

PSYC S230: Moral Psychology

Spring 2023



1 Course information

Class schedule Section 01: M/T/Th/F 2:00–2:50 pm
Section 02: M/T/Th/F 3:00–3:50 pm
Room J213

Instructor Alan Jern
Office: A202D
Email: jern@rose-hulman.edu

Open meeting time Fridays 1:00–1:50 pm (on 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 are over questions of right and wrong—questions that people generally consider to be within the domain 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 intuition 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 many of these and related questions and support your answers with psychological evidence.
- Read a psychology research article and understand its main conclusions and identify some of its limitations.
- Summarize and discuss a psychological study or theory with someone else.
- Identify the key theories in moral psychology, provide evidence for them, and discuss their limitations.

3 Assessment

Component	Points
Syllabus quiz	10
Online participation	160
Class participation	90
Leading discussion	100
Assignments (3)	150
Paper	230

3.1 Participation

This course will be heavily dependent on discussion. Therefore you are expected to come to class having already completed the required reading and prepared to discuss it thoughtfully.

3.1.1 Online score

To make discussions more productive, some pre-discussion will happen online through [Perusall](#). See Moodle for details about signing up and using this site. Your online score for each reading will be based primarily on 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 and your two lowest scores will be dropped. Additionally, scores for readings with student discussion leaders will not count toward your online participation score (though you are still expected to do those readings and come to class prepared to discuss them.)

3.1.2 In-class score

The Perusall discussions will serve as a jumping-off point for our discussions in class. Your in-class participation will be self-assigned using a rubric I will provide you. At three points in the quarter, you will use the rubric to determine what participation score you have earned for that third of the quarter. I will review these scores and may make adjustments if I feel they are wildly off the mark. Your in-class participation score will be the sum of these scores.

3.2 Leading discussion

On one day, you and a couple other students will be appointed the discussion leaders. You will lead discussion for about 30 minutes of class that day. I will randomly assign everyone to a day during the first week of class. Your group will post discussion questions for the assigned reading on Moodle before we are scheduled to discuss that reading in class. On the day of class, you will use these questions as the basis for a discussion of the readings.

I will post some general guidelines on Moodle for running an effective discussion that you should aim to follow. I will also post a grading rubric for leading the discussion on Moodle.

3.3 Assignments

There are three assignments throughout the quarter, each worth 50 points. The assignments 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.

3.4 Paper

Benchmark	Points
First draft	30
Final draft	200
Total	230

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.

3.5 Final grade

Grades will be assigned as follows.

Points	Grade
$\geq 90\%$	A
87%–89.9%	B+
80%–86.9%	B
77%–79.9%	C+
70%–76.9%	C
67%–69.9%	D+
60%–66.9%	D
$< 60\%$	F

4 Course policies

4.1 Late assignments

Late assignments (including the self-assigned participation scores) will receive a point penalty that doubles for each additional day they are late. Specifically:

- 1 day late: 1% deduction
- 2 days late: 2% deduction
- 3 days late: 4% deduction
- 4 days late: 8% deduction
- 5 days late: 16% deduction
- 6 days late: 32% deduction
- 7 days late: 64% deduction
- 8+ days late: No credit

An assignment counts as 1 day late as soon as the deadline for that assignment has passed. If you submit an assignment late, you do not need to notify me. Just submit the assignment on Moodle. It will be automatically timestamped and I will deduct the appropriate number of points when I grade it.

There will be no exceptions made to this late policy and no assignments will be accepted later than 7 days after their deadlines. You should plan to submit your assignments before the deadline. The purpose of this policy is that if something unexpected comes up, you can submit one or two days late with minimal penalty.

Note: The late policy does not apply to the online discussions on Perusall because the whole point of those deadlines is to prepare you for in-class discussion.

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 are revealed after I've finished grading the assignment. I do this to keep my grading as impartial as possible. If you put your name on the assignment, it undermines the process for everyone.

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 to encourage you to be self-sufficient. 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, a detail about the late policy), **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.)

You don't need to be afraid to contact me. The point of this policy is to incentivize you to try to find answers yourselves first. If you look for an answer and genuinely can't find it, I want to know that too. Just tell me you tried to find it on your own first and where you looked. You won't be penalized for this.

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 (including AI-generated work); (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 doing it.

5 Course schedule

The following schedule lists topics, readings, and due dates for the whole term. This schedule is subject to change. Schedule changes will be announced online. I will give you plenty of notice when changes are made.

† indicates a student-led discussion.

Week	Date	Topic	Reading	Due
1	3/6	Origins of morality		
	3/7	Origins of morality	Warneken & Tomasello	
	3/9	Origins of morality	Bloom	Syllabus quiz

Week	Date	Topic	Reading	Due
	3/10	Origins of morality	Tasimi	
2	3/13	Emotion and reason	Haidt Ch. 1–2†	
	3/14	Emotion and reason	Royzman et al	
	3/16	Emotion and reason	Greene Ch. 4	
	3/17	Emotion and reason	Haidt Ch. 3–4†	
3	3/20	Moral judgment		
	3/21	Moral judgment	Haidt Ch. 5–6†	
	3/23	Moral judgment	Haidt Ch. 7†	
	3/24	Moral judgment	Curry	Participation 1
4	3/27	Moral judgment	Gray et al	
	3/28	Moral judgment	Levine et al	Assignment 1
	3/30	Moral judgment	Greene Ch. 9	
	3/31	Moral judgment	Engber + Response†	
5	4/3	Empathy	Cameron et al	
	4/4	Empathy	Bloom	
	4/6	Empathy	Robinson	
	4/7	Empathy	Invisibilia episode†	
6	4/17	Minds and morality	Wegner & Gray Ch. 1†	
	4/18	Minds and morality		
	4/20	Minds and morality	Moran et al	
	4/21	Minds and morality	Cardinale & Marsh	Participation 2
7	4/24	Cruelty	Baumeister & Vohs	
	4/25	Cruelty		Assignment 2
	4/27	Cruelty		
	4/28	Cruelty	Rai	Paper first draft
8	5/1	NO CLASS		
	5/2	Moral character	Hidden Brain episode†	
	5/4	Moral character	Jern	Assignment 3
	5/5	Moral character	Jordan et al	
9	5/8	Honesty	Serota et al	
	5/9	Honesty		
	5/11	Honesty		
	5/12	Honesty	Pascual-Ezama et al	
10	5/15	Applied morality	Schein	
	5/16	Applied morality	Cohn et al	Final paper
	5/18	Applied morality	Caviola	
	5/19	Conclusion		Participation 3