

***Character, Empathy and the Moral Sense:
The Past, Present and Future of Moral Psychology***

PHIL 250.02

Fall 2007

TR 12:30 – 1:45; Buckman 212

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Clough 402B; x3577
Office Hours: MWF 10-10:45 AM*;
TTH 2 – 2:45 PM
& By Appt.

Course Description:

This course will be a survey of the history of moral psychology, from Plato to the Twentieth Century. Moral psychology (in the context of the course) is the philosophy of moral agency – which means it is concerned with exploring questions regarding what it means to be a moral agent. The subject matter of moral psychology is not the same as an Ethics course – this course will not focus on questions regarding the nature of the good or how one ought to respond to particular moral controversies. Instead, this course will primarily questions regarding the aspects of moral agency referenced in the title, such as:

- 1) Must someone acquire certain character traits in order to become a moral agent? And if so, how do they acquire it?
- 2) Should our emotions play a role in moral deliberation?
- 3) Do we need to be able to understand the emotions of others in order to make moral judgments?
- 4) Is compassion sufficient to ensure moral action?
- 5) Do all humans share an innate sense of right and wrong? What would a moral sense be like?

Rather than considering how one might justify one's values (the subject matter of ethics), this course will examine how our beliefs about what is right and wrong influence our actions (as well as the ways in which they ought to influence our actions). In order to generate thoughtful reflection on the answers to these questions we will look at what some past thinkers have said [including Plato, Aristotle, Confucius, Mencius, Xunzi, Seneca, Augustine, Abelard, Aquinas, Hobbes, Hume, and Kant] and at current debates in moral psychology concerning the above-referenced topics. In addition, we will draw on recent work in the natural and social sciences to inform our discussions.

Course Texts:

Nomy Arpaly. *Unprincipled Virtue*. Oxford, 2003. [UV]
John Doris. *Lack of Character*. Cambridge, 2005. [LOC]
Marc Hauser. *Moral Minds*. Ecco, 2007. [MM]
Neil Levy. *What Makes Us Moral?: Crossing the Boundaries of Biology*. Oneworld, 2004. [WM]

Michael Morgan (ed.). *Classics of Moral and Political Theory*, 4th Edition. Hackett, 2005. [CMP]

Some additional readings will be available online and on electronic reserve.

Some films may be shown as a part of this class.

Course Website:

This class will make use of Blackboard [formerly WebCT] and you should check that regularly. To get to Blackboard, go to the Login page on the main Rhodes page and click on WebCT/Blackboard. Once there you login, using your email alias as your ID [the part before @rhodes.edu] and your Banner R number as your password. You will then be prompted to change your password. After changing your password (and logging in again), you will be taken to your overall page – to access the particular course site, click on the name.

Course Schedule:

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| Aug | 23 | Why Be Moral?
(Posthumous) Reading: Plato, <i>Republic</i> 357a-362c [CMP] |
| | 28 | Morality is Necessary for a Healthy Psyche
Reading: Plato, <i>Crito</i> 47d-50a [CMP]
Plato, <i>Republic</i> 427e-445e and 576b-592b [CMP] |
| | 30 | Morality is the Perfection of Our Psyche
Reading: Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book I, 1,2,7 [up to 1098a20], 8, 13; Book II, 1-6; Book III, 1, 10-12; Book VI, 12 and 13; Book VII, 1-4. [CMP] |
| Sep | 4 | Challenging Ideas About Character
Reading: LOC Chapter 1 (pp. 1-6), 2 (all), and 3 (all) |
| | 6 | Morality is God Acting Through Us
Reading: Augustine, <i>City of God</i> , Book XIX, Chapters 1,4,12,13, 21, and 23 [CMP]
Augustine, Selections from <i>On Free Choice of the Will</i> [Online]
Aquinas, Selections on virtue [Online] |
| | 11 | Challenging the Existence of Virtue
Reading: LOC Chapters 4 and 5
Machiavelli, <i>Prince</i> Chapters 15-18 [CMP] |
| | 13 | Psychological Realism and Moral Saints
Reading: LOC Chap 1 (pages 6-14) and 6
Susan Wolf, "Moral Saints" [Online] |
| | 18 | Morality is Hedonistically Motivated
Reading: Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> Book VII, 11-14; and Book X, 1-5 [CMP]
Epicurus, <i>Letter to Menoecus</i> [CMP]
John Stuart Mill, Chapter II [until page 1000] and Chapter IV [CMP] |
| | 20 | Morality is Egoistically Motivated
Reading: Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i> Introduction; Part I, Chapters 6, and 13-15 [CMP]
David Sloan Wilson and Elliot Sober, Summary of <i>Unto Others</i> [Online] |
| | 21 | FIRST PAPER DEADLINE |
| | 25 | Morality is About Our Intentions
Reading: Abelard, <i>Ethics</i> [Online]
Immanuel Kant, <i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> Preface, Section I |

- and II [until G 410] [CMP]
- 27 Puzzles About Moral Intentions
Reading: UV Chapters 1 and 2
- Oct 2 Moral Worth and Autonomy
Reading: UV Chapter 3
Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* Section II [from G 410] and Section III [to G 449]
- 4 Free Will and Autonomy
Reading: UV Chapter 4
Harry Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person" [Online]
- 9 Morality as a Process of Rational Calculation
Reading: Mill, *Utilitarianism* Chapter II [page 1003] and Chapter V [to p. 1021] [CMP]
Derek Parfit, Selection from *Reasons and Persons* [Online]
- 11 Moral Naturalism
Reading: Epictetus, *Encheiridion* [CMP]
Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I-II, Q90; Q91 and Q94 [CMP]
Seneca, Selections from *On Anger* [Online]
- 16 Fall Break – No Class**
- 18 The Evolution of Moral Judgments
Reading: MM Chapter 1
WM Chapter 1
- 23 Conference – No Class**
- 25 The Argument for Universal Principles Underlying Moral Judgments
Reading: MM Chapters 2 and 3
- 26 SECOND PAPER DEADLINE**
- 30 The Argument for an Evolved Moral Sense
Reading: MM Chapters 4 and 5
WM Chapter 3 (107-125)
- Nov 1 Examining the Claims of Evolutionary Psychology
Reading: WM Chapter 4
- 6 Morality as an Extension of Game Theory
Reading: WM Chapter 2 (to page 72) and Chapter 3 (to page 107)
Ken Binmore, Selection from *Natural Justice* [Online]
- 8 The Evolution of Altruism
Reading: Sloan and Wilson, Selections from *Unto Others* [Online]
WM Chapter 5
- 13 The Evolution of Moral Principles
Reading: MM Chapters 6 and 7
- 15 The Confucian Debate Over Human Nature
Reading: Mengzi, Selections [Online]
Xunzi, Selections [Online]
- 20 Morality as an Expression of Sentiment
Reading: David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature* Book III, Part I [CMP]
Robert Gordon, "Sympathy, Simulation and the Impartial Spectator" [Online]
Nel Noddings, Selections from *Caring* [Online]
- 22 Thanksgiving Break – No Class**
- 27 Empathy and Moral Judgment
Reading: John Deigh, "Empathy and Universalizability" [Online]

Jeanette Kennett, "Autism, Empathy and Moral Agency" [Online]

THIRD PAPER DEADLINE

- 29 The Moral Emotions
Reading: LOC Chapter 8
WM Chapter 2 [pages 72-89]
Antonio Damasio, Selections from *Descartes' Error* [Online]
- Dec 4 Moral Nihilism and Moral Fictionalism
Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality* First Treatise 10-11,13, 16
[CMP]
Richard Joyce, "Moral Fictionalism" [Online]
- 7 **FINAL EXAM DUE 5:30 PM**

Course Evaluation:

Initial Responses	10%
Papers	40%
Inclass Assignments	10%
Final Exam	20%
Participation/Presentation	20%

INITIAL RESPONSES. Throughout the semester, students will be scheduled to post a short (about 250 words) initial response to the reading for the day. These responses will be posted the night before and will be read by the rest of the class.

FINAL EXAM. Philosophy (like any other discipline) employs a conceptual framework that one must become familiar with. The final exam will be a cumulative exam to test one's mastery of all the concepts introduced in the course.

INCLASS ASSIGNMENTS. There will be several inclass assignments, mostly designed to model the kinds of questions that one could expect to see on the final exam.

PAPERS. Throughout the course there will be 3 paper assignments of approximately 5-6 pages each. These assignments will be designed to help you hone your skills in argument analysis. You will be required to submit all three assignments, but only two will be used to determine your final grade.

PARTICIPATION/PRESENTATION. Philosophy is not *just* about mastering what some people said several centuries ago. It is also about taking an active role in trying to understand the problems that these people were trying to answer, how that compares to the problems we face today and judging the strength of the responses to these problems. Consequently, philosophy cannot happen in a passive manner. This part of your course grade will measure the quantity and (much more importantly) quality of your participation inside and outside of class (including on Blackboard). And to encourage your active participation, you will be required to make short class presentations during the semester.

Specific details on expectations for assignments will be provided in separate documents.

Grading:

Student work will be assessed according to the grading regulations listed in the Rhodes College *Catalogue*:

- A – Excellent
- B – Good
- C – Satisfactory
- D – Passing
- F – Failure

P – To earn a passing grade, students must pass [get at least a D-] in each element of the course evaluation.

Disabilities Accommodation Policy (from the College Catalogue, p. 43):

Rhodes is committed to ensuring that educational programs are accessible to all qualified students in accordance with the provisions of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and expanded by Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). To guard against discrimination on the basis of disability, reasonable and appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids are determined on a case-by-case basis for students who have a demonstrated need for these services. **It is the student's responsibility to initiate any request for accommodation due to a qualifying disability. Once students are enrolled, the Coordinator of Student Disability Services is the point of contact for students with physical, psychological, learning and attentional disabilities. The Coordinator of Student Disability Services confers with students on an individual basis, then together with the Disability Support Committee, determines appropriate accommodations and identifies needed resources.**

Attendance, Make-up and Lateness Policy:

Philosophy is as much a group-activity as it is a solitary one. Consequently, being in class is an important part of the learning process as we talk about various philosophical issues. You are expected to attend every class. Missing more than three classes will lower your participation/presentation grade by 1/3 per extra missed class ["excused" or "unexcused"].

Please note that I have put "deadlines" as opposed to "due dates" in the schedule. [Regardless of what changes there may be in material covered over the term, these dates will not change.] Each deadline comes with a 48 hour grace period – to allow for the things that sometimes happen. Some of you may be tempted to read the end of the grace period as the *real* due date, but bear the following things in mind: 1) I will not read drafts/outlines or discuss the content of assignment after the deadline; 2) No assignment will be accepted after the end of the grace period, unless the student was incapacitated by illness that began before the deadline and lasted through the grace period; and 3) If the

final draft of an assignment is not able to be printed, you will be able to submit it after the grace period as long as you submit a printed draft with notes by the end of the grace period. ***Please note: In order to avail yourself of the grace period you must attend class the day of the deadline and during the grace period.***

Make-ups for exam or quizzes will be granted only if you can provide appropriate documentation of severe illness, emergency, or reasonable extracurricular or academic-related activity.

Honor Code

The Honor Code states that all work submitted must be your own. You are encouraged to discuss the assignments with other students in the class, but only in order to help each other's understanding. However, all work you submit must be the product of your own effort and you should never dictate to someone else the "best answer."