Philosophy 328—Philosophy of Psychology

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Required Texts:


These texts are at both the University Bookstore and NJ Books. I think you are better off getting them at NJ Books. You can check online for discounted or used editions, but you run the risk of not having them in hand when classes start. NJ Books may have some used copies of Moral Psychology. However, Moral Tribes is brand new and is not a textbook, so you won’t find used copies. You have no excuse not to have the books by the first day of classes.

Philosophy of Psychology can cover a wide range of issues, but I am interested here in moral psychology. Moral psychology is, broadly, the study of the ways we think (and feel) about morality, how we make moral judgments, and why we act as we do when we make moral decisions. Western philosophers have studied moral psychology at least since Plato and Aristotle, and by the end of the nineteenth century a robust empirical scientific psychology had developed which attempted to resolve philosophical questions with scientific tools, such as experiment and mathematics. The dialectic between philosophical methods and empirical methods continues to this day, but with the added complication that philosophers are starting to do experimental work to attempt to resolve philosophical problems of moral reasoning. Both philosophers and psychologists are currently exploring moral psychology with the tools of cognitive neuroscience, and especially neural imaging technologies such as functional magnetic resonance imaging.

Course graded requirements:

1. Weekly 2-page summaries of that week’s readings—10 total, 2 points each = 20 points
2. Three 8-page papers, each worth 25 points = 75 points.
3. 5-point bump for excellent class participation and attendance (can be the difference between A and B+).

PLAGIARISM IS, OF COURSE, PROHIBITED. Definition: In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source. This definition applies to texts published in print or on-line, to manuscripts, and to the work of other student writers. If you plagiarize any of your work, it will be reported to your Dean and the University has a procedure for dealing with it. At that point, your grade will be out of my hands. Absences must be reported through the Student Self-reporting Absences System.
READING AND WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1/25  Introduction: Trolley Car Thought Experiments
2/1   Reason and Passion: The Tradition   MP: pp. 11-39
2/8   Reason and Passion: Current Work   MP: pp. 40-83
2/22  Altruism & Egoism: Current Work   MP: pp. 117-159

FIRST PAPER DUE: HOW CAN EMOTION AFFECT MORAL JUDGMENT WITHOUT UNDERMINING REASON?

3/1   Virtue & Character   MP: pp. 167-196
      Video: The Milgram and Stanford Prison Experiments

3/22  SPRING BREAK

4/5   Agency & Responsibility: Current Work   MP: pp. 264-305
4/12  Moral Intuitions:   MP: pp. 315-387

SECOND PAPER DUE: SITUATIONISM VS. CHARACTER EXPLANATIONS: WHO WINS?

4/26  Moral Tribes: Parts II & III   MT: pp. 132-210
5/3   Moral Tribes: Parts IV & V   MT: pp. 211-353

5/10  FINAL PAPER DUE: WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM NEUROSCIENCE ABOUT ETHICS?