in the brain when making moral decisions as well as work on morality in children and animals, 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 exercises/homework:	60
Class presentation and power points:	30
Class participation	20
Final exam	30
Total:	140 points

Grades: 90% of total points and above A; 87 % B+; 80% B; 77% C+; 70% C; 60% D

**Class exercises (60):** There will be a few 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. These assignments will be announced in class and posted at sakai.

**Class Presentation and Power points (30):** 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 20-30 minute presentation for the class to be given during one of the last classes. The presentation should be based on 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 an in depth review of a psychological theory of morality; it can be a review of research; it can be a proposal for research (e.g., planning an experiment). I want to give you as much latitude as possible to pursue a question or topic that interests you.

**Class participation (20):** Because this is a small class and each meeting is long, the class will be more informative and interesting to the extent students offer their own views on the material. To encourage participation you can earn up to 3 points each class (except for the first class) for active participation in the discussion.

**Final Exam (30):** There is only one formal exam for the class. This will be a take-home final that will be available on 7/1. It is due at the end of the day on 7/4 (last class). It will consist of 3 essay questions each worth 10 points.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topics</u>
<b>5/29</b>	<b>Overview and class survey</b>  <i>Assignment 1 distributed in class</i>
<b>6/3</b>	<b>Moral behavior: what we believe; universal morals?</b>  1. Shermer: Chapters 1 and 2 2. “Moral relativism class” word document at Resources at Sakai 3. Gallup polls that examines change in moral beliefs between 2001 and 2019 <i>Assignment 2 at Sakai Resources</i>
<b>6/5</b>	<b>Western philosophical positions: Virtue Ethics, Deontology, Utilitarianism, Sentiments, Existentialism</b>  1. “Virtue Ethics” word document at Resources 2. “Kantian Deontology” word document at Resources 3. “Utilitarian Morality” word document at Resources 4. “Sentiment Morality” 5. “Existentialist Ethics” word document at Resources <i>Assignment 3 at Sakai Resources</i>
<b>6/10</b>	<b>Intuitionist approach: Moral Foundations Theory</b>  1. Haidt paper: “Emotional dog and rational tail” pdf document at Resources 2. “Five foundations” table word document at Resources 3. Haidt et al article: “Above and below...” pdf document at Resources 4. Graham et al article: “Ideological differences...” pdf document at Resources <i>Assignment 4 at Sakai Resources</i>

**6/12 Evil and Free Will**

1. Shermer chapters 3, 4
  2. “Hinckley: Evolution of insanity plea” word document at Resources
  3. “McDonald’s strip search class” word document at Resources
  4. “Intergroup aggression” pdf document at Resources
  5. “Moral complexity” pdf document at Resources
- Assignments 5, 6, and 7 at Sakai Resources*

**6/17 Religion, Morality, and Provisional Morality**

1. Shermer chapters 5, 6, 7, 8
  2. “Terror management theory” pdf document at Resources
- Assignments 8 and 9 at Sakai Resources*

**6/19 Animals and Morality**

1. Rozin et al article: “Disgust...handbook of emotions” pdf document at Resources
2. “Chimpanzees successfully play...” word document at Resources
3. “Human Fairness: Innate or Evolved” word document at Resources
4. “Evolution of Empathy” word document at Resources
5. “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? Class discussion will focus on these and other issues, so come prepared with your thoughts.

**6/24 Children, the Brain, and Morality**

1. “Infant morality” pdf document at Resources
2. “Infant fairness” pdf document at Resources

Questions: When do children show moral behavior? What is the implication of this research for theories of morality? What areas of the brain are implicated in moral decision making?

**6/26 Presentations**

**7/1 Guest speaker**

**7/3 Presentations**