



PHIX2026

The Ethics and Moral Psychology of Good and Evil

Session 1, Fully online/virtual 2021

Department of Philosophy

Contents

<u>General Information</u>	2
<u>Learning Outcomes</u>	3
<u>General Assessment Information</u>	3
<u>Assessment Tasks</u>	4
<u>Delivery and Resources</u>	6
<u>Unit Schedule</u>	7
<u>Policies and Procedures</u>	10

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Notice

As part of [Phase 3 of our return to campus plan](#), most units will now run tutorials, seminars and other small group activities on campus, and most will keep an online version available to those students unable to return or those who choose to continue their studies online.

To check the availability of face-to-face activities for your unit, please go to [timetable viewer](#). To check detailed information on unit assessments visit your unit's iLearn space or consult your unit convenor.

General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Convenor, Lecturer

Mianna Lotz

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By appointment

Lecturer, tutor

Mark Alfano

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By appointment

Lecturer, tutor

Paul Formosa

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By appointment

Credit points

10

Prerequisites

40cp at 1000 level or above

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

What is it that makes us good or evil, virtuous or vicious? What does it mean to be a competent agent who can be held responsible for moral as well as immoral action? And what does morality and moral theory require of us as agents? Thinking about what motivates morality raises important questions about the role played by reason, will, emotion and intuition in bringing about moral behaviour. It also offers a basis for critically examining prominent ethical theories to see how well they can accommodate the lived realities of human agency and motivation. And it invites further questions about the contribution of social context and psychopathic conditions in explaining ordinary and extreme forms of wrongdoing. This unit will critically examine the philosophical and psychological literature on moral agency, virtue, goodness, and evil, as well as exploring historical and contemporary philosophical accounts of the importance of such things as integrity, character, autonomy and respect for others in moral life and moral relations.

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:

ULO1: draw on sources used in the unit to give clear accounts of the relevant philosophical moral concepts and theories

ULO2: demonstrate a good general understanding of how contemporary philosophical and psychological research contributes to our understanding of moral agency, judgement and motivation

ULO3: analyse and critically evaluate relevant competing philosophical theories and arguments.

ULO4: apply the theoretical knowledge gained to analysis and evaluation of selected case studies in moral psychology

ULO5: construct sound arguments in support of your own ethical positions, judgements and values

General Assessment Information

NOTE: It is expected that students will complete ALL ASSESSMENT COMPONENTS in this unit. You do not need to have passed each assessment to pass the unit, but it is expected that all assessments are attempted.

General Submission Procedure: Written assessments must be submitted via TurnItIn at the correct link provided on the Unit iLearn site. Please ensure that you use the correct link for your assessment!

Extensions: Extensions must be sought via the MQ Special Consideration application procedure, in advance of the due date. Extensions will only be granted for medical or equivalent reasons, supported by documentation (medical certificate or equivalent). Please note that workload in other units, and employment outside of university, will not be accepted as grounds for an extension.

LATE SUBMISSION POLICY: Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, the following will apply:

(a) Late penalty – two (2) marks out of 100 will be deducted per day for assignments submitted after the due date;

(b) No assignment will be accepted more than seven (7) days (incl. weekends) after the original submission deadline.

(c) No late submissions will be accepted for timed assessments – i.e. online quizzes.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
Participation	20%	No	Continuous
Quizzes	25%	No	Weekly as advised
Reflective tasks	20%	No	11.59pm Sunday 21 March 2021
Reflective essay	35%	No	11.59pm Friday 4 June 2021

Participation

Assessment Type ¹: Participatory task

Indicative Time on Task ²: 15 hours

Due: **Continuous**

Weighting: **20%**

Participation in online forums and activities. Students are expected to be well-prepared and make a constructive contribution.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- draw on sources used in the unit to give clear accounts of the relevant philosophical moral concepts and theories
- demonstrate a good general understanding of how contemporary philosophical and psychological research contributes to our understanding of moral agency, judgement and motivation
- analyse and critically evaluate relevant competing philosophical theories and arguments.
- apply the theoretical knowledge gained to analysis and evaluation of selected case studies in moral psychology
- construct sound arguments in support of your own ethical positions, judgements and values

Quizzes

Assessment Type ¹: Quiz/Test

Indicative Time on Task ²: 15 hours

Due: **Weekly as advised**

Weighting: **25%**

Online quizzes to test comprehension of the required readings.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- draw on sources used in the unit to give clear accounts of the relevant philosophical moral concepts and theories
- demonstrate a good general understanding of how contemporary philosophical and psychological research contributes to our understanding of moral agency, judgement and motivation
- analyse and critically evaluate relevant competing philosophical theories and arguments.
- apply the theoretical knowledge gained to analysis and evaluation of selected case studies in moral psychology

Reflective tasks

Assessment Type ¹: Reflective Writing

Indicative Time on Task ²: 15 hours

Due: **11.59pm Sunday 21 March 2021**

Weighting: **20%**

Short reflective and analytic writing tasks

On successful completion you will be able to:

- draw on sources used in the unit to give clear accounts of the relevant philosophical moral concepts and theories
- demonstrate a good general understanding of how contemporary philosophical and psychological research contributes to our understanding of moral agency, judgement and motivation
- analyse and critically evaluate relevant competing philosophical theories and arguments.
- apply the theoretical knowledge gained to analysis and evaluation of selected case studies in moral psychology
- construct sound arguments in support of your own ethical positions, judgements and values

Reflective essay

Assessment Type ¹: Essay

Indicative Time on Task ²: 30 hours

Due: **11.59pm Friday 4 June 2021**

Weighting: **35%**

A major essay applying relevant concepts and theories introduced in the unit

On successful completion you will be able to:

- draw on sources used in the unit to give clear accounts of the relevant philosophical moral concepts and theories
- demonstrate a good general understanding of how contemporary philosophical and psychological research contributes to our understanding of moral agency, judgement and motivation
- analyse and critically evaluate relevant competing philosophical theories and arguments.
- apply the theoretical knowledge gained to analysis and evaluation of selected case studies in moral psychology
- construct sound arguments in support of your own ethical positions, judgements and values

¹ If you need help with your assignment, please contact:

- the academic teaching staff in your unit for guidance in understanding or completing this type of assessment
- the [Writing Centre](#) for academic skills support.

² Indicative time-on-task is an estimate of the time required for completion of the assessment task and is subject to individual variation

Delivery and Resources

Due to COVID-19 restrictions there will be a recorded lecture each week (which may be broken into 2-3 parts) and one 1-hour tutorial (zoom or face-to-face for Internals) or discussion board Forum (for Externals) per week.

Students are expected to complete at least 3.5 hours of unit reading and private study per week in this unit, additional to lecture listening and tutorial participation and any assessment preparation time.

REQUIRED READING: All required reading in this unit can be accessed via the PHIL2064 Leganto link on the unit iLearn site. Additional readings will be notified on iLearn and in lectures.

The readings are compulsory reading for this unit. You will be expected to keep up with the readings throughout semester, and tutorial/online discussion as well as the quizzes will require prior familiarity with the relevant readings.

Unit Schedule

PHIL2026 UNIT SCHEDULE AND READINGS

The following is an outline of the topics and the Essential Readings that will be covered week by week. The listed essential readings are all available in Leganto under the unit code PHIL2026. These are the minimum required reading for the unit. Further readings recommended in classes will assist you to develop an expanded understanding of the issues discussed in lectures, and are expected to be used for essays.

SECTION 1: ETHICAL THEORY, GOODNESS, AND MORAL PSYCHOLOGY (Mianna Lotz)

Week 1 (beginning 22 February): Introduction to Consequentialist ethics

Essential Reading:

1. Philip Pettit, 'Consequentialism' in Peter Singer (ed), *A Companion to Ethics*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993): pp. 230–240.
2. Samuel Scheffler, Excerpt from 'Introduction', In Samuel Scheffler (ed.) *Consequentialism and Its Critics*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998): pp. 1-5.

Week 2 (beginning 1 March) – Consequentialism and moral psychology (i): Is the good consequentialist a person without integrity?

Essential Reading:

1. Susan Wolf, 'Moral Saints', *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 79, No. 8 (August, 1982): 419-439.
2. Bernard Williams, 'Consequentialism and Integrity' In Samuel Scheffler (ed.) *Consequentialism and Its Critics*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998): pp. 20-50.

Week 3 (beginning 8 March) – Consequentialism and moral psychology (ii): Is the good consequentialist incapable of genuine friendship and intimacy?

Essential Reading:

1. Michael Stocker, excerpt from 'The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories', *The Journal of Philosophy* Vol. 73, No. 14, On Motives and Morals (August 12, 1976): pp. 453-466.
2. Peter Railton, 'Alienation, Consequentialism and the Demands of Morality', *Philosophy and*

Public Affairs, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Spring 1984): pp. 134-171.

Week 4 (beginning 15 March) – Virtue ethics and moral psychology: What kind of person is the Aristotelean virtuous agent?

Essential Reading:

1. Aristotle, excerpts from *The Nicomachean Ethics*. J.L. Ackrill, trans. (London: Faber & Faber, 1973.)
2. Philippa Foot, 'Virtues and Vices.' In Stephen Darwall (ed), *Virtue Ethics*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003): pp. 105-120.

Reflective Writing Task DUE: 11.59pm Sunday 21 March 2021

SECTION 2: EVIL (Paul Formosa)

Week 5 (beginning 22 March): Evil Actions and Evil People

Essential reading:

1. Formosa, Paul. 'A Conception of Evil'. *Journal of Value Inquiry* 42, no. 2 (2008): 217–39.
2. Russell, Luke. "Dispositional Accounts of Evil Personhood" In *Evil: A Philosophical Investigation*. Oxford University Press, 2014. Chapter 8.

Week 6 (beginning 29 March): Kantian rationalism, Moral Development, and Evil

Essential reading:

1. Herman, Barbara. 'On the Value of Acting from the Motive of Duty'. In *The Practice of Moral Judgment*, 1993. Harvard University Press.
2. Formosa, Paul. 'Evil, Virtue, and Education in Kant'. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 2018, 1–10.

***** MID-SEMESTER BREAK: 5-16 April 2021 *****

SECTION 3: CONNECTING MORAL PSYCHOLOGY AND EMPIRICAL PSYCHOLOGY (Mark Alfano)

Week 7 (beginning 19 April): Wellbeing and the evolution of preferences

Essential Reading:

1. Mark Alfano (2016), *Moral Psychology: An Introduction*. Polity. chapters 1 and 2.
2. Amartya Sen. (1985). Well-being, agency, and freedom. *Journal of Philosophy*, 82(4): 169-221.

Week 8 (beginning 26 April): Being and becoming responsible

Essential Reading:

1. Mark Alfano (2016). *Moral Psychology*. Polity. Chapter 2
2. Heidi Maibom (2014), "To Treat a Psychopath" *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics*, Vol 35 (1), pp. 31 - 42.

Week 9 (beginning 3 May): Emotions: It's not facts versus feelings

Essential Reading:

1. Mark Alfano (2016). *Moral Psychology: An Introduction*. Chapter 3
2. Christine Tappolet (2009). "Emotion, motivation and action: The case of fear." In Goldie (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion*. Oxford University Press.

Week 10 (beginning 10 May): Character: the good, the bad, and the ugly

Essential Reading:

1. Mark Alfano (2016). *Moral Psychology: An Introduction*. Polity. Chapter 4
2. David Shoemaker (2015), "Psychopathy and Autism: The Limits of Regard," *Responsibility from the Margins*, Oxford Scholarship Online.

Week 11 (beginning 17 May): Moral agreement and disagreement

Essential Reading:

1. Mark Alfano (2016). *Moral Psychology: An Introduction*. Polity. Chapter 5
2. Mark Alfano, Marc Cheong, & Oliver Curry (forthcoming). Moral universals: A machine-reading analysis of 256 cultures.

Week 12 (beginning 24 May): Trust and distrust: How to live in a polarized world

Essential Reading:

1. Nguyen, Thi (forthcoming). Trust as an unquestioning attitude. *Oxford Studies in Epistemology*. Oxford University Press.

2. Quintana, I., Klein, C., Cheong, M., Sullivan, E., Reimann, R., & Alfano, M. (under review). The evolution of vaccine discourse on Twitter during the first six months of COVID-19.

ESSAY DUE: 11.59pm Friday 4 June 2021

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central \(https://policies.mq.edu.au\)](https://policies.mq.edu.au). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- [Academic Appeals Policy](#)
- [Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- [Academic Progression Policy](#)
- [Assessment Policy](#)
- [Fitness to Practice Procedure](#)
- [Grade Appeal Policy](#)
- [Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public](#)
- [Special Consideration Policy](#)

Students seeking more policy resources can visit [Student Policies \(https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies\)](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

To find other policies relating to Teaching and Learning, visit [Policy Central \(https://policies.mq.edu.au\)](https://policies.mq.edu.au) and use the [search tool](#).

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: <https://students.mq.edu.au/admin/other-resources/student-conduct>

Results

Results published on platform other than [eStudent](#), (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) 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.mq.edu.au or if you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@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 help you improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Getting help with your assignment](#)
- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module](#)

The Library provides online and face to face support to help you find and use relevant information resources.

- [Subject and Research Guides](#)
- [Ask a Librarian](#)

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

If you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/.

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