

**PPE 4800-302**

**Psychology Capstone:**

**Moral Psychology**

**Spring 2024**

**When and where:**

Monday 12:00 – 3:00pm

Room 337, Claudia Cohen Hall

**Instructor:**

Paul Deutchman

[pdeu@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:pdeu@sas.upenn.edu)

375 Claudia Cohen Hall/Zoom:

<https://upenn.zoom.us/my/pauldeutchman>

Office hours: Monday 3-4pm

or by appointment

**Course description**

This course explores human morality and its importance to human behavior and society. We will read and discuss theoretical and empirical work on morality, primarily from the psychological literature, but supplemented with work from moral philosophy, evolutionary biology, and behavioral economics. We will start the class by discussing the evolutionary origins of morality and cover major themes of moral psychology spanning moral judgements and decision making, moral emotions, and moral development. We will conclude the course by synthesizing the concepts and ideas from moral psychology with philosophical theories of morality and will discuss the implications of moral psychology to contemporary societal issues. Over the length of the course, we will address questions such as: Where does morality come from? How does morality change across childhood? Why are there cross-cultural differences in morality? How can the empirical study of morality inform ethical decision making and public policy?

**Course goals**

- Think about your own behavior and cognition through a new lens with an understanding of its evolutionary and psychological foundations
- Gain a better understanding of the complexity of human behavior and society
- Become a more discerning reader and consumer of science journalism and learn to read academic primary sources.

- Hone your critical thinking and writing skills as well as your ability to synthesize complex information.

### Grade breakdown

Requirement	% of Grade
Attendance & Participation	15
Discussion Posts	15
Weekly presentations	10
Quizzes	20
Final Paper	30
Final Paper Presentation	10

### Overview

#### Discussion posts and in-class presentations

**1) Discussion posts:**

For every class, students are responsible for writing and submitting a 400-500-word discussion post on the assigned article before class. Information on how to write a discussion post is available below and described in detail on Canvas. We will also cover this on the first day of class.

**2) In-class presentations:**

Each week, a student will prepare a discussion on that week’s topic. Students are also expected to give a final presentation on a research paper related to the material covered in class. More details will be available on Canvas.

#### Attendance & Participation

Students are expected to attend every class. You should come prepared having read the assigned articles and ready to discuss it. Unexcused absences will harm your attendance & participation grade. If you miss class you are responsible for that day’s content—reach out to your classmates for their notes. I will also post the lecture slides on Canvas after class. Posting discussion questions to the week's discussion board will also factor into your participation grade.

#### Discussion Posts

Your discussion can include comments and/or open questions (with possible answers/solutions) but should not revolve around issues that can be addressed in the reading itself. You will submit your discussion post to the relevant assignment on Canvas by the due date. **You are also responsible for posting two discussion/content questions on that class’s discussion board on Canvas** to help that week’s presenters guide discussion. You can post questions about a reading's

methodology & findings, bigger picture questions about the content, or clarification questions if something confuses you about a reading.

Additionally, **responses should not summarize readings**. Instead, think deeply about the reading, draw connections with lecture content and past readings, think about alternative explanations for reported findings and alternative methods or extensions for a given study. While it may be tempting to focus only on criticisms, much of what you'll be reading is top-notch science so think about what was done well in addition to what could have been done better or what wasn't done. For more information, please see the Discussion Post Guide on canvas. Finally, feel free to use a large portion of your response post to outline a potential study that could address an open question that you've identified in the paper. If you have worked on research proposals for other classes, you could consider this to be a micro version of that kind of assignment.

You will complete 12 discussion posts throughout the length of course. Each discussion post will be graded out of 2 points. At the end of the semester, you will have the option to drop your lowest graded discussion post. Discussion posts and discussion board questions are due the night before class (Sunday 11:59pm) so I and that week's presenters have time to review them before class.

## Weekly Presentations

At the beginning of the semester you will be assigned to two topics based on your preferences (which I will solicit via a survey at the beginning of the semester). For these two topics, you will be responsible for working with one or two classmates to put together a (brief) presentation on that week's topic and lead an in-class discussion. As a part of this presentation, **your group is responsible for finding a related article to the class's topic and/or assigned readings** (I will discuss in class how to find related papers). You will have approximately an hour for both the presentation and the discussion and the presentation should take up no more than half of that time. Your presentation should focus on the article you found and only very briefly summarize the assigned readings at the highest level (e.g., explaining the main research questions and findings from the papers—I will generally cover the specifics of the papers in my lecture). The paper presentation should include a short summary of the research questions, methods, and results. For review papers, the presentations should outline the key concepts and ideas covered. Most importantly, you should come prepared to lead a discussion on the paper—this can include, but is not limited to, discussing findings, related research and papers, future research directions, potential limitations, connections to other material/papers from class, classroom activities, and broader implications for real-world behavior and society. I'll be there to jump in and guide the discussion but you should come prepared to lead it. You are required to send me the additional article you selected by **Thursday 5pm** of the preceding week so I can confirm its suitability (but I encourage you to send earlier). I also encourage you to send me an outline or list of the discussion questions you plan on covering if you'd like any feedback before your presentation.

## Quizzes

You will take four mixed-format quizzes (T/F, multiple choice, short answer, etc) throughout the semester. Each quiz will cover material from that third of the course (e.g., they are not cumulative). Quizzes will be completed on Canvas and will be open-book and timed (quiz

format subject to change). Deadlines for completing the quizzes can be found on Canvas and the syllabus schedule. Quizzes will be available from the end of class (Monday 3pm) until the night before the next class (e.g., Sunday 11:59pm). For example, quiz 1 due Monday 2/12 will be available on Canvas from Monday 2/5 at 3pm until Sunday 2/11 11:59pm. Quizzes should be completed independently—students found to share answers will also receive a grade of 0. **If you miss the deadline to complete a quiz you will receive a grade of 0.**

### **Final Paper: Research paper**

In this paper, you will synthesize course content covered up to that point and write a research paper (2500-3000 words) where you will stake out a position and use primary sources (e.g., academic articles and literature reviews) to support your argument. More details will be available on Canvas closer to the due date.

## **General Course Policies**

### **Plagiarism**

Students at Penn are expected to have high standards of integrity. Any student who cheats or plagiarizes on examinations or assignments may fail the course, and a letter of explanation will be placed in their files. Students who plagiarize are subject to dismissal from the University. Note that **substantial paraphrasing**, or knowingly using the words or thoughts of another individual (from conversation, web sources, or published or unpublished material) **without citation can also be considered plagiarism**. (This means that you need to work to put things into your own words. Substantial quoting, with appropriate citation, is not plagiarism but is lazy writing, and will be marked down.) Any work that has been confirmed to be plagiarized will receive a grade of 0. For information on Penn's Integrity Policy, see: <https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/code-of-academic-integrity/>. If you are unsure of the appropriate way to give credit in a paper or about any other aspect of an assignment, please contact me.

### **ChatGPT**

There are a few situations in which using ChatGPT is acceptable. For instance, it would be acceptable to use it to help brainstorm examples of a psychological phenomenon such as social norms. It is not acceptable to use ChatGPT to actually write assignments for you (including discussion posts in addition to papers) and in any case, would be ill-advised—you'll almost always do better when writing yourself than using ChatGPT. Importantly, ChatGPT is known to make up academic citations so if you use it to write a paper, I will be able to tell and you will receive a grade of 0.

## **Readings**

All readings for this course will be posted on Canvas in advance. Readings consist of 2-3 academic articles for each class. I have kept the reading relatively light to ensure that you are really doing all the readings—please come to class prepared to discuss the assigned reading.

## **Late Submissions & Make-up Policy**

All assignments are due on Canvas the night before the due date (e.g., 11:59pm). Assignments received after deadlines will automatically be marked “late” on Canvas and will receive a full letter grade deduction, with another letter grade deducted for each additional day late. Late discussion posts will receive half credit one day late and no credit beyond that. The only exceptions to the late policy are due to documented medical emergencies (or other Penn-approved personal emergencies). If you will have a foreseeable conflict (athletic travel, etc.), please contact me beforehand to make alternative arrangements.

Papers must be uploaded to Canvas. Please note that if your paper fails to upload properly, it will still be considered late, no matter when you sent it. It is your responsibility to ensure that we have received your papers and assignments on time.

## **Electronics in the Classroom**

Students are not permitted to use their phones during class (during the break is okay). Students are permitted to use their laptops or tablets during class to take notes. However, out of respect to your classmates and myself, please refrain from using them for non-class related uses (e.g., online shopping, watching sports) as it is distracting to yourself and others. If I notice your use of electronics is distracting other students or you’re using them for reasons other than taking notes this will impact your participation grade in the course and I may change the policy.

## **Student Support**

If you are a student with a documented disability seeking reasonable accommodations in this course, please contact the Weingarten Center learning. If you are feeling stressed, having challenges managing your time, sleep, or making choices around alcohol and food, Student Health and Counseling (3624 Market Street, First Floor West) offers counseling services via appointment and drop-ins.

I also encourage you to take advantage of the library resources available to you at Penn Libraries. Penn Libraries is a great resource for you and they are happy to help you with any related questions such as how to best find academic sources for a research paper.

## **Classroom Participation**

Students are expected to attend every class and participate by asking and answering questions, participating equally in group activities, contributing to class discussion, and posting discussion questions on Canvas. Failing to do so will negatively impact your participation grade in the class. That said, students should stay home if they're not feeling well, please email me if you're unable to make it to class for that or any other reason—failing to do so will harm your participation grade. Not completing or submitting class activities or assignments (e.g., not submitting your research paper proposal) will also negatively impact your participation grade.

### **Canvas**

A copy of this syllabus will be posted to Canvas under 'modules'. Downloadable copies of the lecture slides, details on the paper assignments, and other course materials will be posted there as well. Lecture PDFs will be available following lectures. Your reading responses and papers will be submitted to Canvas. I look forward to seeing discussions develop on the public discussion boards as well.

### **Email**

Please allow me two business days to respond to your email. In practice I will respond to you as soon as possible. If you do not hear back from me after two days feel free to send a follow-up email. I do not regularly check my email in the evenings and the weekend so please do not expect an immediate response if you contact me during those times. Feel free to reach out to me with any questions/comments/concerns about the class, course content, or anything that's on your mind.

### **Grade Questions/Changes/Communication**

If you have a question about a graded assignment, you must contact me no later than one week after the assignment was returned, detailing your concerns in writing and we will set up a time to meet. Discussions regarding grades will only be conducted in-person. I will entirely re-grade the assignment in question, substituting the newer grade for the original. Importantly, this means you may potentially receive a higher or lower grade than you received initially.

### **Schedule**

Date	Topic	Readings & Assignments
Mon 1/22	Introduction and syllabus review	
	Origins of human morality	

Mon 1/29	Evolution and human behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kurzban, R., Burton-Chellew, M. N., &amp; West, S. A. (2015). The evolution of altruism in humans. <i>Annual review of psychology</i>, 66, 575-599.</li> <li>• Tomasello, M., &amp; Vaish, A. (2013). Origins of human cooperation and morality. <i>Annual review of psychology</i>, 64, 231-255.</li> </ul>
Mon 2/5	Morality as cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curry, O. S. (2016). Morality as cooperation: A problem-centered approach. <i>The evolution of morality</i>, 27-51.</li> <li>• Curry, O. S., Mullins, D. A., &amp; Whitehouse, H. (2019). Is it good to cooperate? Testing the theory of morality-as-cooperation in 60 societies. <i>Current Anthropology</i>, 60(1), 47-69.</li> </ul>
Theories of morality		
Mon 2/12	Moral foundations	<p><b>Quiz 1 Due</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graham, J., Haidt, J., Koleva, S., Motyl, M., Iyer, R., Wojcik, S. P., &amp; Ditto, P. H. (2013). Moral foundations theory: The pragmatic validity of moral pluralism. In <i>Advances in experimental social psychology</i> (Vol. 47, pp. 55-130). Academic Press.</li> <li>• Suhler, C. L., &amp; Churchland, P. (2011). Can innate, modular “foundations” explain morality? Challenges for Haidt's moral foundations theory. <i>Journal of cognitive neuroscience</i>, 23(9), 2103-2116.</li> </ul>
Mon 2/19	Dual process theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greene, J. D., Morelli, S. A., Lowenberg, K., Nystrom, L. E., &amp; Cohen, J. D. (2008). Cognitive load selectively interferes with utilitarian moral judgment. <i>Cognition</i>, 107(3), 1144-1154.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Koenigs, M., Young, L., Adolphs, R., Tranel, D., Cushman, F., Hauser, M., &amp; Damasio, A. (2007). Damage to the prefrontal cortex increases utilitarian moral judgements. <i>Nature</i>, 446(7138), 908-911.</li> <li>• Moll, J., &amp; de Oliveira-Souza, R. (2007). Response to Greene: Moral sentiments and reason: friends or foes?. <i>Trends in Cognitive Sciences</i>, 11(8), 323-324.</li> <li>• Greene, J. D. (2007). Why are VMPFC patients more utilitarian? A dual-process theory of moral judgment explains. <i>Trends in cognitive sciences</i>, 11(8), 322-323.</li> <li>• Cushman, F., &amp; Young, L. (2009). The psychology of dilemmas and the philosophy of morality. <i>Ethical Theory and Moral Practice</i>, 12, 9-24.</li> </ul>
	Psychological mechanisms of morality	
Mon 2/26	Moral emotions	<b>Quiz 2 Due</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tangney, J. P., Stuewig, J., &amp; Mashek, D. J. (2007). Moral emotions and moral behavior. <i>Annu. Rev. Psychol.</i>, 58, 345-372.</li> <li>• Gray, K., &amp; Wegner, D. M. (2011). Dimensions of moral emotions. <i>Emotion Review</i>, 3(3), 258-260.</li> <li>• Ongley, S. F., &amp; Malti, T. (2014). The role of moral emotions in the development of children's sharing behavior. <i>Developmental Psychology</i>, 50(4), 1148.</li> </ul>
Mon 3/4	Spring break, no class	
Mon 3/11	Mind perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gray, K., Young, L., &amp; Waytz, A. (2012). Mind perception is the essence of morality.</li> </ul>

		<p><i>Psychological Inquiry</i>, 23(2), 101-124.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Epley, N., &amp; Waytz, A. (2010). Mind perception. <i>Handbook of social psychology</i>, 1(5), 498-541.</li> <li>• Baron-Cohen, S. (1999). The evolution of a theory of mind. In M. Corballis, &amp; S. Lea (Eds.) <i>The descent of mind: psychological perspectives on hominid evolution</i> (pp. 261-277). Oxford University Press.</li> </ul>
Mon 3/18	Empathy & dehumanization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decety, J., &amp; Cowell, J. M. (2014). The complex relation between morality and empathy. <i>Trends in Cognitive Sciences</i>, 18(7), 337-339.</li> <li>• Glenn, A. L., Iyer, R., Graham, J., Koleva, S., &amp; Haidt, J. (2009). Are all types of morality compromised in psychopathy?. <i>Journal of Personality Disorders</i>, 23(4), 384-398.</li> <li>• Kteily, N. S., &amp; Landry, A. P. (2022). Dehumanization: Trends, insights, and challenges. <i>Trends in Cognitive Sciences</i>, 26(3), 222-240.</li> </ul>
Mon 3/25	Punishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hofmann, W., Brandt, M. J., Wisneski, D. C., Rockenbach, B., &amp; Skitka, L. J. (2018). Moral punishment in everyday life. <i>Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin</i>, 44(12), 1697-1711.</li> <li>• Cushman, F. (2008). Crime and punishment: Distinguishing the roles of causal and intentional analyses in moral judgment. <i>Cognition</i>, 108(2), 353-380.</li> <li>• Jensen, K. (2010). Punishment and spite, the dark side of cooperation. <i>Philosophical</i></li> </ul>

		<i>Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences</i> , 365(1553), 2635-2650.
Mon 4/1	Social norms & internalization; Writing workshop	<p><b>Quiz 3 Due</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kelly, D., &amp; Davis, T. (2018). Social norms and human normative psychology. <i>Social Philosophy and Policy</i>, 35(1), 54-76.</li> <li>• Lindström, B., Jangard, S., Selbing, I., &amp; Olsson, A. (2018). The role of a “common is moral” heuristic in the stability and change of moral norms. <i>Journal of Experimental Psychology: General</i>, 147(2), 228.</li> <li>• House, B. R., Kamngiesser, P., Barrett, H. C., Broesch, T., Cebioglu, S., Crittenden, A. N., ... &amp; Silk, J. B. (2020). Universal norm psychology leads to societal diversity in prosocial behaviour and development. <i>Nature Human Behaviour</i>, 4(1), 36-44.</li> </ul>
	Morality & society	
Mon 4/8	Moralizing gods	<p><b>Final Paper Proposals Due</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skali, A. (2017). Moralizing gods and armed conflict. <i>Journal of Economic Psychology</i>, 63, 184-198.</li> <li>• Gervais, W. M. (2013). Perceiving minds and gods: How mind perception enables, constrains, and is triggered by belief in gods. <i>Perspectives on Psychological Science</i>, 8(4), 380-394.</li> <li>• Lang, M., Purzycki, B. G., Apicella, C. L., Atkinson, Q. D., Bolyanatz, A., Cohen, E., ... &amp; Henrich, J. (2019). Moralizing gods, impartiality and religious parochialism across 15 societies. <i>Proceedings of the Royal</i></li> </ul>

		<i>Society B</i> , 286(1898), 20190202.
Mon 4/15	Morality, politics, & policy	<p><b>Final Paper Outlines Due</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kivikangas, J. M., Fernández-Castilla, B., Järvelä, S., Ravaja, N., &amp; Lönnqvist, J. E. (2021). Moral foundations and political orientation: Systematic review and meta-analysis. <i>Psychological Bulletin</i>, 147(1), 55.</li> <li>• Delton, A. W., DeScioli, P., &amp; Ryan, T. J. (2020). Moral obstinacy in political negotiations. <i>Political Psychology</i>, 41(1), 3-20.</li> <li>• Skitka, L. J., &amp; Morgan, G. S. (2014). The social and political implications of moral conviction. <i>Political Psychology</i>, 35, 95-110.</li> </ul>
Mon 4/22	Morality, misinformation, & social media; Overflow day	<p><b>Quiz 4 Due</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kozyreva, A., Herzog, S. M., Lewandowsky, S., Hertwig, R., Lorenz-Spreen, P., Leiser, M., &amp; Reifler, J. (2023). Resolving content moderation dilemmas between free speech and harmful misinformation. <i>Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences</i>, 120(7), e2210666120.</li> <li>• Effron, D. A., &amp; Raj, M. (2020). Misinformation and morality: Encountering fake-news headlines makes them seem less unethical to publish and share. <i>Psychological Science</i>, 31(1), 75-87.</li> </ul>
Mon 4/29	Final presentations	<b>Final Paper Due</b>