

PHIL 237 Contemporary Moral Issues

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Course Description: This course explores contemporary moral issues in light of work in fields such as psychology, cognitive science, and biology. The course is divided into two broad units. The first considers issues of moral responsibility and bias, with a final application to issues of race and racism. The second considers moral questions that arise through emerging work on non-human minds: other animals and artificial entities.

Readings: Required readings will be provided by the instructor online in PDF format for students to download. No other readings or materials are required.

Course Logistics: Lectures will be made available pre-recorded and posted on MyCourses on the scheduled day and time of the lecture. They will remain up thereafter for students to view as best fits their own schedule.

Students are expected to be available once a week for a total of 4 'live' meetings with me. I will circulate a sign-up sheet to determine 2 timeslots on Mondays (starting Monday, June 15th) where 2 separate groups will meet with me as a discussion group each time. I will provide more details in lecture and via email.

Office Hours: In consultation with students I will also determine a few timeslots (likely 3 spread out during the week) that are the most beneficial for the group. Students can then sign up for appointments during those timeslots for one on one meetings with me.

Course Evaluation:

Method	Value
4 reading responses (250-300 words) to be submitted by midnight of the following dates: Friday, June 12 Friday, June 19 Friday, June 26 Friday, July 3	20% (5% each)
Short Assignment (800 words) Monday, June 15	15%
Short Assignment (1000 words) Thursday, June 25	25%
Final Paper (1500 words) Thursday, July 9th	40%

4 Reading Responses: Students will submit a question regarding the week's readings to the instructor on Fridays, ahead of Monday's scheduled live meeting. Full instructions to be provided in lecture.

2 Short Assignments: Students will write two short assignments that critically engage with some of the views examined in the course. Full instructions to be provided in lecture.

Final Paper: 1500 words – On a choice of topics to be supplied by me, or on a topic chosen by the student, in consultation with me no later than Monday, June 30. Full instructions and advice to be provided in lecture.

Policies

Late Policy: It is **imperative (!!!!!)** that you submit your reading responses on time! No submission by midnight will result in a grade of 0 for that response.

All other extensions will only be considered based on documented evidence about extenuating circumstances. Please keep in mind the very quick pace of the course, and the very quick grading pace for your TA; this makes other extensions on any other ground impossible, my apologies in advance. All late submissions (other than the responses) will be penalized by one 3rd of a letter grade per day late (eg. an original B+ will result in a B, and so on).

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

As the instructor of this course I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the [Office for Students with Disabilities](#), 514-398-6009

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Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Due Dates	Reading
Monday, June 8	Introduction		
Tuesday, June 9	Moral Psychology		Tamar Gendler, <i>Alief and Belief</i>
Wednesday, June 10	Moral Psychology		Brownstein & Madva, <i>Ethical Automaticity</i>
Thursday, June 11	Moral Psychology		Neil Levy, <i>The Good, The Bad, And The Blameworthy</i>
Friday, June 12	Response		
Monday, June 15	Questions/Answers	Assignment 1	
Tuesday, June 16	Moral Psychology		Ayala Lopez and Beeghly, <i>Explaining Injustice</i>
Wednesday, June 17	Moral Psychology		Alia Al-Saji, <i>A Phenomenology of Hesitation</i>
Thursday, June 18	Moral Psychology		Rima Basu, <i>The Wrongs of Racist Beliefs</i>
Friday, June 19	Response		
Monday, June 22	Questions/Answers		Peter Singer, <i>All Animals Are Equal</i>
Tuesday, June 23	Animals		Vincent et al., <i>Normative Practices of Other Animals</i>
Wednesday, June 24			
Thursday, June 25	Animals	Assignment 2	Machery and Mallon, <i>Evolution of Morality</i>
Friday, June 26	Response		
Monday, June 29	Questions/Answers		Philosopher's Brief: The Case of Tommy the Chimpanzee
Tuesday, June 30	Animals		Marx and Tiefensee, <i>Of Animals, Robots, And Men</i>
Wednesday, July 1			
Thursday, July 2	Robots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NOTE 2 READINGS 	Allen, <i>Artificial Morality</i> AND Moor, <i>The Nature of Machine Ethics</i>
Friday, July 3	Response		
Monday, July 6	Questions/Answers		Cappuccio et al., <i>Sympathy for Dolores</i>
Tuesday, July 7	Robots		Gualeni, <i>Artificial Beings Worthy of Moral Consideration</i>
Wednesday, July 8			Study Day
Thursday, July 9		Final Paper	Paper Due