

Advanced Social Psychology SOP4704

Moral Psychology

Tuesdays 8:30 AM – 10:25 AM | MAEB0238

Thursdays 9:35 AM – 10:25 AM | FLI117

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Office Hours: Tuesdays/Thursdays 11AM – 12PM (Please email for appointment)

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Course Overview

Why do we care about being good—and why do we sometimes fall short?

Most people want to be good, do good, and – importantly – avoid being *bad*. We also care deeply about how others behave; we reward virtue, punish wrongdoing, and debate what counts as moral in the first place. But where does the sense of right and wrong come from? And why does it matter so much?

This seminar explores classic and contemporary research in moral psychology, asking questions like: Are humans born moral? Do moral judgments stem more from emotion or reason? Is morality universal, or culturally constructed? And if people care so much about being good, why do they still do bad things?

We'll place empirical findings in conversation with ethical philosophy, sociological theory, and anthropological perspectives to build a rich understanding of how the moral mind works. Along the way, we'll examine real-world dilemmas, from moral outrage on social media to cross-cultural clashes over justice and fairness, and reflect on what it means to live ethically in a complex world.

Course Expectations

This course depends on a shared commitment to engaging with the readings with care and curiosity. I expect all of us to arrive at each class having read the material closely and having taken notes/annotations on the ideas that challenged or intrigued us, that we did not understand, or that we would critique. I expect that we will approach these texts and our conversations about them as a collaborative effort to better understand the theories and findings of Moral Psychology.

A thriving seminar requires both confidence and humility: humility in recognizing the limits of our own perspectives, listening generously, and treating others with respect, and confidence in offering up our own ideas, even when they feel tentative or incomplete, and in welcoming challenges from others. Disagreement is not a disruption to the work we do, so long as we disagree with care and

respect. I expect that all of us will strive to show up with humility and confidence, and I will work to foster an environment that is open, comfortable, and intellectually vibrant.

Although this is a class about moral psychology, it is not a venue for grandstanding, domineering, or preaching. We will strive to be scientific, thoughtful, and nuanced in our understanding of how the moral mind works.

Course Structure

Our seminar will be almost entirely discussion-based, with brief lectures on occasion to lay theoretical groundwork as needed. Because this is a small discussion-based seminar, there is no option to attend virtually. All students are expected to attend all class sessions, barring some emergency or prior authorization. Students who cannot commit to attending all sessions of the course in-person should consider applying to take the course another time.

There are no final exams or traditional term papers in this class. Instead, I expect that you will complete the following tasks each week that we meet:

1. Annotated course readings through the Perusall platform
 - a. Due by midnight on Monday and Wednesday
2. Deep dive slide for weekly role
 - a. due by midnight on Monday and Wednesday.

In addition, you will be expected to submit two larger assignments:

1. Research proposal (mini-deadlines across semester)
2. Final presentation due on April 16th

The first hour of class (on Tuesdays and Thursdays) will be spent in conference discussions. You can expect we will spend ~5 minutes introducing the readings, ~20 minutes presenting the “Deep Dives,” and ~25 minutes continuing and refining the discussion started through the Deep Dives and Perusall as a class. Each student should be prepared to present on their Deep Dive role for the week.

The second hour of class (on Tuesdays only) will be devoted to working on your research proposals, as well as class demonstrations, films, and activities.

What you can expect from me

You can expect that I will communicate my expectations clearly and that I will fairly evaluate your assignments and your contributions to the seminar. You can expect that I will work hard to create a safe, constructive, and engaging class structure. You can expect me to take your ideas seriously and treat you as a fellow scholar. You can also expect that I will prioritize your health, be that academic, mental, social, or physical. You should feel able to raise concerns as they arise and be confident that I will take those concerns seriously and respectfully.

What I expect from you

I expect you to bring your full attention to class for the entire session. Students who fail to engage with course materials in a serious or meaningful way will do poorly in this course. Everyone is expected to come to the seminar having read the material closely and with thoughts and questions prepared.

I expect that laptops and phones will be turned off during the class section. For this reason, I encourage you to bring hard copies of the readings and your notes to class, including key concepts or questions you might want to raise. If/when class sessions require the use of technology (e.g., presentation days), I will let you know ahead of time.

Please feel free to call me any of the following: Professor LePine, Professor Elisha, Elisha, Mx. LePine – whatever you are most comfortable with (note that I do not yet have my PhD, so I am not “Dr. LePine”). Please do not call me “Ms./Miss/Mrs. LePine.” Finally, thank you for reading to this point in the syllabus! To indicate you have done so and earn an extra credit point, please email me a photo of your favorite bird with “SOP 4704 syllabus extra credit” as the subject line.

How you will be evaluated as a student

This course is designed to center your intellectual development rather than your pursuit of a particular letter grade. For that reason, individual assignments will not receive numerical scores. Instead, you will receive written feedback throughout the semester aimed at helping you strengthen your thinking and your work.

Your final grade will be determined collaboratively by you and me through a grading contract. This contract outlines three possible levels of engagement—high (A), moderate (B), and minimal (C)—and specifies what is required to demonstrate each level of commitment.

On the first day of class, you will select the contract that best reflects the effort you intend to invest. Midway through the semester, we will revisit your choice, and you may keep your original contract or move to a different one. Changing your contract carries no penalty.

At the end of the term, we will meet briefly to finalize your grade. You will bring your signed contract along with documentation showing how you met the expectations associated with it. Your task in that meeting is to make a clear case that you have satisfied the criteria. If we agree that the requirements have been met, the corresponding grade will be recorded. If the evidence is incomplete—or if you can demonstrate that you exceeded the expectations—we may discuss an adjustment. Please note that final grades are ultimately determined by the instructor and must align with the policies described in this syllabus and the grading contract.

This course does not include formal extra-credit opportunities. However, you may present evidence of work that exceeds the basic expectations during our final meeting. Such efforts may support your case but cannot replace the minimum requirements outlined in the contract.

Texts

There is no required textbook. All readings will come from peer-reviewed journal articles, which you can access at no cost through Perusall.

Course Assignments

Active participation is essential to the functioning of this seminar. All students are expected to engage fully in discussions and complete all assigned work. According to university policy, a grade of C- or higher is required for a course to count as “satisfactory.”

Assignment	Grade Points
Annotated Readings (Perusall)	10%
Participation/Attendance	20%
Deep Dives	20%
Research Proposal	
Topic activity	5%
Annotated bibliography	5%
Methods outline	5%
Final proposal	20%
Final Presentation	15%

Annotated Class Readings

We will use Perusall as our shared workspace for engaging with each week’s readings outside of class. Perusall allows us to learn collaboratively by annotating the texts together, responding to one another’s comments, and building threaded conversations around key ideas. Helpful guidance on how to use Perusall is available on the platform.

Unlike other assignments in this course, Perusall generates an automatic score. These scores are based on both the substance and the volume of your annotations. As you comment, pose questions, or reply to classmates, you might consider prompts such as: Do the authors’ arguments persuade you, and why? If their claims hold, what follows from them? What theories or perspectives, either from this course or elsewhere, connect to the reading but go unmentioned? Whose perspectives are represented, and whose are missing? How do your own identities and experiences shape the way you interpret the material?

Class Participation & Attendance

A significant portion of your grade reflects your presence and engagement in our seminar. This includes coming prepared, having completed and reflected on the readings, and contributing thoughtfully to our discussions. Each student may miss up to two class meetings without explanation. Beyond that, absences should occur only in cases of genuine emergency. There is no remote or hybrid option for this course; students who cannot reliably attend in person should consider enrolling in a future semester.

To earn full participation credit, you should consistently:

- Listen closely and remain actively engaged during discussions.
- Contribute in ways that advance our conversation—by offering new insights, questioning assumptions, introducing relevant examples, or shifting the discussion when appropriate.
- Bring a range of contribution types (e.g., conceptual points, observations, connections to other material).

- Respond to classmates by acknowledging their ideas, asking clarifying questions, or offering respectful disagreement.
- Be attentive to group dynamics—participating regularly while also making space for others to join in.

Attendance and participation expectations, as well as policies for make-up work, follow university guidelines.

Deep Dives:

Each class session will include a structured “deep dive” into the assigned article. Every student will take on a specific role that shapes how they read the paper and what they prepare for the group discussion. Because some roles require more preparation than others, roles will rotate evenly across the semester so that everyone completes each role once.

We will begin each class by hearing brief presentations from the students assigned to that day’s roles. Given the size of the class, we will alternate presenters: half of the class will present on Tuesdays, and the other half on Thursdays. You will upload your slide for the deep dive to Canvas by midnight the night before your presentation day.

On days when you are not presenting, you will instead create an alternative title for the paper and submit one discussion question to that week’s Parliamentarian. We will share alternative titles at the start of class. Discussion questions are due by 4 p.m. the day before class.

Important: If you need to miss class, you are still responsible for submitting your deep dive slide or your alternative title and discussion question before the session begins.

Please see Canvas for full descriptions of each role:

Scientific Peer Reviewer. The paper has not been published yet and is currently submitted to a top journal where you’ve been assigned as a peer reviewer. Complete a full review of the paper. This includes recommending whether to accept or reject the paper.

Archaeologist. This paper was found buried under ground in the desert. You’re an archeologist who must determine where this paper sits in the context of previous and subsequent work. Find and report on one older paper cited within the current paper that substantially influenced the current paper and one newer paper that cites this current paper.

Journalist. You’re a freelance journalist who just heard about this new paper. Draft a short, punchy, but accurate account of the work for a print, television, or radio outlet. But wait! Have you been scooped? After drafting your own copy, check and locate any previous media/press coverage this paper actually received.

Academic Researcher. You’re a researcher who is working on a new project in this area. Propose an imaginary follow-up project not just based on the current paper but only possible due to the existence and success of the current paper.

Policy Advisor (NGO). You work at a governmental or non-profit organization developing a new policy or intervention intended to increase well-being. Bring a convincing pitch for why (and how)

your agency should implement the ideas and/or method in the paper, and discuss at least one positive and negative impact of this application.

Replicator: You're a replicator who wants to determine whether the effects in this paper replicate. Design a conceptual or direct replication of one of the studies reported in the paper that can be conducted in class.

Private Investigator. You are a detective who needs to run a background check on one of the paper's authors. Where have they worked? What did they study? What previous projects might have led to working on this one? What motivated them to work on this project? Feel free to contact the authors, but remember to be courteous, polite, and on-topic.

Impact Assessor. Identify how (or whether) this paper self-assesses its (hopefully positive) impact on the world. Have any additional positive social impacts been left out? Are there ways these findings could be abused to hurt rather than help people?

Research Proposal

As a part of the course, you will submit a written proposal for an experimental study to test a research idea related to topics covered in this course. For the purposes of this class, the proposed study must be experimental in methodology. We will workshop ideas, topics, and methods together as a class.

The process of creating the research proposal will be broken down into several mini-deadlines:

1. Topic activity

- a. We will collaborate in small groups to generate several research topic ideas and workshop them together. You will submit a summary of your topic ideas as a group.

2. Topic proposal and annotated bibliography

- a. You will individually decide on a single topic/research question to focus on. You will submit a short description of your topic/question and why you find it interesting, along with an annotated bibliography of sources that will help you in writing your proposal.

3. Methods outline

- a. You will submit a short description of the methods you would use to answer your research question. Your methods must be experimental in nature. You will describe your procedures, the materials to be used, and the measures to be collected.

4. Final proposal

- a. You will submit a final brief (3-4 pages) proposal including an introduction summarizing the relevant literature and providing the reasoning for your study, hypotheses, a methods section detailing your proposed methodology, and a brief section on your expected results.

Final Presentation:

As we reach the end of the semester, you will have spent many weeks thinking, questioning, and learning together. Your final assignment asks you to take one idea or concept from the course and

teach it to a broader public audience. You have complete freedom in how you choose to communicate it, so long as the format is accessible to people who have not been part of our seminar.

You might write a short popular essay, craft a magazine-style piece, record a podcast segment, or produce a short video—these are only examples, not limits. Whatever medium you choose, your goal is straightforward: help your audience understand something meaningful from the course.

Strong projects will show clear mastery of the concept you've chosen, present it in a polished and thoughtful way, and be understandable to readers or listeners outside the class. The final product is due during our last class meeting

Honor Policy

I trust every student in this course to fully comply with all the provisions of UF's Honor Code. By enrolling in this course, you have agreed to abide by and uphold the Honor Code of the University of Florida, as well as the following policies specific to this course.

- *Your written work must be your own – no plagiarizing. Always cite any resources you consult to complete an assignment.*
- *All suspected violations will be forwarded to Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution*

(SCCR) in the Dean's Office at the instructor's discretion. You may receive an immediate zero on an assignment, or an F for the course, regardless of any action taken by SCCR.

- *It is okay to read & peer edit each other's written work, and receive writing assistance from the writing center for this class*
- *It is okay to share lecture notes and study together*

For more information about the honor code, visit: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/>

In-class Recordings

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited.

Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled

students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University as part of a University of Florida course. **A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.**

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Policy on Course Syllabi 3 UF, Academic Affairs, August 5th, 2021 Honor Code and Student Conduct Code

Inclusive Classroom Environment

We are committed to fostering a community that celebrates and supports diversity, and where all members of the community feel safe and welcome. To support these goals, we are committed to maintaining respectful and non-discriminatory language in our communications with ourselves and others.

Sexual Harassment. Sexual harassment is not tolerated in this class, in the Department of Psychology, or at the University of Florida. Sexual harassment includes: the inappropriate introduction of sexual activities or comments in a situation where sex would otherwise be irrelevant, or gender-based discrimination. Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination and a violation of state and federal laws as well as of the policies and regulations of the

university. All UF employees and students must adhere to UF’s sexual harassment policy which can be found here: <https://hr.ufl.edu/forms-policies/policies-managers/sexual-harassment/>. You can also complete a Sexual Harassment Complaint Form (Title IX) here: <https://titleix.ufl.edu/title-ix-complaint-form/>.

Seeking Help on Campus

Accommodations for disability. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter; please present this letter to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester. **If you have not yet formally requested accommodation, or are experiencing a family/physical/mental health emergency, please contact Prof Westgate.** We are happy to arrange temporary accommodations to address your needs in the interim.

Mental Health and Stress. Stress, mood changes, excessive worry, or problems with eating and/or sleeping can interfere with academic performance. The source of symptoms might be related to your course work; if so, please speak with me. However, problems with relationships, family worries, loss, or others personal struggles can also contribute to decreased academic performance. The University of Florida provides cost-free mental health services through the Counseling and Wellness

Center (CWC; <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>, 392-1575). If you or a friend is in distress, you can also contact the “U Matter, We Care” team at umatter@ufl.edu or 352 392-1575, and a team member will reach out. Please seek help if you feel you need it.

If you or a friend is a victim of a sexual assault, you can contact sexual assault recovery services (SARS) at the student health center at 392-1161.

Food, Shelter, and Other Material Needs. Any student who has difficulty accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, is urged to contact the Field and Fork Food Pantry or the Dean of Students Office for support. Furthermore, please notify me or one of your TAs if you are comfortable doing so. This will allow us to put you in touch with additional resources that may be of service.

If you have any difficulty acquiring class materials or texts due to your financial situation, please let me know; I will work with you to find affordable alternatives to accessing these materials (e.g., library holds/loans, UF bookstore deferred payment program, rental/used alternatives, etc.).

ASSIGNED READINGS

All readings are to be completed *before* class. Deep Dives are due by midnight prior to class; for weeks with multiple readings, the intended “Deep Dive” reading is indicated. Assigned readings and deadlines are subject to change.

Tue 1/13	Syllabus Day
Topic 1: Developmental approaches to Morality	
Thur 1/15	Gibbs et al. (2007)
Tue 1/20	Hamlin, Wynn, & Bloom (2007)
Thur 1/22	Yoo & Smetana (2022)
Tue 1/27	Yucel, Hepach, & Vaish (2020) Topic activity due
Thur 1/29	Roberts, Guo, & Gelman (2018)
Topic 2: Evolutionary approaches to Morality	
Tue 2/3	Tomasello & Vaish (2013)
Thur 2/5	Curry et al. (2019)
Tue 2/10:	Kurzban, de Scioli, & O’Brien (2007)
Thur 2/12	Yucel & Vaish (2017) Topic proposal with annotated bibliography due
Tue 2/17	The Dawn of Everything – First chapter
Topic 3: Pluralism, Monism, and Culture	
Thur 2/19	Shweder et al. (1997)
Tue 2/24	Haidt (2001) DEEP DIVE: Graham, Haidt, & Nosek (2009)
Thur 2/26 – NO CLASS	
Tue 3/3	Atari et al. (2022)
Thur 3/5	Gray et al. (2023)
Tue 3/10	Gray, Schein, & Cameron (2017)
Thur 3/12	Schein & Gray (2015)

	Methods outline due
Tue 3/17 – NO CLASS SPRING BREAK	
Thur 3/19 – NO CLASS SPRING BREAK	
Tue 3/24	Salerno et al. (2025)
Thur 3/26	Buchtel et al. (2015)
Assorted topics	
Tue 3/31	Wormley et al. (2025)
Thur 4/2	Salerno, Murphy, & Bottoms (2014) DEEP DIVE: Morgenroth, Axt, & Westgate (2022)
Tue 4/7	Falk & Szech (2013)
Thur 4/9	Cohen, Shin, & Lawless (2021)
Tue 4/14	DEEP DIVE: Burger (2009) Crandall et al. (2008)
Thur 4/16	Presentations
Tue 4/21	Presentations
4/27-4/30: Final grade meetings	Final proposal due 4/27

