

THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR

a Study of Sin



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

contents

***A Study of Sin.* Moral Psychology Primer**

BY STEVEN BENGAL

An exploration into contemporary *moral psychology*;
The science of *how* people come to their moral decisions.
Reading and discourse on *psychological research* into:
guilt, moral dumbfounding, ethical bases, psychopathy and more.
Each week will focus on a new topic explored in the field.

Of what makes a *saint*
And a *sinner*
And everything *between*.

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class introduction



Of all **evil** I deem you capable, therefore I want **good** from you. Verily, I have often laughed at the weaklings who thought themselves good, **because they had no claws.**

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE



CARMEN.OSU.EDU

All homework and other assignments can be completed here. Important course dates, information, announcements, and your grades are all located on this site. Please check it *regularly* and *frequently*.

Electronic communications via Carmen uses students' OSU handles, making OSU e-mail a primary form of communication outside of class.



REQUIRED TEXT

DIRECT SOURCES. (FREE). ALL REQUIRED SOURCES WILL BE POSTED TO CARMEN.

ALL STUDENTS should be prepared to make use of original sources. *Article, talk,* and *concept* discussion will make up a majority of the class.

You are responsible for completing the assigned readings **BEFORE YOU COME TO CLASS.**

the **instructor** steven bengal, ph.d.



OFFICE LOCATION

ROOM PSY 165

EMAIL BENGAL.1@OSU.EDU

PHONE 614.292.8185

The best way to reach me is by EMAIL using your OSU account.

OFFICE HOURS

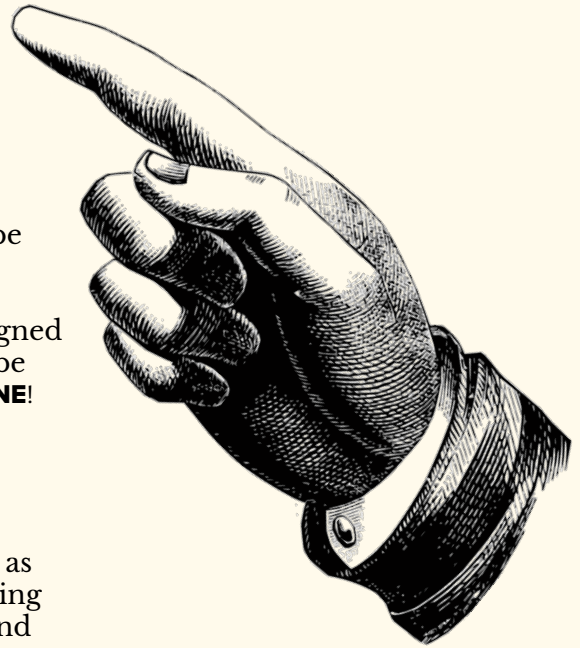
M 11:25 AM–12:25 PM

W 11:25 AM–12:25 PM

OR BY APPOINTMENT

Contact me for all *other visits* through my EMAIL.

the **rules** of engagement



SPEAKING UP

You must be prepared to *speak*. You will be expected to participate throughout the entirety of this course, often in a public manner. You are expected to discuss assigned readings and ask questions. Stage fright be damned, this course is **YOUR TIME TO SHINE!**



CONSIDER COLLEAGUES

Be respectful to other students in the class, as well as the instructor! Refrain from sleeping in class, working on other assignments, and using electronic devices in a distracting fashion (with the exception of taking notes and following along). Be prepared for each class period by arriving on time. Take an *active*, engaged role in your own learning.



PARTICIPATION

This course will use *Top Hat* for a number of in-class activities. As such, you are required to bring a device capable of connecting to and using Top Hat. If this is not possible, you must immediately inform me on the **FIRST DAY OF CLASS** for us to discuss alternatives.
TOPHAT.OSU.EDU



BE AWARE

This course structure varies by lecture, by concept, by unexpected snowdays (heatdays?) and sickness, the whims of the academic board and if the bat signal illuminates the night sky, I must answer its call. As such, I reserve the right to revise the syllabus, class schedule, assignments, and other course features, as necessary. You will always be informed of these changes on CARMEN and in class.

the **course** requirements

1

ATTENDANCE

PLEASE DO!

Attendance is *required* for first year seminars, and there is a strong correlation between attending the course and final grades. A large part of this class is collaborative discussion. Lastly, there are points associated with showing up!

2

DESIGN

LECTURES, PAPERS, DISCUSSIONS, AND READINGS

This course has a mixed format: concepts will be initially discussed or introduced in “mini-lectures”. These will be followed by group discussions in which you cooperatively demonstrate your learning with peers and review your understanding of the materials and “readings”. Each week, a TED TALK will be the central assigned reading, and be a central focus of our discussion.

3

GRADES

READ, WRITE, TALK

This course has a small assignment, *Morality in Poetry* (see p. 7) and a larger assignment, the *Study Report and Discussion* (see p. 8).

In addition, there are *weekly questions* meant to guide your thinking and provide you an outlet to discuss the class content outside of the confines of the class.

Lastly, the majority of your points will be allocated for attending, and participating in, the *in-class discussions* of the mini-lectures and assigned videos.

component values

MORALITY IN POETRY	3 PTS
WEEKLY QUESTIONS	7 PTS
STUDY REPORT...	10 PTS
IN-CLASS DISCUSSION	20 PTS
TOTAL	40 PTS

grading scale

A (EXCELLENT)	100—93
A- (REALLY GOOD)	92.99—90
B+ (VERY GOOD)	89.99—87
B (GOOD)	86.99—83
B- (KIND OF GOOD)	82.99—80
C+ (BIT BETTER THAN OK)	79.99—77
C (OK)	76.99—73
C- (BIT WORSE THAN OK)	72.99—70
D (VERY WEAK)	69.99—65
E (FATALLY FLAWED)	BELOW 65

morality applied: poetry

Your goal is to consider how people have discussed morality and ethics, good and evil, as a subject of inquiry and consideration. We will consider applications and implications for psychology out of these relevant works.

STEP ONE. Locate any poem (or general quote) that you feel is germane to the topic of MORALITY. Bring this work to class and be prepared to discuss and share it. Make sure to include the AUTHOR'S NAME and YEAR of the work.

STEP TWO. Directly comment on the poem, noting those parts or passages you think are relevant to this topic (and to the field of psychology more broadly).

STEP THREE. Consider how PSYCHOLOGISTS could investigate the main CONCEPT of the poem. Construct a TESTABLE HYPOTHESIS about people based on the work you chose.

example morality poem

In the Desert

BY STEPHEN CRANE

In the desert
I saw a creature, naked, bestial,
Who, squatting upon the ground,
Held his heart in his hands,
And ate of it.
I said, "Is it good, friend?"
"It is bitter—bitter," he answered;

"But I like it
"Because it is bitter,
"And because it is my heart."

study report and discussion

Your goal is to consider a direct scientific work in the field of moral psychology. Grapple with a formal research paper into a domain of personal interest, and consider possible applications and implications for your, and others', lives.

STEP ONE. Locate any peer-reviewed, scientific, psychological article that you feel is germane to the topic of MORALITY (that we have not discussed in class). Bring this work to class and be prepared to discuss and share it. You may use PSYCINFO, Google Scholar, or some other means to locate this article.

STEP TWO. Bring at least FOUR (4) brief summaries of the paper, written by yourself, which include: (1) the abstract of the paper, (2) in bullet points or a short synopsis, what you thought were the most interesting details of the paper, (3) what initially interested you in this topic, and (4) a proposal hypothesis for moving beyond this article (e.g., what might a follow-up study look like?).

example morality article

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Review

TRENDS in Cognitive Sciences Vol.7 No.7 July 2003



Thinking the unthinkable: sacred values and taboo cognitions

Philip E. Tetlock

University of California, Berkeley, USA

Many people insist that their commitments to certain values (e.g. love, honor, justice) are absolute and inviolable – in effect, sacred. They treat the mere thought of trading off sacred values against secular ones (such as money) as transparently outrageous – in effect, taboo. Economists insist, however, that in a world of scarce resources, taboo trade-offs are unavoidable. Research shows that, although people do respond with moral outrage to taboo trade-offs, they often acquiesce when secular violations of sacred values are rhetorically reframed as routine or tragic trade-offs. The results reveal the peculiar character of moral boundaries on what is thinkable, alternately punitively rigid and forgivingly flexible.

environments (what price endangered species?), and civil liberties and rights (can ethnic-religious profiling to identify terrorists be justified on Bayesian and cost-benefit grounds?). This article explores these issues in two sections. The first section offers a working definition of sacred values and a set of hypotheses concerning how people cope with secular encroachments on such values. The second section sketches the principal lines of empirical work bearing on these hypotheses.

Conceptual backdrop

Political philosophers – from Aristotle to Marx and Nietzsche – have long speculated that citizens are more likely to do what they are supposed to do if they believe the

additional resources



What is expected **student conduct**?
What about **other resources**?
Who do I talk to about **disability services**?



ACADEMIC AND BEHAVIORAL MISCONDUCT

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (FACULTY RULE 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct at [HTTP://STUDENTLIFE.OSU.EDU/CSC](http://STUDENTLIFE.OSU.EDU/CSC).



SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at [HTTP://TITLEIX.OSU.EDU](http://TITLEIX.OSU.EDU) or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Kellie Brennan, at TITLEIX@OSU.EDU.

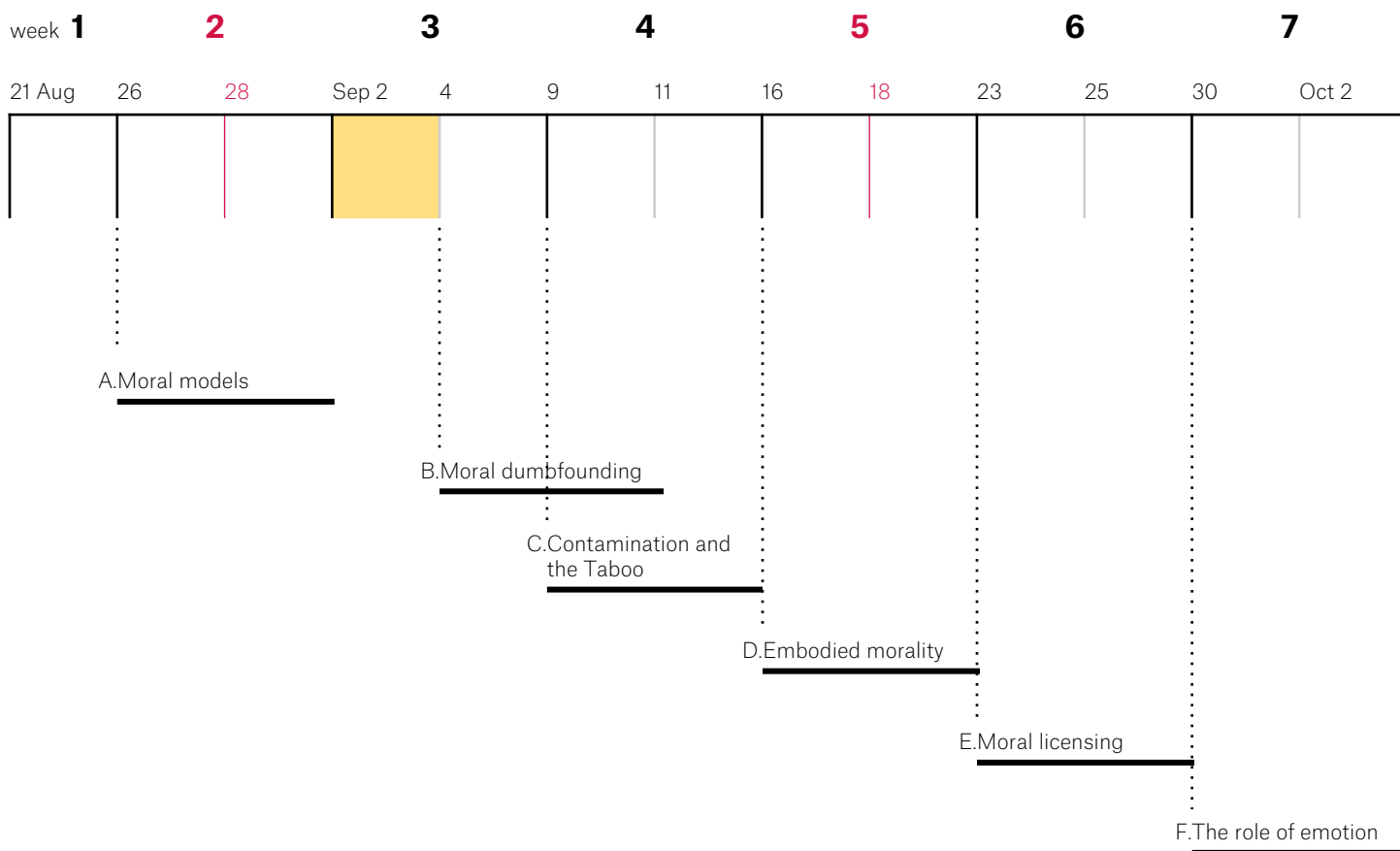


DISABILITY SERVICES

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion.

SLDS CONTACT INFORMATION: SLDS@OSU.EDU; 614-292-3307; SLDS.OSU.EDU; 098 BAKER HALL, 113 W. 12TH AVENUE.

the structure of a first-year seminar



WEEK	DAY	DATE	TOPIC	NOTES
01	W	8/21	Introductions MORALITY	
02	M	8/26	MORAL MODELS	TED TALK "Would you sacrifice one person...?" (Nelson)
	W	8/28	seeing morality	A timeless consideration: morality in poetry
03	M	9/2	Labor Day – no classes	
	W	9/4	MORAL DUMBFOUNDING	TED TALK "Our buggy moral code" (Ariely)
04	M	9/9	CONTAMINATION AND THE TABOO	
	W	9/11	considering moral intuitions	TED TALK "The moral roots..." (Haidt)
05	M	9/16	EMBODIED MORALITY	
	W	9/18	on washing hands	Study report and discussion
06	M	9/23	MORAL LICENSING	
	W	9/25	a scale model	TED TALK "The strange politics of disgust" (Pizarro)
07	M	9/30	THE ROLE OF EMOTION	
	W	10/2	finding ethics in the brain	TED TALK "Trust, morality – and oxytocin" (Zak)

schedule is tentative and subject to change.