



PHIL226

The Moral Psychology of Good and Evil

S2 External 2015

Dept of Philosophy

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General Information

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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

General Assessment Information

Unit Requirements and Expectations: Attendance

For internal students only:

Lectures: attendance at lectures is required. Absences must be supported by medical certificates or equivalent. **You will only be eligible to pass the unit if you have attended at least 70% of the lectures.**

Students can request an exemption from the lecture attendance requirement on the grounds of timetable clashes or for other reasons the unit convenor deems acceptable. Supporting documentation must be provided. Exemption requests must be made in writing (email) to the unit convenor by the end of week 2.

Tutorials: attendance at tutorials is required. Absences must be supported by medical certificates or equivalent. **You will only be eligible to pass the unit if you have attended at least 80% of tutorials.**

For external students: There is no on-campus session for this unit. External students are expected to contribute to the online discussion board on a regular basis. **You will only be eligible to pass the unit if you have contributed to at least 80% of the weekly topics for discussion posted there.**

Weekly Tutorial Responses

The weekly responses must show that the student has read and reflected on the relevant text in relation to the week's topic. Responses will be recorded as either satisfactory (S) or not satisfactory (N). Responses that show little understanding of or engagement with the relevant text or which are vague, superficial or too short will be graded N. Responses that show a genuine attempt to understand the issues will be graded S, even if there are problems of understanding and interpretation. Weekly responses must be handed in at the end of the relevant tutorial or, for online students, on the day specified by your online tutor. **Late submissions will not be accepted** unless the delay is caused by illness or other unavoidable disruptions (see 'Extensions and Special Consideration').

Each tutorial is worth a possible 2 marks. Students will receive 1 mark for each satisfactory written response they submit and a mark out of 1 for attendance and participation. Note: students who attend every tutorial can still receive less than 10/ 20 for this section if their participation and written responses are inadequate. Individual comments will not be given, but the tutor will provide general feedback in tutorials or in the online forum for external students. The last tutorial of the semester (week 11) will be devoted to essay plans, so students will not be required to submit written answers to that week's tutorial questions. Attendance and participation for this final tutorial will be worth 2 marks.

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

You will lose 10% of the value of the assignment for every 4 days that it is late. Work will not be accepted after 2 weeks from the due date unless you have submitted a disruption to studies request.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Due
Short essay	25%	September 11
Preparation and Participation	20%	Continuous
Three Tutorial Responses	15%	October 16
Essay Plan	5%	Week 11
Major essay	35%	November 9

Short essay

Due: **September 11**

Weighting: **25%**

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

On successful completion you will be able to:

- 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

Preparation and Participation

Due: **Continuous**

Weighting: **20%**

Students will write a short (typed) reflection/response or answer questions on a key text each week and bring this to class as a basis for tutorial discussion. Responses must be submitted at the end of the tutorial. External students will post them to the online forum. Your response or answers should be a minimum of 150 words.

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

Three Tutorial Responses

Due: **October 16**

Weighting: **15%**

Students must select three of their submitted tutorial responses to revise for grading. The aim of this task is to encourage students to revisit their original responses and to make revisions or additions that reflect developments or changes in their thinking about the issues (**600-800** words).

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

Essay Plan

Due: **Week 11**

Weighting: **5%**

In week 11 students must bring a one page essay plan and bibliography to tutorials for discussion and *guided peer assessment*. External students will participate in a similar exercise online.

On successful completion you will be able to:

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

Major essay

Due: **November 9**

Weighting: **35%**

Students will be expected to analyse a case study of evil using the relevant concepts introduced in the unit and making use of the appropriate unit readings. **1600** words.

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

All required readings and most supplementary readings are available from the library on e-Reserve. There is no reader for this unit. A week-by-week schedule of required readings and supplementary readings can be found on the PHIL226 iLearn homepage.

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.

Unit Schedule

Week 1: Introduction: Moral judgment 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

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 14-28 September

Week 8: Mad or bad?

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

Week 9: What do we lack when we lack conscience?

1. What is conscience?
2. Conscience and moral agency

Week 10: Moral identity

1. Moral identity and moral motivation
2. A no self view of evil

Week 11: Moral Responsibility and Moral Motivation

1. Moral emotions and responsibility
2. Reason and responsibility

Week 12: Evil and Responsibility: Can someone be evil but not responsible?

1. Psychopathy and responsibility
2. Evil and responsibility

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/

Results

Results shown in *iLearn*, or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit [ask.m](#)

mq.edu.au.

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/help/>.

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

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

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
- 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

Assessment tasks

- Short essay
- Preparation and Participation
- Three Tutorial Responses
- 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

- Short essay
- Preparation and Participation
- Three Tutorial Responses
- Essay Plan
- 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
- Essay Plan
- 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

- Short essay
- Preparation and Participation
- Three Tutorial Responses
- Essay Plan
- 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
- 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.
- 6. You will be able to apply the conceptual knowledge gained to provide a careful analysis of cases of wrongful action

Assessment tasks

- Short essay
- Preparation and Participation
- Major essay