



# PHIL2026

## The Ethics and Moral Psychology of Good and Evil

Session 1, In person-scheduled-weekday, North Ryde 2025

*School of Humanities*

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#### Disclaimer

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## General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Unit Convenor and Lecturer

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17WW 252

by arrangement

Lecturer

Mark Alfano

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Credit points

10

Prerequisites

40cp at 1000 level or above

Corequisites

Co-badged status

PHIX2026

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

### *Late submission penalty*

*Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, a 5% penalty (of the total possible mark) will be applied each day to late submissions, up until the 7th calendar day (including weekends). After the 7th day, a mark of '0' (zero) will be awarded even if the assessment is submitted. Submission time for all written assessments is set at 11.55pm. A 1-hour grace period is provided to students who experience a technical issue.*

### *Important to note:*

- Late submission of time sensitive tasks (such as tests/exams, performance assessments/presentations, scheduled practical assessments/labs) will be addressed by the unit convenor in a Special consideration application.*
- Students should not request an informal arrangement from their tutor, lecturer or Unit Convenor (or equivalent).*
- Where an application for Special Consideration is approved and the outcome is an extension to the due date of a task, submissions that are received after the new due date will be subject to late penalties that are calculated from the new due date. This only applies where the outcome is an extension to the due date – see the [Special Consideration Policy](#) for a schedule of all possible outcomes.*

### **GenAI/ChatGPT**

In this Unit, and unless notified otherwise *in writing* by the Unit Convenor, substantive assessment content that has been generated by AI will be regarded as not the student's own work and potentially in breach of Academic Integrity standards. This applies to all assessments, including online forums. In submitting assessments all students will be required to confirm their agreement with the following:

*In submitting this assessment, I certify that this submission is my own work and demonstrates my own understanding, analysis, research, reflection, critical thinking, and writing. I am not submitting anything that I cannot myself fully explain and defend, if called upon to do so. I understand that if my teachers have concerns about whether this submission is my own work or an AI-generated output, I may be required to attend an interview with the Unit Convenor/Integrity Officer/academic staff to verify my research methods, my understanding of the content, and my close familiarity with all sources I have cited. If I am found to have submitted work that is not my own, my work will be further investigated, and I may be found to be in breach of the MQ Academic Integrity Policy.*

### Further details about assessment

For further details about assessment please see the unit iLearn.

## Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
Literature review	30%	No	13/04/2025
Research essay	40%	No	16/05/2025
Viva voce	30%	No	Week 13

### Literature review

Assessment Type <sup>1</sup>: Literature review

Indicative Time on Task <sup>2</sup>: 20 hours

Due: **13/04/2025**

Weighting: **30%**

Students will devise a literature search strategy, and demonstrate judgment in their selection and justification of texts to be used as sources for the essay.

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

## Research essay

Assessment Type <sup>1</sup>: Essay

Indicative Time on Task <sup>2</sup>: 35 hours

Due: **16/05/2025**

Weighting: **40%**

Students will write an essay on a topic from the unit, responding to a supplied essay question and offering an argument in support of a thesis.

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

## Viva voce

Assessment Type <sup>1</sup>: Viva/oral examination

Indicative Time on Task <sup>2</sup>: 20 hours

Due: **Week 13**

Weighting: **30%**

Students will attend a 5-10 minute viva voce zoom meeting. They will be assessed on their verbal responses in a discussion about the content and learning activities 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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

Lectures will be delivered in person with location and timing as published in the timetable.

Lectures will be available live online and will be recorded. Recorded lectures will be available via Echo/iLearn.

Full descriptions of assessment tasks will be available via iLearn.

Readings will be available via Leganto.

Tutorials for internal students are in-person during weeks 2 through 12, inclusive. There is no tutorial in week 10.

Forum participation for external students is weekly from week 2 through 12 inclusive, via iLearn. There is no forum engagement required in Week 10.

## Unit Schedule

Part 1: Moral Psychology. (Weeks 1 - 4)

Lecturer Prof Mark Alfano.

- Indicative text: *Moral Psychology: An Introduction* by Mark Alfano

## Part 2: Evil. (Weeks 5 - 8)

Lecturers Prof Mark Alfano and Dr Katrina Hutchison

- Indicative texts:
  - *On Evil* by Adam Morton;
  - "Standing between Us and Our Grave Wrongdoing" by Bat Ami Bar On
  - "Evil and Forgiveness" by Kathryn Norlock.

## Part III: Ethics, Emotions and Reason. (Weeks 9 - 12)

Lecturer Dr Katrina Hutchison

- Indicative texts - we will read a selection of philosophy papers, such as:
  - "The Uses of Anger" by Audre Lorde
  - "Freedom and Resentment" by Peter Strawson
  - "Introduction:(Almost) everything you ever wanted to know about empathy" from *Empathy and morality* by Heidi Maibom
  - "On the Value of Acting from the Motive of Duty" by Barbara Herman
  - "Autism, empathy and moral agency" by Jeanette Kennett

# 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](#)
- [Assessment Procedure](#)
- [Complaints Resolution 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 [connect.mq.edu.au](https://connect.mq.edu.au) or if you are a Global MBA student contact [globalmba.support@mq.edu.au](mailto:globalmba.support@mq.edu.au)

## Academic Integrity

At Macquarie, we believe [academic integrity](#) – honesty, respect, trust, responsibility, fairness and courage – is at the core of learning, teaching and research. We recognise that meeting the expectations required to complete your assessments can be challenging. So, we offer you a range of resources and services to help you reach your potential, including free [online writing and maths support](#), [academic skills development](#) and [wellbeing consultations](#).

## Student Support

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

## Academic Success

[Academic Success](#) provides resources to develop your English language proficiency, academic writing, and communication skills.

- [Workshops](#)
- [Chat with a WriteWISE peer writing leader](#)
- [Access StudyWISE](#)
- [Upload an assignment to Studiosity](#)
- [Complete the 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

Macquarie University offers a range of [Student Support Services](#) including:

- [IT Support](#)
- [Accessibility and disability support](#) with study



- Mental health [support](#)
- [Safety support](#) to respond to bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and sexual assault
- [Social support including information about finances, tenancy and legal issues](#)
- [Student Advocacy](#) provides independent advice on MQ policies, procedures, and processes

## Student Enquiries

Got a question? Ask us via the [Service Connect Portal](#), or contact [Service Connect](#).

## IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit [http://www.mq.edu.au/about\\_us/offices\\_and\\_units/information\\_technology/help/](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.

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Unit information based on version 2025.03 of the [Handbook](#)