

Chapman University Honors Program

Spring 2018 Honors 282-01: Evolution, Morality, and Ethics

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Office Hours: Before and after class.

Classroom: Demille Hall 101

Day/Time: Thursdays 4:00 to 6:50pm

Prerequisites: Formal acceptance in the University Honors Program

Course Description

This course will cover a wide range of topics across a broad spectrum of fields, including evolutionary theory, biology, psychology, cognitive neuroscience, philosophy, metaphysics, and theology. We will attempt to answer such questions as: What is the origin of morality? Is there good and evil? Can there be objective right and wrong? Can science determine human values? Why is there war, murder, and violence, and can we put an end to them? Is there moral progress? Which ethical system among the many on offer from history's greatest moral philosophers—Augustine (Divine Command Theory), Kant (Deontology), Hume and Smith (Moral Emotions/Sentiments), Bentham and Mills (Utilitarianism), Aristotle (Virtue Ethics), Rand (Egoism), Benedict (Ethical Relativism), Rawls (Social Contract Theory)—is the correct one for different moral dilemmas? Students will read about, discuss, research, and lecture on these and many other problems related to evolution, morality, and ethics, in light of recent developments that attempt to integrate facts and values, science and ethics. Students will debate such issues as abortion, capital punishment, prison reform and criminal justice, euthanasia, same-sex marriage, animal rights, immigration, torture, war, assassinations, and more.

Learning Outcomes

1. GE Learning Outcomes
 - a. GE 7VI Learning Outcome: *Articulates how values and ethics inform human understanding, social structures, culture and behavior.*
 - b. GE 7NI Learning Outcome: *Uses scientific principles and reasoning as a way of knowing the natural world and distinguishes science from non-science.*
 - c. GE 7SI Learning Outcome: *Identifies, frames, and analyzes the processes by which human beings develop social and/or historical perspectives from a scientific perspective.*
2. Program and Course Learning Outcomes: Upon completion of this course students will be able to:
 - a. Critically understand general philosophical and religious approaches to ethical theory, ancient and modern, through the study of primary texts;
 - b. Understand the scientific theory of evolution and its involvement in the development of complex life as well as the development of the conscious mind and a moral conscious.
 - c. Appreciate the complexity of the ethical life and the need for theoretical nuance as they critically apply philosophical and religious approaches, which they have learned, to the sciences and more specifically, the evolution of humanity, the mind, and morals.
 - d. Think critically, and with an open mind, about contemporary moral issues;
 - e. Develop effective communication skills, specifically in the areas of oral and written exposition, by judiciously analyzing and synthesizing a broad range of knowledge through engagement in active learning with fellow students, faculty, texts, and the world as well as through written information. This will be done through lectures, discussions, debates, and student TED talk presentations.

Required Texts

1. White, James E. 2006. *Contemporary Moral Problems*. United States: Thomson/Wadsworth.
2. Dawkins, Richard. 1976. *The Selfish Gene*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
3. Greene, Joshua. 2013. *Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason & the Gap Between Us and Them*. New York: Penguin.
4. Haidt, Jonathan. 2012. *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*. New York: Random House.
5. Pinker, Steven. 2011. *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*. New York: Penguin.
6. Shermer, Michael. 2015. *The Moral Arc: How Science and Reason Lead Humanity Toward Truth, Justice, and Freedom*. New York: Henry Holt.
7. Harris, Sam. 2010. *The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values*. New York: Free Press.

Films

1. *The Stanford Prison Experiment*. 2015. Dir. Kyle Patrick Alvarez. Perf. Billy Crudup & others. Drama reenacts Professor Phil Zimbardo's famous experiment on violence, human nature, and social conditions.
2. *Experimenter*. 2015. Dir. Michael Almereyda. Perf. Peter Sarsgaard, Winona Ryder. Magnolia Pictures. Drama reenacts the famous obedience to authority experiments by Stanley Milgram involving shocking another human being when told to do so.
3. *Eye in the Sky*. 2015. Dir. Gavin Hood. Perf. Helen Mirren, Alan Rickman. Moral dilemmas involving the use of drones to combat terrorism and the problem of collateral damage. Entertainment One.

Instructional Strategies

1. The class will be structured as a seminar although mini-lectures will be used to introduce the historical context and theoretical framework of our readings so as to enhance seminar conversations – intended to achieve Program and Course Learning Outcomes (a) and (b).
2. Students are expected to arrive at their own conclusions about issues discussed, to be able to give reasons for their conclusions, and to sympathetically understand why others may disagree – intended to achieve Program and Course Learning Outcome (c). Students are taught how to think about moral and ethical issues, not what to think about them.
3. Students are expected to develop further the art of dialogue and conversation. Conversation requires active listening – that is, openness to what others have to say, asking questions, risking opinions, and the willingness to engage in the back-and-forth of open-ended dialogue. Such conversations are essential for global citizenship in a pluralistic world – intended to achieve Program and Course Learning Outcome (d).
4. These three strategies are together intended to meet GE Learning Outcomes for 7VI, 7NI, and 7SI.

Course Requirements

1. *Class Attendance*: Class attendance is required. You are expected to attend all class meetings and to have assignments done when they are due. As this class meets once a week for three hours, three absences will result in zero points for the Class Participation portion of the grade. Any more absences beyond three will result in a failing grade in the class.

2. *Class Participation*: Participation does not mean mere presence in the classroom. It means active listening and conversing, the willingness to engage in the back-and-forth of open-ended and reasoned conversations by being open to what others have to say, risking our opinions, asking questions, and surfacing disagreements. Such “active listening” is essential to being a community of scholars.
3. *Class Time*: Class meetings will be a combination of lectures, discussions, debates, and student presentations.
4. *Readings*: You are asked to study carefully all required readings by the day on which they appear on the projected course schedule. It is important to note that you are asked not merely to read all assigned materials but to study them. Such study may require several readings of the material.
5. *Exams*: There will be two exams during the semester—a midterm and final—which will consist of essay questions based on the readings and class discussions.
6. *Student TED Talks*: You will be required to give a presentation to the class on a subject of your choice based on the theme of the course. It should be about 18 minutes in length and make a convincing and well thought out argument. There should be a coherent synthesis of the theoretical foundations studied and should include a defense of possible criticisms.
7. *Student Debates*: You will pair up and debate each other on one topic, such as abortion, capital punishment, prison reform and criminal justice, euthanasia, same-sex marriage, animal rights, immigration, torture, war, assassinations, free speech, democracy, capitalism, or some other topic of the dyad’s choosing.
8. *Paper*: You are to write a ~1500-word essay answer this question: What is the origin of morality?

Chapman University Academic Integrity Policy

Chapman University is a community of scholars which emphasizes the mutual responsibility of all members to seek knowledge honestly and in good faith. Students are responsible for doing their own work, and academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated anywhere in the university.

Chapman University Students with Disabilities Policy

In compliance with ADA guidelines, students who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, that might affect their ability to perform in this class are encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services. If you will need to utilize your approved accommodations in this class, please follow the proper notification procedure for informing your professor(s). This notification process must occur more than a week before any accommodation can be utilized. Please contact Disability Services at (714) 516-4520 or (www.chapman.edu/students/student-health-services/disability-services) if you have questions regarding this procedure, or for information and to make an appointment to discuss and/or request potential accommodations based on documentation of your disability. Once formal approval of your need for an accommodation has been granted, you are encouraged to talk with your professor(s) about your accommodation options. The granting of any accommodation will not be retroactive and cannot jeopardize the academic standards or integrity of the course.

Chapman University Diversity Policy

Chapman University is committed to fostering learning and working environments that encourage and embrace diversity, multiple perspectives, and the free exchange of ideas as important measures to advance educational and social benefits. Our commitment and affirmation are rooted in our traditions of peace and social justice and our mission of producing ethical and responsible global citizens. The term diversity implies a respect for all and an understanding of individual differences in age, class, disability, ethnicity, gender, language, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.

Methods of Evaluation

1. Evaluation and grading will be based on the following:

<u>Requirements</u>	<u>Percentage of Grade</u>
Class Participation:	10%
Student TED Talk:	20%
Student Debate:	20%
Midterm Exam:	20%
Final Exam:	20%
Paper :	10%

2. Grades will be assigned as follows: A = 100-90; B = 89-80; C = 79-70; D = 69-60; F = below 59

Class Schedule

Week 1	February 1	Introduction to Evolution, Morality, and Ethics
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Class members introduce themselves▪ Review syllabus: objectives/expectations of the course▪ General introduction to the course. Review books.▪ Review of general topics: What is evolution? What is morality? What is ethics? Can there be a science of morality?
		Read: Harris, <i>The Moral Landscape</i> , Introduction, Chapters 1, 2 Read: Greene, <i>Moral Tribes</i> , Introduction, Chapter 1 Read: Haidt, <i>The Righteous Mind</i> , Introduction, Chapter 1, 2
		Watch: Dr. Robert Sapolsky, <i>The Biology of Our Best and Worst Selves</i> http://bit.ly/2r0cKbS
Week 2	February 8	Foundations of Evolution and Ethics
		Read: Harris, <i>The Moral Landscape</i> , Chapters 3, 4 Read: Dawkins, <i>The Selfish Gene</i> , Chapters 1 - 3 Read: Greene, <i>Moral Tribes</i> , Chapters 2, 3 Read: White, <i>Contemporary Moral Problems</i> , pp. 1-12: Introduction
Week 3	February 15	Egoism: Single Cells to Moral Tribes
		Read: White, <i>Contemporary Moral Problems</i> , pp. 12-19: Egoism and Moral Skepticism Read: Dawkins, <i>The Selfish Gene</i> , Chapters 4 – 6 Read: Haidt, <i>The Righteous Mind</i> , Introduction, Chapters 1 – 4
		Student TED Talk

Week 4 February 22 Cooperation, Conflict, and the Evolution of Altruism

Read: Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, Chapter 7 - 10
Read: Greene, *Moral Tribes*, Chapters 4, 5
Read: Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, Preface
Read: Shermer, *The Moral Arc*, Prologue

Student TED Talk
Student Debate 1

Week 5 March 1 Obedience and Tribal Mentality

Read: Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, Chapter 11, 13
Read: Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, Chapters 9, 10
Read: Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, Chapter 2
Read: Shermer, *The Moral Arc*, Chapter 1
Watch: *The Stanford Prison Experiment*

Student TED Talk
Student Debate 2

Week 6 March 8 Emotions and the Limbic System

Read: White, *Contemporary Moral Problems*, pp. 31-34: Morality Is Based on Sentiment
Read: Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, Chapters 5, 6
Read: Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, Chapter 3
Read: Shermer, *The Moral Arc*, Chapter 2
Watch: *Experimenter*

Student TED Talk
Student Debate 3

Week 7 March 15 MIDTERM DUE What Drives Moral Progress?

Read: Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, Chapter 4
Read: Shermer, *The Moral Arc*, Chapter 3, 4

Student TED Talk

Week 8 March 22 Spring Break

Week 9 March 29 Rationale and the Frontal Lobe

Read: White, *Contemporary Moral Problems*, pp. 38-46: Utilitarianism
Read: Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*, Chapter 5
Read: Shermer, *The Moral Arc*, Chapter 5

Student TED Talk
Student Debate 4

Week 10	April 5	Pragmatism and Politics
		<p>Read: White, <i>Contemporary Moral Problems</i>, pp. 53-61: Happiness and Virtue Read: Haidt, <i>The Righteous Mind</i>, Chapters 7, 8 Read: Pinker, <i>The Better Angels of Our Nature</i>, Chapter 6 Read: Shermer, <i>The Moral Arc</i>, Chapter 6</p> <p>Student TED Talk Student Debate 5</p>
Week 11	April 12	Culture and Relativism
		<p>Read: Pinker, <i>The Better Angels of Our Nature</i>, Chapter 7 Read: Shermer, <i>The Moral Arc</i>, Chapter 7</p> <p>Student TED Talk Student Debate 6</p>
Week 12	April 19	Societal and Innate Laws
		<p>Read: White, <i>Contemporary Moral Problems</i>, pp. 62-68: A Theory of Justice Read: Pinker, <i>The Better Angels of Our Nature</i>, Chapter 8 Read: Shermer, <i>The Moral Arc</i>, Chapter 8</p> <p>Student TED Talk Student Debate 7</p>
Week 13	April 26	Universals and Reality
		<p>Read: White, <i>Contemporary Moral Problems</i>, pp. 47-52: The Categorical Imperative Read: Pinker, <i>The Better Angels of Our Nature</i>, Chapter 9 Read: Shermer, <i>The Moral Arc</i>, Chapter 9</p> <p>Student TED Talk</p>
Week 14	May 3	Moral Progress or Regress?
		<p>Read: Harris, <i>The Moral Landscape</i>, Chapter 5 Read: Greene, <i>Moral Tribes</i>, Chapters 11, 12 Read: Haidt, <i>The Righteous Mind</i>, Chapter 12 Read: Shermer, <i>The Moral Arc</i>, Chapter 12</p> <p>Student TED Talk</p>
Week 15	May 10	Student TED Talks remaining
Finals Week	May 17	Presentation of Student Research Projects
		FINAL EXAM DUE May 24