

**PSY 4200: Psychology of Morality**  
**CRN: 43833**  
**Fall, 2009**  
**Meeting Room: McDonald 207**  
**Meeting Times/Days: 2:30 – 5:00 Tuesdays**

Instructor Contact Information:

**NAME:** John T. Jones II, Ph.D.  
**OFFICE:** McDonald 220  
**OFFICE HOURS:** 11:00-12:00 MF, 12:00-1:00 T, 2:00-3:00 R  
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**Text:** Readings will be distributed via blackboard.

**I. Course Description**

Morality seems to be a universal feature of human thinking. People across time, place, and culture have a strong sense of right and wrong. While morality was once of primary interest to psychologists, interest in the topic saw a sharp decline in the last several decades. In recent years, however, there has been a resurgence of interest in the science of morality. Recently, scientists across a wide range of disciplines have made discoveries that bear on the question of how and why humans have a sense of morality.

The purpose of this section is to offer an introduction to this resurgence in moral psychology. In order to achieve this goal, we will read articles that introduce evolutionary, cognitive, neurological, and social-psychological research in which the central phenomena are moral judgments, emotions, intuitions, and behavior. I hope that by the end of this section you will be positioned to critically address the following questions:

- 1) What is morality?
- 2) How do we know what is right and what is wrong?
- 3) Are some people truly immoral? amoral?, and if so, why?
- 4) Finally, how can we explain why seemingly good “moral” people often do seemingly bad (immoral) things?

My true desire, however, is that by the end of this course you have more questions about moral psychology than you have answers.

**II. Class Policies**

**A. College approved absences.** Dixie College Policy explains in detail what needs to happen if you anticipate being absent from class because of a college-sponsored activity (athletic events, club activities, field trips for other classes, etc. Please read this information and follow the instructions carefully! The policy can be found at: <http://www.dixie.edu/humanres/policy/sec5/523.html>

**B. Academic honesty.** I believe that most students are honest, and I don't want to punish everyone for the few that aren't. However, I will not tolerate cheating, and if I discover that it has occurred, a zero grade will be given for that assignment or exam, at the very least. Repeated or aggravated offenses will result in failing the course or expulsion from Dixie State College.

Any time you take credit for work you did not do, you are cheating. This includes copying information from a library or

internet source and presenting it as if it were your own words (plagiarism), handing in papers that you claim to be your own but that are actually, in whole, or in part, someone else's (a friend, relative, stranger, anonymous individual via some web-site wrote some or all of the paper), looking at someone else's answers on an exam, and asking someone who has already taken a test about what questions it contains.

If you cheat and I don't catch you it doesn't mean that you "beat the system." Rather, it means you violated the student code of conduct and forfeited your integrity, whether or not you are caught. It is better to fail an assignment or even a class than to cheat and lose the chance to continue your education. (See DSC Policy 34.1.1-4). Or maybe cheating is okay under certain circumstances? Sounds like a good course topic.

**B. Turn off all electronic equipment** before entering the classroom (laptops may be used to take notes only). After the first week of class, if I see you using unauthorized electronic devices of any kind at any time in the classroom (or using a laptop for anything other than taking notes), I will deduct 5% of your total course points for each offense.

**C. Arrive on time.**

**D. Avoid leaving early.** Not only is this distracting to your fellow students, it's distracting to me. I do understand that occasionally people must miss part of a class. **If you intend to do so, please let me know and then sit near the door if possible**, so you can slip out without distracting everyone.

**E. If you have questions, please ask.** You may try to see me after class, but don't get frustrated if there is not time. Best: come by my office during office hours or set up an appointment with me. You are my priority at DSC. We can find a time that works for both of us.

**F. Attendance:** Come to class. This is especially important in this class, given we only meet once per week.

**G. Grade checks.** If you need me to verify your grade for athletic/scholarship/financial aid purposes etc....you must either come see me during office hours (which begin right after this class) or make an appointment. Furthermore, I will ONLY report your grade on the official form provided for this purpose.

### III. Earning Points in the Course

A. Thought papers: 4 papers x 100 points = 400 points total

B. Participation Grade/Discussion Leader = 100 points total

C. Final Paper = 200 points total

<b>Total Points Possible = 700</b>
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**A. Thought Papers:** No later than 6:00 p.m. on Monday as assigned you will submit to me (via e-mail attachment) a thought paper. This should be as close as possible to *one single-spaced page in length written in 12pt. Arial Narrow font*. Each of these papers will be written in response to readings that I will provide to you. Late papers will receive a zero.

Note well: I will not accept excuses for late papers or question submissions. Such excuses include, but are not limited to, technology failure of one type or another. You are responsible for ensuring that your submissions are in MY inbox by 6:00 p.m. Monday AND you are responsible for if I can't open those attachments. Remember, my email is [jones@dixie.edu](mailto:jones@dixie.edu).

### How to approach a thought paper

1 – Read the first article as if you did not have to write about it later.

2 – Read the article again, this time, more carefully and thoughtfully, keeping in mind (**and jotting in the margins**) your thoughts, objections, and questions.

Repeat steps 1 and 2 for the remaining article(s)

3 – Sit down and draft your ideas and questions in a stream of consciousness way.

4 – Turn this in to a thoughtful, concise, logically constructed, and well written paper that does some or most of the following:

- a. Identifies and explains inconsistencies in reasoning, logic, or theory either within a single article or in comparison with other articles.
- b. Challenges or expands upon the assertions or conclusions made by the author with specific assertions and conclusions of your own.
- c. Raises new issues or questions that need to be addressed on the basis of current findings or assumptions.

**\*Every week you DO NOT submit a thought paper you should submit 2 thoughtful discussion questions regarding the readings/topic of the week by 6:00 p.m. Monday. If questions are not submitted by this time, you will receive a zero for participation for that week. You will be required to submit your questions to your group leaders AND TO ME.**

Each thought paper will be graded on the following scale:

- A = 95 points
- B = 85 points
- C = 75 points
- D = 65 points
- F = 55 points

**B. Participation/Group Discussion Leader:** Your participation in discussions will be an integral part of this course. I will rely on you, as upper-classwomen and men, to engage in thoughtful discussions of the topics and readings each week. I fully expect all members of the seminar to participate in these discussions and I may call on individuals during class to provide their thoughts and opinions.

On the first day of class, you will be assigned to a group of 9 students. The students scheduled to submit thought papers will also prepare to serve as group discussion leaders for the coming week's class. To help you prepare, the six students from your group who are NOT writing papers will each submit 2 discussion questions to you no later than 6:00 p.m. on the day before the discussion is to take place. Organize your discussion around these questions and your own impressions and insight. Remember, your success as a discussion leader will depend on the quantity and quality of GROUP discussion that takes place within your group.

**C. Final paper:** This paper represents your opportunity to organize and synthesize your impressions, thoughts, ideas, questions, and concerns regarding what we know (and more importantly what we don't know) about moral psychology. Questions you should use to guide you include: What direction should future theory and research in moral psychology take? How would you lead the field in this direction (i.e. what issues need to be resolved or explored in greater detail, and how might this be done? Why should it be done?

Remember – This paper is designed to be your unique insight into moral psychology, and that insight should be grounded primarily in your readings, your thought papers and discussion questions, and our in-class discussions. This paper should be 8-10 pages long, double-spaced, in 12 pt. Arial Narrow font. It is due no later than Tuesday,

December 8th at 5:00 p.m. Late papers will receive a zero.

#### IV. Grading Scale

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percent</u>
A	94% - 100%	C	74% - 76%
A-	90% - 93%	C-	70% - 73%
B+	87% - 89%	D+	67% - 69%
B	84% - 86%	D	64% - 66%
B-	80% - 83%	D-	60% - 63%
C+	77% - 79%	F	59% AND BELOW

You can convert the points you have earned into a percentage by using the following formula.

$$\text{Points you earned} \div \text{Points possible} = \text{your percentage}$$

2. At no time during the course will grades be curved. Your point totals determine your grade, not how other people perform.

#### V: ADMINISTRIVIA

##### STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

If you are a student with a medical, psychological or a learning difference and requesting reasonable academic accommodations due to this disability, you must provide an official request of accommodation to your professor(s) from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) **within the first two weeks** of the beginning of classes. Students are to contact the center on the main campus to follow through with, and receive assistance in the documentation process to determine the appropriate accommodations related to their disability.

You may call **(435) 652-7516** for an appointment and further information regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 per Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The DRC is located in the **Student Services Center, Room #201 of the Edith Whitehead Building.**

##### OTHER IMPORTANT DATES/DEADLINES

Aug 24	Class work Starts
Aug 26	Last Day to Add Without Signature
Sep 7	Labor Day
Sep 8	\$50 Late Registration/Payment Fee
Sep 14	Pell Grant Census
Sep 14	Last Day for Full Refund
Sep 18	Last Day to Add Classes
Oct 15-16	Semester Break
Oct 19	Last Day to Drop/Audit Classes
Nov 13	Last Day for Complete Withdrawal
Nov 17	Career Day
Nov 25-27	Thanksgiving Break
Dec 11	Class work Ends
Dec 14-18	Final Exams

**VI. Schedule for Course Assignments (Reading for each week TBA and available on Blackboard)**

Aug 25 – Week One: Introduction to course

Sep 1 – Sep 15: Section I – The Social Science of Morality: Culture and Learning.

Week Two: 1 September  
Week Three: 8 September  
Week Four: 15 September

Sep 22 – Oct 6: Section II – The Evolution of Morality: Adaptations and Innateness

Week Five: 22 September  
Week Six: 29 September  
Week Seven: 6 October

Oct 13 – Oct 27: Section III – Thinking and Feeling Morality

Week Eight: 13 October  
Week Nine: 20 October  
Week Ten: 27 October

Nov 3 – Nov 24: Section IV – Why don't moral people act morally?

Week Eleven: 3 November  
Week Twelve: 10 November  
Week Thirteen: 24 November

Dec 1 – Week Fourteen: Final Paper Peer Review

Dec 8 – Week Fifteen: Final Paper Due

**DISCLAIMER**

Information contained in this syllabus, other than the grading scale may be subject to change with advanced notice, as deemed appropriate to the instructor.