



PHIL226

The Moral Psychology of Good and Evil

S2 External 2014

Philosophy

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

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Credit points

3

Prerequisites

12cp or admission to GDipArts

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

Is morality more a matter of reason or of passion? While we often think of strong emotions and desires as a threat to virtue, leading to action which is weak-willed or compulsive, recent work in psychology and neuroscience has tended to support a sentimentalist account of morality. This evidence suggests that moral judgments are intuitive, emotional judgments and that paradigmatically evil individuals such as psychopaths are deficient in empathy not in rationality. They know what is wrong but they just don't care. They are bad not mad! Empathy or sympathy seems to be essential to the development of conscience, moral understanding, and morally good action. Yet most evil actions are not performed by psychopaths. We will critically examine philosophical and psychological literature on the contribution of a range of cognitive processes including memory, emotion, mindreading, planning and imagination to moral competence and moral motivation and reconsider whether limited rationality or limited sympathy is the key to understanding a range of moral failings and impairments. We will also examine the role of disease or disorder in explaining both ordinary and extreme cases of wrongdoing.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

1. You will acquire an understanding of important moral concepts such as conscience, duty, evil, and character at an intermediate level
2. You will acquire knowledge of a key philosophical debate between rationalism and sentimentalism at an intermediate level.
3. You will understand in an applied way, how contemporary philosophical and psychological research can together contribute to our knowledge of the capacities necessary for sound moral judgment and moral motivation.
4. You will develop skills in analyzing and critically evaluating philosophical arguments at an intermediate level
5. You will develop skills in managing study projects effectively
6. You will be able to apply the conceptual knowledge gained to provide a careful analysis of cases of wrongful action

Assessment Tasks

| Name | Weighting | Due |
|---|-----------|-------------------------|
| Short reading assignment | 10% | Week 4 |
| Preparation and participation | 30% | Throughout the semester |
| Short essay | 25% | Week 7 |
| Major essay | 35% | Monday 17 November |

Short reading assignment

Due: **Week 4**

Weighting: **10%**

On successful completion you will be able to:

- 1. You will acquire an understanding of important moral concepts such as conscience, duty, evil, and character at an intermediate level

Preparation and participation

Due: **Throughout the semester**

Weighting: **30%**

Students will write a brief reflection/response or answer questions on a key text each week as a basis for tutorial discussion. Internal students will submit them at the end of the tutorial. External students will post them online. In week 12 an essay plan and bibliography will be required.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- 1. You will acquire an understanding of important moral concepts such as conscience, duty, evil, and character at an intermediate level
- 2. You will acquire knowledge of a key philosophical debate between rationalism and sentimentalism at an intermediate level.
- 3. You will understand in an applied way, how contemporary philosophical and psychological research can together contribute to our knowledge of the capacities necessary for sound moral judgment and moral motivation.
- 4. You will develop skills in analyzing and critically evaluating philosophical arguments at an intermediate level

- 5. You will develop skills in managing study projects effectively

Short essay

Due: **Week 7**

Weighting: **25%**

800-1000 word essay comparing Kant and Hume on moral judgment and moral motivation

On successful completion you will be able to:

- 1. You will acquire an understanding of important moral concepts such as conscience, duty, evil, and character at an intermediate level
- 2. You will acquire knowledge of a key philosophical debate between rationalism and sentimentalism at an intermediate level.
- 4. You will develop skills in analyzing and critically evaluating philosophical arguments at an intermediate level

Major essay

Due: **Monday 17 November**

Weighting: **35%**

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On successful completion you will be able to:

- 1. You will acquire an understanding of important moral concepts such as conscience, duty, evil, and character at an intermediate level
- 3. You will understand in an applied way, how contemporary philosophical and psychological research can together contribute to our knowledge of the capacities necessary for sound moral judgment and moral motivation.
- 4. You will develop skills in analyzing and critically evaluating philosophical arguments at an intermediate level
- 5. You will develop skills in managing study projects effectively
- 6. You will be able to apply the conceptual knowledge gained to provide a careful analysis of cases of wrongful action

Delivery and Resources

Required Reading

The main content of the course will revolve around a book of readings (PHL226 The Moral Psychology of Good and Evil). This will be available from the Campus Bookstore. This contains all core readings. Additional readings will be available online via the library.

Technology Used and Required

We use an iLearn website. Lectures are recorded. Lecture slides and any other material you need will be available through the iLearn website. We recommend you have access to a reliable internet connection throughout semester.

Assignment Submission

Assignments in this course will be submitted electronically, as word documents. **There is no need for a coversheet** - the iLearn assignment submission (Turnitin) involves declaring your details and honesty in submitting your work. Please note, we do not accept submission by email attachment.

Extensions and Special Consideration

Requests for extensions must, normally, be made in writing before the due date. Extensions of up to 3 days can be granted by your tutor if reasonable grounds are given, and some written documentation can be produced. Work load from other units, or from employment, are not considered reasonable justification.

Requests for extensions of more than 3 days should be submitted via a [Disruption to Studies Request](#), which is available in the ask.mq.edu.au portal. Your request should be accompanied by appropriate documentation, such as a medical certificate. Please see the Disruption to Studies policy in the list of policies at the end of this document for further details.

Penalties for Late Submission

Late submissions of assignments will attract a penalty proportionate to the nature and timeliness of the work. All work must be submitted within 2 weeks of the assessment due date. Outside of this time, special circumstances must be proven to have interrupted your study.

Unit Schedule

Week 1: Introduction: Moral judgement and moral motivation

1. What are we doing when we make a moral judgment? How might moral judgment be connected to moral motivation?
2. The problem of the amoralist. Psychopaths as real life amoralists?

Week 2: What is evil?

1. The concept of evil
2. The moral significance of evil

Week 3. Evil and bad morality: Limited sympathy or limited rationality?

1. Ordinary evil.
2. Bennett: The Conscience of Huckleberry Finn

Week 4: Emotion based accounts of moral judgment and motivation in philosophy and psychology

1. Philosophy: Sentimentalism: Hume and the role of sympathy

2. Psychology: Experimental accounts: Haidt The emotional dog and his rational tail.

Week 5: Reason based accounts of moral judgment and motivation in philosophy and psychology

1. Philosophy: Kant: Reason and duty
2. Psychology: Kohlberg on moral development.

Week 6: Testing the accounts. Psychopathy and acquired sociopathy.

1. Do psychopaths make moral judgments?
2. Are psychopaths deficient in reason or in empathy?

Week 7: Testing the accounts: Autism

1. Morality and mind reading
2. Autism, empathy and moral agency

Semester break

Week 8: What do we lack when we lack conscience? (Public holiday on Monday. One lecture only)

1. What is conscience? Developmental accounts. Precursors of conscience in self-control and attention. Philosophical accounts: Kant and moral feeling

Week 9: Character, vice and virtue.

1. Scepticism about character
2. A virtue ethics defence of character

Week 10 Moral identity

1. Moral identity and moral motivation
2. The Dark Triad – a no self view of evil

Week 11 Mad or bad?

1. Disease and disorder
2. Is there a difference between bad character and psychological incapacity?

Week 12. Evil and Responsibility

Can someone be evil but not responsible? Case studies.

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to

Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html

Assessment Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html>

Grading Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

Grade Appeal Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Grievance Management Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance_management/policy.html

Disruption to Studies Policy http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html *The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.*

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the [Learning and Teaching Category](#) of Policy Central.

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit <http://informatics.mq.edu.au/hel>

p/.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Graduate Capabilities

Capable of Professional and Personal Judgement and Initiative

We want our graduates to have emotional intelligence and sound interpersonal skills and to demonstrate discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgement. They will exercise initiative as needed. They will be capable of risk assessment, and be able to handle ambiguity and complexity, enabling them to be adaptable in diverse and changing environments.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- 5. You will develop skills in managing study projects effectively
- 6. You will be able to apply the conceptual knowledge gained to provide a careful analysis of cases of wrongful action

Assessment tasks

- Preparation and participation
- Major essay

Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- 1. You will acquire an understanding of important moral concepts such as conscience, duty, evil, and character at an intermediate level
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- 3. You will understand in an applied way, how contemporary philosophical and psychological research can together contribute to our knowledge of the capacities

necessary for sound moral judgment and moral motivation.

- 4. You will develop skills in analyzing and critically evaluating philosophical arguments at an intermediate level

Assessment tasks

- Short reading assignment
- Preparation and participation
- Short essay
- Major essay

Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- 2. You will acquire knowledge of a key philosophical debate between rationalism and sentimentalism at an intermediate level.
- 3. You will understand in an applied way, how contemporary philosophical and psychological research can together contribute to our knowledge of the capacities necessary for sound moral judgment and moral motivation.
- 4. You will develop skills in analyzing and critically evaluating philosophical arguments at an intermediate level
- 6. You will be able to apply the conceptual knowledge gained to provide a careful analysis of cases of wrongful action

Assessment tasks

- Preparation and participation
- Short essay
- Major essay

Problem Solving and Research Capability

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative

in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- 3. You will understand in an applied way, how contemporary philosophical and psychological research can together contribute to our knowledge of the capacities necessary for sound moral judgment and moral motivation.
- 5. You will develop skills in managing study projects effectively
- 6. You will be able to apply the conceptual knowledge gained to provide a careful analysis of cases of wrongful action

Assessment tasks

- Preparation and participation
- Major essay

Creative and Innovative

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- 6. You will be able to apply the conceptual knowledge gained to provide a careful analysis of cases of wrongful action

Assessment task

- Major essay

Effective Communication

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- 2. You will acquire knowledge of a key philosophical debate between rationalism and sentimentalism at an intermediate level.
- 4. You will develop skills in analyzing and critically evaluating philosophical arguments at

an intermediate level

- 5. You will develop skills in managing study projects effectively
- 6. You will be able to apply the conceptual knowledge gained to provide a careful analysis of cases of wrongful action

Assessment tasks

- Preparation and participation
- Short essay
- Major essay

Engaged and Ethical Local and Global citizens

As local citizens our graduates will be aware of indigenous perspectives and of the nation's historical context. They will be engaged with the challenges of contemporary society and with knowledge and ideas. We want our graduates to have respect for diversity, to be open-minded, sensitive to others and inclusive, and to be open to other cultures and perspectives: they should have a level of cultural literacy. Our graduates should be aware of disadvantage and social justice, and be willing to participate to help create a wiser and better society.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- 1. You will acquire an understanding of important moral concepts such as conscience, duty, evil, and character at an intermediate level
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- 3. You will understand in an applied way, how contemporary philosophical and psychological research can together contribute to our knowledge of the capacities necessary for sound moral judgment and moral motivation.
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Assessment tasks

- Short reading assignment
- Preparation and participation
- Short essay
- Major essay