PSYC S230: Moral Psychology

Winter 2020/21

nobody is in danger

however, you can pull the lever
to make the train get closer just
so you can wave at all the people

(via KnowYourMeme)
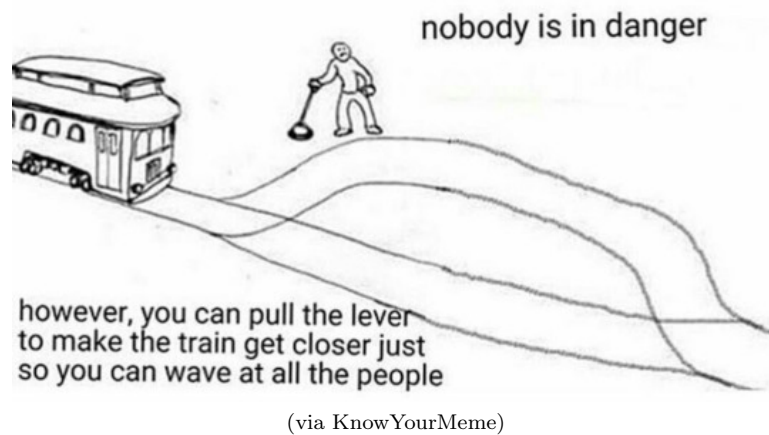
1   Course information

Class schedule	Section 01: Thursdays 11:00 am–12:50 pm
	Section 02: Thursdays 2:00 pm–3:50 pm
	Room TBA
Instructor	Alan Jern
	Email: jern@rose-hulman.edu
Open meeting times	Thursdays 4:00 pm–5:00 pm (On Microsoft Teams)
Required book	Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion* (E-book acceptable)

2   Overview

Some of the greatest disagreements people have between each other are over questions of right and wrong—questions of morality. The purpose of this course is to explore how people think about morality and moral questions, and to better understand these sorts of disagreements. Some of the central questions of this course are:

- Are people naturally good?

- Are moral judgments driven more by emotion or reason?

- Do people follow consistent principles when making moral judgments and, if so, what principles do they rely on?

- How do people judge the moral character of others?

- Are people generally honest?

- What role does empathy play in moral judgment?

By the end of this course, you should be able to provide your own thoughtful answers to all of these questions and support your answers with psychological evidence.

3 Assessment

Component	Points
Syllabus quiz	10
Online participation	270
Class participation	90
Assignments (3)	300
Paper	330
Total	1000

3.1 Participation

This course will be heavily dependent on discussion, both online and in class. There will be several readings assigned each week. To keep these reading assignments fairly predictable, they will always be due on Mondays, Wednesdays, or Fridays. You won't have readings due every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, but you won't ever have readings due on other days of the week.

The discussion will take place online and in class (online only for the first three weeks). Discussion includes asking questions, answering questions, or responding to comments made by fellow classmates. Your participation score will be based on two components.

3.1.1 Online score (270 points)

Most discussion will take place online through Perusall. See Moodle for details about signing up and using this site. Your online score for each reading will be based on multiple factors, including the number of thoughtful, high-quality comments you make throughout the reading and the number of upvotes and responses you make to other students' comments. In general, the more thoughtful and engaged you are in the discussion, the higher your score will be. **Your score for the first reading won't count and your two lowest scores will be dropped.**

3.1.2 In-class score (90 points)

On in-class days, we'll have more in-depth discussions about one or more readings from the previous week. I will assign participation scores at three points throughout the quarter. Your in-class participation score will be the sum of these scores. Note: If the course ends up moving to fully online, this part of your final grade will change.

3.2 Assignments

There are three assignments throughout the quarter, each worth 100 points. Each assignment will require you to think more deeply about one topic or reading from the class, in some cases perform a simple experiment, and write a short paper.

3.3 Paper

Benchmark	Points
First draft / Peer review	100
Final draft	230
Total	330

I will provide you with a list of questions related to the course. You will choose one of these questions (or one of your own, with my permission) and write an essay taking a position on the question using supporting evidence from the course. More details about this assignment will be posted separately on Moodle.

3.4 Final grade

Grades will be assigned as follows.

Points	Grade
≥ 900	A
870–899	B+
800–869	B
770–799	C+
700–769	C
670–699	D+
600–660	D
< 600	F

4 Course policies

4.1 Late assignments

For the entire course, you will have **two free late days** that can be used for assignments or the final paper (you cannot use these to submit late comments for online discussions). Assignments will be considered one day late if they are submitted any time after the submission deadline up to 24

hours later. Assignments will be considered two days late if they are submitted any time between 24 and 48 hours after the submission deadline. You don't need to notify me in advance if you plan to use one of your late days—I will keep track of your late days and notify you by email when you have no late days remaining.

Any assignments submitted after using your late days will not be accepted. The purpose for this policy is to help me grade and return your work in a timely fashion.

4.2 Blind grading

Do not include your name on anything (including file name) you submit on Moodle, unless I say otherwise. The reason for this is because I use a feature on Moodle called blind grading that lets me grade your assignments without seeing your names—your names (which Moodle knows) are revealed after I've finished grading the assignment. I do this to keep my grading as fair as possible. If you put your name on the assignment, it undermines the process.

4.3 Asking for help

I highly encourage you to contact me if you ever need help in this course. That's what I'm here for! But I also want you to encourage you to be self-sufficient whenever possible. So if you ever ask me a question that can be easily answered on this syllabus or the Moodle page (a due date, a page limit, whether an upcoming exam is open-book), **I will deduct 1 point from your grade total**.

The corollary of this policy is that if you ever find anything on this syllabus or the Moodle page that looks like a genuine mistake (the wrong date, inconsistent information) and you ask me about it, **I will give you 1 point of extra credit**. (Only the first person to tell me gets the extra credit.)

4.4 Academic integrity

Academic misconduct will be addressed according to the policies described in the Rose-Hulman student handbook. Academic misconduct includes: (1) submitting work that is not your own; (2) copying ideas, words, or graphics from any source without appropriate citation; (3) misrepresenting your work or yourself (i.e., deliberately submitting the wrong assignment or lying to explain a late assignment); (4) collaborating with other students when this is not permitted; and (5) submitting the same work for credit in two courses without prior consent of both instructors. If you are unsure whether something qualifies as academic misconduct, please check with me before engaging in the behavior.

5 Course schedule

Below is a tentative schedule for the quarter. I've left off specific due dates because they may vary from week to week and even these dates should be considered approximate. Everything that needs to be completed each week will be posted on Moodle.

Module	Week(s)	Due
Origins of morality	1/2	Syllabus quiz
Emotion vs. reason	3	
Moral judgment	4/5	Assignment 1 (Week 4)
Empathy	6	
Minds and morality	7	Paper first draft
		Assignment 2
Altruism and cruelty	8	Assignment 3
Moral character	9	Peer review
Applied morality	10	Paper final draft