PSY 5301H – Controversies in Moral Psychology
(draft syllabus as of Aug 3, 2021)

Wait, is that the right title?

Yes, it is. Ignore the official title, which begins with "Advanced Topics in Development". This is not a specifically developmental course, though there is certainly some developmental context.

Is it only for psychology graduate students?

Nope, I welcome students from disciplines outside of psychology, such as philosophy and management. If you're uncertain if you have the right background, please contact me to check.

When it is?

Fall, 2021, Mondays, from 4-6

Where is it?

Room SS 560—I think. I heard that the first few classes are supposed to take place on Zoom, and I guess there's some possibility that *the whole thing* will be on Zoom. Stay tuned.

Who is the instructor:

Me. Paul Bloom. My email is Paul.Bloom@utoronto.ca, My webpage is paulbloom.net

Doesn't ring a bell. Are you new here?

Yes, just arrived in the summer.

What's the course about?

This seminar dives into the modern science of moral thought and moral action, explored through the disciplines of cognitive science, psychology, neuroscience, behavioural economics, and philosophy. Topics include empathy and compassion; fairness; disgust and purity; anger, punishment, revenge, and forgiveness; dehumanization; psychopaths; and extraordinary altruists. No specific requirements, but participants should be prepared to read, and discuss, articles from a wide range of intellectual disciplines.

<u>A bit less formally, please?</u>
We'll read some cool papers about ongoing and classic debates in moral psychology and spend two hours a week arguing about them in an enthusiastic and civil manner. I'm hoping that this will lead some of you to some new theoretical and empirical directions, and maybe take your research to new places. At minimum, it should introduce you to a really interesting field of scholarship.

<u>What do I need to do in this seminar?</u>
1. You need to send a *weekly reading response*. Before each class except for the first one and the last one, participants will submit a 200-250 word comment about the readings. This comment will be a response to a question raised in the previous class and should be sent to me by email (no attachments, please). It is due by Sunday at 6 PM. Your comments will demonstrate to me that you have done the readings, and, more important, will help structure the discussion we have during class. You are allowed to skip one reading response without penalty.

2. You need a final *project/presentation* I will provide more details about this later in the course, but the general idea is that it should be the sort of thing you could submit to a journal or to a granting agency, such as a theoretical critique or a series of proposed experiments. For certain sorts of final projects, particularly those that involve empirical work, collaboration is encouraged. The final class will be devoted to presentations of these in-progress projects.

3. You need to *talk*. Seminar participants are expected to ... participate. You should participate in the discussion every time we meet. (Having said this, I understand that serious crises and unavoidable obligations do occur—please try to let me know in advance if you need to miss a seminar meeting.)

   Participants should also be aware that I intend to ask them for their opinions and arguments. I may ask a specific individual to expand on a point made in the comment that he or she sent in, for instance. I'll note also that I expect participant's contributions in class to reflect a careful reading of the assigned materials. If you haven't done the readings, don't show up. (As Wittgenstein was reputed to have said: No tourists!)

All of this might be a factor when deciding whether to take this course.

How are we graded?
Don't fret about grades. But since you asked: reading responses = 30%, participation = 30%, final = 40%.

Where can I find the readings?
Right here (I'll add the readings to the folder a couple of weeks ahead of time)
https://www.dropbox.com/sh/gggfdfjok7bnvgb/AADbUcuV4aZyirrpwbKEIFn2a?dl=0

Wouldn't it be nice if, once the semester got going, we got together, as a totally optional thing, and had some drinks and some food and just hung out and got to know each other as people?
Such a good idea! I'm going to try to arrange it, perhaps at a restaurant, or a park, or at my house (living in Roncy, not far from campus). The obvious concern is Covid; we need to see what the situation is regarding large gatherings.

This is a great syllabus, but I have more questions.
So ask me: paul.bloom@utoronto.ca

Tentative Schedule

This schedule of topics and readings is certain to change, but this will provide a sense of what I hope to cover.

<u>Background</u>

Prior to the class of Sept 20 (and ideally before Sept 13) please read the following, as these readings will provide essential psychological and philosophical background:

- Rachels, J. (2006). *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, excerpt
- Pinker, S. (2008). The Moral Instinct. *New York Times*
- Bloom, P (2013). *Just Babies*, excerpt

Sept 13: Introduction to the class

Sept 20: Moral Foundations

- Haidt, J. (2008). The Moral Roots of Liberals and Conservatives, TED talk
  https://www.ted.com/talks/jonathan_haidt_the_moral_roots_of_liberals_and_conservatives?language=en
- Haidt, J. (2007). The new synthesis in moral psychology. *Science*
- Gray, K., Schein, C., & Ward, A. F. (2014). The myth of harmless wrongs in moral cognition: Automatic dyadic completion from sin to suffering. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*
- Gray, K, DiMaggio, N, Schein, C, Kachanoff, F. (under review). What is 'purity'? Conceptual murkiness in moral psychology
- Pizarro, D. A., & Bloom, P. (2003). The intelligence of the moral intuitions: A comment on Haidt (2001). *Psychological Review*

Sept 27: Dehumanization

- Kteily, N. S., & Bruneau, E. (2017). Darker demons of our nature: The need to (re) focus attention on blatant forms of dehumanization. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*
- Smith, D.L. (2020). *On Inhumanity*, excerpt

- Over, H. (2021). Seven challenges for the dehumanization hypothesis. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*
- Bloom, P. (2017). The root of all cruelty. *New Yorker*

Oct 4:   Empathy

- Bloom, P. (2017). *Against Empathy*, excerpt
- [Discussion of "Against Empathy" in *Boston Review*, read target article, commentaries, and reply]
- Zaki, J. (2018). Empathy is a moral force. *Atlas of Moral Psychology*

Oct 11:   No class, Thanksgiving

Oct 18:   Fairness

- Shaw, A., Choshen-Hillel, S., & Caruso, E. (2018). Being biased against friends to appear unbiased. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*
- Bloom, P (2013). *Just Babies*, excerpt
- Starmans, C., Sheskin, M., & Bloom, P. (2017). Why people prefer unequal societies. *Nature Human Behaviour*

Oct 23:   Signaling

- Jordan, J. J., & Kouchaki, M. (under review). Virtuous Victims
- Jordan, J. J., & Rand, D. G. (2019). Signaling When No One Is Watching: A Reputation Heuristics Account of Outrage and Punishment In One-Shot Anonymous Interactions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*
- Crockett, M. J. (2017). Moral outrage in the digital age. *Nature human behaviour*
- Dana, J., Cain, D. M., & Dawes, R. M. (2006). What you don't know won't hurt me: Costly (but quiet) exit in dictator games. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*

Nov 1:   Character

- o Goodwin, G. P., Piazza, J., & Rozin, P. (2014). Moral character predominates in person perception and evaluation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*
- o Siegel, J. Z., Mathys, C., Rutledge, R. B., & Crockett, M. J. (2018). Beliefs about bad people are volatile. *Nature Human Behaviour*.
- o Anderson, R. A., Kamtekar, R., Nichols, S., & Pizarro, D. A. (2021). "False positive" emotions, responsibility, and moral character. *Cognition*
- o Everett, J. A., Pizarro, D. A., & Crockett, M. J. (2016). Inference of trustworthiness from intuitive moral judgments. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*

Nov 8:   Reading Week

Nov 15:   Punishment

- o Goodwin, G. P., & Benforado, A. (2015). Judging the goring ox: Retribution directed toward animals. *Cognitive Science*
- o Marshall, J., Yudkin, D. A., & Crockett, M. J. (2020). Children punish third parties to satisfy both consequentialist and retributive motives. Nature Human Behaviour.
- o Sarin, A., Ho, M. K., Martin, J. W., & Cushman, F. A. (2021). Punishment is organized around principles of communicative inference. *Cognition*

Nov 22:   TBA

The topic for this class will be decided by the class. Possibilities include:

Anger
Disgust
Apologies
Moral Psychology and Criminal Law
Moral Psychology and Religion

Nov 29:   Moral Improvement

- o Singer, P. (2015). The logic of effective altruism. [also read commentaries and author reply], *Boston Review*
- o MacFarquhar, L. (2015). *Strangers Drowning,* excerpt.
- o Caviola, L., Schubert, S., and Green, J.D. (2021). The psychology of (in)effective altruism. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*

Dec 6:   Final presentations