

## SOP 4850: Moral Psychology Course Syllabus

How do people decide what is right and wrong? What motivates people to help others, blame others, punish others, and reward others? Where does morality come from? Is morality universal or culturally specific? How do people resolve moral conundrums? Is morality based primarily on reasoning or on moral emotions? Can science make the world a better place? This course examines such fundamental questions about human morality. Integrating perspectives from psychology, philosophy, biology, neuroscience, development, and other fields, we will examine both classic and cutting-edge work that speaks to these timeless questions.

**Learning Objectives:** By the end of the course, students should be able to identify the major theories of moral psychology and describe evidence for and criticisms of each theory. Students should also be capable of correctly interpreting the main findings of scientific articles about moral psychology.

**Course time:** Mondays, Wednesday, & Fridays, 12:30pm-2:40pm

**Course Location:** Online via Canvas & Zoom, live lectures that will get recorded

**Midterm 1:** Friday May 22 during class

**Midterm 2:** Friday June 5 during class

**Final Exam:** Friday June 19 during class

**Instructor:** Dr. Paul Conway

**Office:** Psychology B333

**Email:** [conway@psy.fsu.edu](mailto:conway@psy.fsu.edu)

**Office Phone:** 850-688-5525 (my cell so you can reach me)

**Office Hours:** Mondays 2:40-3:40 (after class), and by appointment

**Departmental Assistant:** Elena Brandt

**Email:** eb19l@my.fsu.edu (However please direct questions to Paul by default)

**Textbook:** There will be no textbook for this course. Instead, there will be one mandatory reading for each class available on Canvas. **Students are expected to complete the relevant reading and the relevant quiz before each lecture.**

**Canvas Website:** The course website is essential for this class as that is where you will find the course syllabus, all course readings, powerpoints (posted after class), lecture recordings, assignments, quizzes, and exams, as well as a discussion group.

### Grade Breakdown

**Quizzes:** 10% - 10 quizzes out of 12 (you can skip any two quizzes)

**Exam 1:** 20% - 30 multiple choice (15 points) & one written question (5 points)

**Exam 2:** 20% - 30 multiple choice (15 points) & one written question (5 points)

**Assignment:** 10% - yourmorals.org written assignment

**Final:** 30% - 50 multiple choice (25 points) & one written question (5 points)

### Course Schedule

#	Date	Topic	Reading & Quiz: complete <i>before</i> class
1	May 11	Introduction	
2	May 13	Philosophy & Science	Gordon (2015)
3	May 15	Kohlberg's Model	Bergman (2002)
4	May 18	Moral Licensing	Bolderdijk et al. (2018)
5	May 20	Moral Self	Conway (2018)
	May 22	<b>Exam 1</b>	
	May 25	<i>Memorial Day</i>	<i>No class - Go remember stuff</i>
6	May 27	Animal Morality	Play Trust game: <a href="https://ncase.me/trust/">https://ncase.me/trust/</a>
7	May 29	Evolution of Morality	Krebs (2008)
8	June 1	Moral Intuitions	Haidt (2001)
9	June 3	Moral Foundations	Haidt & Graham (2007)
	<b>June 5</b>	<b>Exam 2</b>	Not cumulative
10	June 8	Dyadic Morality	Gray, Young, & Waytz (2012)
11	June 10	Moral Dilemmas	Rom & Conway (2018)
12	June 12	Moral Conviction	Skitka, Bauman, & Sargis (2005)
		<b>Written Assignment Due</b>	
13	June 15	Everyday Morality	Hofmann et al. (2015)
14	June 17	Review	
	<b>June 19</b>	<b>Final Exam</b>	<b>Cumulative</b>

### Grading Scale (Canadian Style)

The grading scale for each element of the course and for the course overall is as follows: Final grade percentages ending in a decimal of ".5" or greater will be rounded up to the next whole number. Beware—in Canada they have high standards!

<b>A</b> 100 – 92	<b>B</b> 83 – 80	<b>C</b> 71 – 67	<b>D</b> 58 – 55
<b>A-</b> 91 – 88	<b>B-</b> 79 – 76	<b>C-</b> 66 – 63	<b>D-</b> 54 – 50
<b>B+</b> 87 – 84	<b>C+</b> 75 – 72	<b>D+</b> 62 – 59	<b>F</b> 49 or below

**Quizzes:** Each class we will have one assigned reading that you are expected to complete before class (it will make a huge difference in your comprehension). To encourage reading, we will have a 3-question quiz before each class about that class's reading (unless there is an exam). Each quiz question is worth 1/3 of a point, so one percent of your final grade per quiz. There will be 12 quizzes in total but only 10 quiz points, so you can **choose to skip any two quizzes** while still gaining maximum points. If you chose to complete 11 or 12 quizzes, **I will drop your lowest one or two scores**. However, **you MUST complete the quiz before the start of the relevant class**. Late quizzes get scored an automatic zero.

**Exam Format:** All exams will consist of multiple-choice questions plus one short-answer question, during class time, taken on Canvas. Exam 2 is NOT cumulative. However, the final exam IS cumulative. About 2/3 of exam material will come from class, and about 1/3 from readings. There will be at least one question about each reading. However, especially focus on material that overlaps class and readings.

Multiple choice questions will test your **general understanding** of the main ideas in the reading and lectures and their **implications**. Read accordingly: strive to understand the big picture clearly, don't worry too much about minor details. You are NOT required to understand the statistics in depth; for example, there will NEVER be a question like "In reading X how much higher was group 1 than group 2 on the thing they measured?" Instead, questions will be more like "The BEST description of X Theory is the following..."

Short answer questions will entail about 1 page of writing and will involve integrating ideas from several topics. For example, "Briefly explain Important Theory X. What is the most famous support for this theory? What are 3 criticisms of this theory?" For example, "What is a key argument that people make in support of morality stemming from rationality? What is a problem with this argument? What is a key argument that people make in support of morality stemming from emotion? What is a problem with this argument?"

### **Written Assignment – Due at the beginning of class, June 12**

**Step 1:** Go to the website [www.yourmorals.org](http://www.yourmorals.org). Register for a free account (it is run by academics and will not spam you). Once you register, click on the *Explore your Morals* tab.

**Step 2: Choose one questionnaire to complete:** Take notes as it is hard to access the questions again without creating a new account. The exact questionnaires available sometimes fluctuate, but some good examples include:

- The Moral Foundations Questionnaire
- Moral Dilemma Survey
- Interpersonal Reactivity Index
- Business Ethics Questionnaire
- Gratitude Questionnaire

## -Disgust Scale

**Step 3: Find an empirical scientific paper** that also uses the same scale or a scale on a similar topic—something relevant to morality published since the year 2000.

Download a .pdf copy of that paper, and upload it to Canvas. I recommend using google scholar. If you are having trouble consult with me after class.

**Step 4:** Write a 1-2 page paper in Times New Roman 12 Point Font, single spaced, in full paragraphs, with no extra spacing after paragraphs. It should fill at least one page, up to a second page (but the real goal is not length but *clarity* and *precision*). Your paper should address the following topics:

**What psychological construct does the questionnaire aim to measure?** Try to describe and explain this construct using precise language but explaining in ways that would be clear to a nonexpert. If your (non psych) roommate or your mom would understand your topic and learn something new about it, you are doing it right. For example, empathic concern and perspective-taking refer to two different ways people consider others. Empathic concern reflects emotional atonement with others—a tendency to sense and care about other's emotions by experiencing related emotions (e.g., other's sadness may evoke compassion). On the other hand, perspective-taking involves a relatively more cognitive process of imagining the world from the other person's perspective and considering how things seem from that point of view. It is less about emotionally resonating with them and more about figuring out what seems important to them.

**How does the questionnaire you took operationalize (measure) the psychological concept** (i.e., how does it turn an abstract psychological construct into a number?). This will require explaining what kinds of questions this measure asks, including an example of each question type, as well as defining the response scale, explaining how answers are coded. Note that some questionnaires measure several different concepts on different subscales. Do your best to fully and clearly explain all subscales. For example, a measure of focusing on other people might aim to assess both *empathic concern* with items like 'I tend to feel other people's emotions' as well as *perspective-taking* with items like 'I tend to consider the world through other people's shoes.' Participants respond to these items on 7-point scales from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

**Report one key finding from the paper** that is conceptually related to the scale you took. Take some sentences to explain what they measured and what they found. Specifically, explain what key constructs they measured, and whether they manipulated a variable or simply measured more than one thing. Then report what the statistical relationship was between the two things they measured (e.g., the correlation or regression weight), or report which group scored higher than which another group on the construct they measured. Use words only, do not report numbers or statistics. For example, 'people higher in disgust sensitivity rated *eating one's dog* more immoral than people lower in disgust sensitivity' or 'dog owners rated hurting dogs as more immoral

than cat owners did.’ Make it clear how they measured the concepts in question (how did participants indicate their immorality ratings? On a 1-5 scale? By giving thumbs up or thumbs down? By howling at the moon?). This might be the exact same way as the questionnaire you took, or it might be a related but different way—clarify. Make sure you cite your paper in the text (e.g., Brandt & Conway, 2020). However, you do not need a reference section or title page or a running head.

**Important: use your own language** to describe the scale and the finding; do not rely on the language used in the website or article. It is vitally important to develop the skill of accurately summarizing and explaining other people’s work without using their words. Also, plagiarism is bad. Please do not do it. Try to balance being thorough with being efficient—there should be no unnecessary fluff, and you should cover all the important aspects. Experts call that kind of writing “muscular” and one builds writing muscles much like gym muscles—lots of (pen) lifting. Try to smoothly connect the paragraphs together with transition sentences and frame the entire paper neatly with an introductory sentence and closing sentence. In other words, warm up your reader to the topic before addressing the questions and give them one last statement to chew on at the end.

**Bonus challenge:** Write the entire thing in rhyme. (Kidding. Mostly). But every year I get a few in rhyme and they get 1-2 bonus points.

**Grading Scheme for Written Assignment: Total: 10 Points**

- /2.5 Clearly explain the construct in question
- /2.5 Clearly explain operationalization
- /2.5 Report key finding from paper & cite
- /1 Upload .pdf of empirical article
- /1.5 Overall writing style, clarity, precision

**Submission:** You must **upload your assignment to Canvas (dropbox)** as a word document or .pdf attachment by midnight **June 12**. Assignments will lose 1 point each day late they are submitted. **For example, you can get a max of 8/10 for an assignment 2 days late.** This means it’s always best to submit even if late.

**Research Participation**

At Florida State University, as at other major universities, the accumulation of new knowledge in the field of psychology comes from research conducted by faculty and students. You may participate in department research projects and earn extra credit in this course. Participating in research both helps advance our knowledge about psychology and is an excellent way of getting to know how such research is conducted. You will encounter research methods firsthand and after the study is completed you will be informed of its purpose and given an explanation of the study. You may volunteer to **participate in up to 3 credits worth of experiments, for up to 3% bonus** in your final grade. One research credit typically ranges from 30-60 minutes of time. Descriptions of the experiments and lists of time slots available are on the psychology experiment website. You use your FSU email account to log onto the site:

<https://fsu.sona-systems.com/default.aspx>.

Then select the Experiment Sign-up option, and finally choose the General Psychology Research Participants option (not the one for Experimenters). At that point, log on with your username name and password, and you can see descriptions of the experiments and times available, and you may sign up for open times. Please make a note of when and where the study is to take place. Students who fail to show up for a study at the agreed-upon time twice in one semester will no longer be eligible to participate in research experiments for credit. You may also come back to check on the title and where you are supposed to be for an experiment under My Sign-ups. All extra credit related to research participation must be completed by the last day of classes. Extra credit will be given only for participation in approved departmental research projects that appear on the SONA website.

### **Alternative to Research Participation**

As an alternative to research participation, you may also earn extra credit by writing additional Writing Assignments (see above). You may do **up to 3 extra assignments, for up to 3% bonus** in your final grade. Again, all extra credit research summaries must be turned in by the last day of classes. You may do a combination of research participation and personality scale reflections, but you cannot exceed 3 extra credit points with these options. Email these bonus assignments to me.

**Attendance:** Note that to get counted **for first day attendance you MUST complete the attendance quiz on Canvas by Tuesday May 12 at Midnight**. Attendance is mandatory on the first day of class or you will be dropped from the course. Otherwise, you are expected to attend all classes on zoom at the assigned time and actively participate by taking notes, asking questions, engaging in thoughtful dialogue, completing class activities, and sending comments via chat. **You will do the best in this class by regularly attending zoom lecture at the regular class time.** However, attendance is not part of your grade. The powerpoints will get posted and lectured will hopefully get recorded and posted (but sometimes there may be technical issues that prevent this). **These tools are in place to help you review material and to catch up on material you miss due to life circumstances, they are not a substitute for regular live attendance.** If meeting at the regular class time is going to be a problem, please talk to me. **(Virtual) Attendance is mandatory for exams. There will be no opportunity to make up missed exams unless one has an official FSU-sanctioned reason** to have missed class that day (see University Attendance Policy below).

### **University Attendance Policy**

Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.

### **Free Tutoring from FSU**

On-campus tutoring and writing assistance is available for many courses at Florida State University. For more information, visit the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) Tutoring Services' comprehensive list of on-campus tutoring options - see <http://ace.fsu.edu/tutoring> or contact [tutor@fsu.edu](mailto:tutor@fsu.edu). High-quality tutoring is available by appointment and on a walk-in basis. These services are offered by tutors trained to encourage the highest level of individual academic success while upholding personal academic integrity.

### **Academic Honor Policy**

The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of students' academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to ". . . be honest and truthful and . . . [to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University." (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at <http://fda.fsu.edu/academic-resources/academic-integrity-and-grievances/academic-honor-policy>)

### **Title IX Statement**

As a recipient of Federal financial assistance for education activities, FSU is required by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 to ensure that all of its education programs and activities are free from discrimination on the basis of sex. Sexual discrimination includes sexual misconduct (sexual violence, stalking, intimate partner violence, gender based animosity and gender based stereotyping). If you have questions about Title IX or wish to file a Title IX complaint, please visit the FSU Title IX website: <http://www.titleix.fsu.edu> or call Jennifer Broomfield, Title IX Director 850-644-6271. Please note that as Responsible Employees, all faculty are required to report any incidents of sexual misconduct to the Title IX Office.

The Victim Advocate Program at FSU has a confidential advocate on call twenty-four hours a day to respond to FSU students, faculty, and staff who are victimized, or any other person who is victimized on our campus, or by an FSU student. Daytime Phone: 850.644 .7161, 850.644.2277, or 850.645.0086. Nights, Weekends & Holidays 850.644.1234 (FSUPD) Ask to speak to the on-call advocate.

### **Americans with Disabilities Act**

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should:

- (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center;
- (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type.

This should be done during the first week of class.

This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact:

Student Disability Resource Center  
874 Traditions Way  
108 Student Services Building  
Florida State University  
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167  
(850) 644-9566 (voice)  
(850) 644-8504 (TDD)  
sdrc@admin.fsu.edu  
<http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/>

**Syllabus Change Policy**

"Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice."