

**The Evolution of Morality**  
**CGSC 406 / PSYC 406**  
**Fall 2016**

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**Time/Location:** Tuesdays, 2:30-4:20  
**Office Hour:** Thursdays 1:00-2:00; SSS 205 H (inside "Panda Lab")  
**Course Website:** on Canvas

### **General Information**

"Nature is red in tooth and claw."

"Survival of the fittest."

"Selfish genes."

Evolutionary biology has produced several phrases that have entered popular consciousness as symbols of the harsh struggles organisms face in their lives, and the (mistaken) idea that only the most vicious and selfish individuals will succeed. Against this backdrop, it may seem impossible that natural selection could produce animals who behave "morally" and humans who care deeply about treating others well.

### **Objectives**

In this seminar, we will engage with several lines of empirical investigation to see how much of morality has its foundation in our evolutionary past. We will also see where there are still debates, including current research on how much of adult morality is early-emerging in development vs. a late-emerging product that relies heavily on learning, how much of human morality may be present in other species, and what the relationship is between the evolution of morality and the evolution of religious belief.

### **Prerequisites**

This course is intended for advanced undergraduates and graduate students, and it is expected that each student will be comfortable reading, evaluating, and discussing articles in cognitive science. On the other hand, it is expected that the students will come from diverse academic backgrounds. Therefore, there are no specific prerequisites for this course. Students who wish to verify their preparation for this course should look through the readings provided in the week-by-week breakdown of the course, and should feel free to contact me for additional information.

### **Course Requirements and Evaluation**

Twenty-four hours prior to each meeting of the course, you should submit a reading response of about 500 words. This will typically be split between two parts that are each about 250 words. One of the 250-word parts ("Part A") should address the readings for

the upcoming meeting, and should focus on a small number of criticisms, questions, or comments about the readings. These responses will help to structure the discussion of the upcoming meeting. The second 250-word part (“Part B”) should focus on the previous week, and should reference the response submitted for that week and the discussion during that week. How has your understanding of the material changed following discussion with your peers? Combined, the responses and participation in discussion will account for 50% of the final grade. On the course website, you can find an example of the reading response format, and instructions for submitting assignments.

The other 50% of the final grade will come from a final project submitted at the end of the semester. Typically, your paper will propose an experiment related to the course content. Your final paper should be between 12 and 15 pages (unless it is for the senior essay requirement, in which case it must be 20 pages). You will have the opportunity to receive feedback on both a one-page proposal (I will post an example on the course website) and a full-length rough draft.

**Standard Final Paper Timeline (for papers not being used for senior essay/requirement, talk to me in first week of class if using for senior essay/requirement):**

Project Proposal	October 25 or earlier
I return comments	~1 week after submission (around Nov 1 if submitted Oct 25)
Full-length draft	November 29 or earlier
I return comments	~1 week after submission (around Dec 6 if submitted Nov 29)
Final draft	December 21 (Yale deadline, I cannot extend)

**Statement on Academic Integrity**

Please do not violate academic integrity during this course. Most notably, do not plagiarize. As defined in the Yale College Undergraduate Regulations (1), “Plagiarism is the use of someone else’s work, words, or ideas as if they were one’s own.” There are many reasons to avoid plagiarism. Two of them highlighted in materials from the Yale College Writing Center (2) are that plagiarism is a “detriment to your intellectual and moral development” and that “Yale punishes academic dishonesty severely.” The Yale Writing Center has many resources you can consult to learn how to use sources properly and avoid plagiarism (3). Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or wish to discuss any of this information in more detail.

(1) [http://yalecollege.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/URegs\\_14-15.pdf](http://yalecollege.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/URegs_14-15.pdf)

(2) <http://writing.yalecollege.yale.edu/advice-faculty/addressing-plagiarism/sample-plagiarism-warnings>

(3) <http://writing.yalecollege.yale.edu/advice-students/using-sources>

## Overview of Topics and Readings by Week

- The below list based on Spring 2016 student preferences and recent publications
- The topics and readings may change based on preferences and publications this semester
- The only required readings each week are those identified with a single letter, and the letters indicate the suggested reading order
- Optional papers have one of two designations: “REC” = recommended to all students, “SPEC” = potentially of specialized interest to some students
- Week 2 is somewhat light on reading, so you might want to also start reading for Week 3 at the same time (which is heavier than average).

### Week 1: First Meeting (6 September 2016)

- No readings today

### Week 2: Background Readings: Evolution (13 September 2016)

- (A) Reading Guide
- (B) Evolutionary psychology primer. Cosmides & Tooby.  
<http://www.cep.ucsb.edu/primer.html>

### Week 3: Background Readings: Morality (20 September 2016)

- (A) Reading Guide
- (B) The elements of moral philosophy. Rachels (1986).

### Week 4: Three Example Approaches to Carving Up Morality (27 September 2016)

- (A) Reading Guide
- (B) Morality. Haidt (2008). *Perspectives on Psychological Science*.
- (C) The myth of harmless wrongs in moral cognition: Automatic dyadic completion from sin to suffering. Gray et al. (2014). *JEP: General*.
- (D) Spontaneous giving and calculated greed. Rand et al. (2012). *Nature*.
- (REC) The secret joke of Kant’s soul. Greene (2008). *Moral psychology*.

### Week 5: Kin, Reciprocation, and Evolutionary Modeling (4 October 2016)

- (A) Reading Guide
- (B) The evolution of altruism in humans. Kurzban et al. (2015). *Annual Review of Psychology*.
- (C) Biological trade and markets. Hammerstein & Nöe (2016). *Phil. Trans. B*.
- (D) Evolution of equal division among unequal partners. Debove et al. (2015). *Evolution*.

- (SPEC) Social semantics: how useful has group selection been? West et al. (2008). *Evolutionary Biology*.
- (SPEC) Adaptations for social cognition in the primate brain. Platt et al. (2016). *Phil. Trans. B*.

### **Week 6: Origins and Development (11 October 2016)**

- (A) Reading Guide
- (B) Social evaluation by preverbal infants. Hamlin et al. (2007). *Nature*.
- (C) Altruistic helping in human infants and young chimpanzees. Warneken & Tomasello (2006). *Science*.
- (D) How institutions shaped the last major evolutionary transition to large-scale human societies. Powers et al. (2016). *Phil. Trans. B*.
- (E) Life-history theory explains childhood moral development. Sheskin et al. (2014). *TiCS*.
- (REC) A new consequence of Simpson's paradox: Stable cooperation in one-shot prisoner's dilemma from populations of individualistic learners. Chater et al. (2008). *Journal of Experimental Psychology*.

### **Week 7: Cross-cultural Universals and Variation (18 October 2016)**

- (A) Reading Guide
- (B) Markets, religion, community size, and the evolution of fairness and punishment. Henrich et al. (2010). *Science*.
- (C) Commentaries on Henrich et al. (2010) by Baumard et al. and by Delton et al. *Science*.
- (D) Liberals and conservatives rely on different sets of moral foundations. Graham et al. (2009). *JPSP*.

### **Week 8: Groups (25 October 2016)**

- (A) Reading Guide
- (B) Race Effects on eBay. Ayres et al. (2011).
- (C) With malice toward none and charity for some: Ingroup favoritism enables discrimination. Greenwald & Pettigrew (2014). *American Psychologist*.
- (D) The content of our cooperation, not the color of our skin: An alliance detection system regulates categorization by coalition and race, but not sex. Pietraszewski et al. (2014). *PloS One*.
- (REC) Children's essentialist reasoning about language and race. Kinzler & Dautel (2012). *Developmental Science*.
- (REC) The Coevolution of Cultural Groups and Ingroup. Efferson et al. (2008). *Science*.
- (SPEC) Universal dimensions of social cognition: Warmth and competence. Fiske et al. (2007). *TiCS*.

### **Week 9: Punishment (1 November 2016)**

- (A) Reading Guide
- (B) Do humans *really* punish altruistically? A closer look. Pedersen et al. (2013). *Proceedings Royal Society B*.
- (C) What are punishment and reputation for? Krasnow et al. (2012). *PloS One*.
- (D) Altruistic Punishment in Humans. Fehr & Gächter (2002). *Nature*.
- (E) Coordinated Punishment of Defectors Sustains Cooperation and Can Proliferate When Rare. Boyd et al. (2010). *Science*.

### **Week 10: Microscopic Morality (8 November 2016)**

- (A) Reading Guide
- (B) Antisocial oxytocin: complex effects on social behavior. Beery (2015). *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences*.
- (C) Dissociable effects of serotonin and dopamine on the valuation of harm in moral decision making. Crockett et al. (2015). *Current Biology*.
- (D) Activity in ventromedial prefrontal cortex co-varies with revealed social preferences: evidence for person-invariant value. Zaki et al. (2013). *SCAN*.
- (E) For the law, neuroscience changes nothing and everything. Greene & Cohen (2004). *Phil. Trans. Royal Soc. B*.

### **Week 11: Charity (15 November 2016)**

- (A) Reading Guide
- (B) Eye images increase charitable donations: evidence from an opportunistic field experiment in a supermarket. Powell et al. (2012). *Ethology*.
- (C) The braggart's dilemma: on the social rewards and penalties of advertising prosocial behavior. Berman et al. (2015). *Journal of Marketing Research*.
- (D) The martyrdom effect: when pain and effort increase prosocial contributions. Olivola & Shafir (2013). *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*.
- (E) 'm moral, but I won't help you: the distinct roles of empathy and justice in donations. Lee et al. (2014). *Journal of Consumer Research*.
- (REC) Biological markets and the effects of partner choice on cooperation and friendship. Barclay (2016). *Current Opinion in Psychology*.
- (SPEC) The evolution of charitable behavior and the power of reputation. Barclay (2011).

### **Week 12: Religion (29 November 2016)**

- (A) Reading Guide
- (B) Religion and Morality. McKay & Whitehouse (2015). *Psychological Bulletin*.
- (C) Religion, Morality, Evolution. Bloom (2012). *Annual Review of Psychology*.

- (D) Increased affluence explains the emergence of ascetic wisdoms and moralizing religions. Baumard et al. (2015). *Current Biology*.
- (REC) Cognitive science of religion: looking back, looking forward. Barrett (2011). *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*.
- (SPEC) In the name of God: how children and adults judge agents who act for religious versus secular reasons. Heiphetz et al. (2015). *Cognition*.

**Week 13: Capstone Day (6 December 2016)**

- (A) Reading Guide
- (B) First reading you choose to re-read from earlier in the semester
- (C) Second reading you choose to re-read from earlier in the semester