

Fall 2009 / Honors 2013: Evolution and Biology of Morality  
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408 Hodges Hall / 578-6664 /

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is an introductory course in the current research into the biological underpinnings and evolutionary origins of morality. The course is interdisciplinary, combining psychology, biology, neuroscience, and philosophy. The course should be both an introduction to cutting-edge research and a chance to revisit perennial questions.

## GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will be able to (1) identify the key concepts and critical issues the books discussed (measured by essay examination); (2) conduct research into and develop a critical relation to the literature (measured by a 2000 word term paper); (3) communicate their findings to classmates (measured by a 10 minute multimedia presentation during last two week of classes).

Collaborative research projects are encouraged but not required.

## READING LIST

Kim Sterelny and Paul Griffiths, *Sex and Death: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Biology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999). ISBN: 0226773043

Jonathan Haidt, "The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment." *Psychological Review* 108 (2001): 814-34

Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: Avon, 1994). ISBN: 0380726475

Bruce Wexler, *Brain and Culture: Neurobiology, Ideology, and Social Change* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2008). ISBN: 9780262731935

Susan McKinnon, *Neo-Liberal Genetics: The Myths and Moral Tales of Evolutionary Psychology* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2005). ISBN: 0976147521

Richard Joyce, *The Evolution of Morality* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2006). ISBN: 9780262600729

Frans De Waal, *Primates and Philosophers: How Morality Evolved* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006). ISBN: 9780691141299

ACADEMIC HONESTY: students are referred to the LSU Plagiarism statement:  
<http://www.lsu.edu/judicialaffairs/Plagiarism.htm>

ATTENDANCE POLICY: students will be expected to attend each class meeting.

GRADING POLICY: standard criteria for letter grades will be used:

- A =  $\geq 90\%$  = excellent
- B =  $\geq 80\%$  = good
- C =  $\geq 70\%$  = competent
- D =  $\geq 60\%$  = poor
- F =  $\leq 59\%$  = unacceptable

### GRADING COMPONENTS

1. Two essay examinations (weeks 8 and finals week): 20% each for a total of 40%
2. Term paper of 2000 words due in finals week, with preliminary steps required (paper is to be preceded by a thesis statement and outline due in week 9, an annotated bibliography in week 11, and a rough draft due in week 13): 40%
3. Final presentation: 15%. Content comes from term paper research. Students will be graded on quality of research, clarity of presentation, and integration of multimedia with content of presentation. They will also be graded on quality and clarity of answers to questions about their presentations.
4. Questions during final presentations: 5%. Students will take notes during presentations and will be prepared to pose a question if called upon. Students will write up 2 copies of their questions for next class period after presentation; one copy to student and one to professor.
5. Class participation: no set percentage, but outstanding work will be taken into account for borderline grades.

ENGLISH 2000: the course design and assignments fulfill the requirements for English 2000 in terms of research requirements, use of writing-to-learn strategies, technology use, and collaborative projects.

Honors 2013: Biology of Morality / Fall 2009 (16 August 2009)

213 French House / MW 3:10 – 4:30 / <http://www.protevi.com/john/Morality/index.html>

John Protevi / 408 Hodges / Office Hours: MW 2-3 and by appt. / 8-6664 / [protevi@lsu.edu](mailto:protevi@lsu.edu)

Wk	#	Day	Date	Month	Assignment	Notes
1	1	M	24	Aug	Course introduction	
	2	W	26	Aug	Sterelny and Griffiths, Chs 1-2	
2	3	M	31	Aug	Sterelny and Griffiths, Chs 3-5	
	4	W	2	Sept	Sterelny and Griffiths, Chs 6-7	
3	5	M	7	Sept	NO CLASS	LABOR DAY
	6	W	9	Sept	Haidt	
4	7	M	14	Sept	Haidt	
	8	W	16	Sept	Damasio, Chs 1-3 / Sterelny Ch 14	GUEST LECTURE
5	9	M	21	Sept	Damasio, Chs 4-5	GUEST LECTURE
	10	W	23	Sept	Damasio, Chs 6-8	
6	11	M	28	Sept	Damasio, Chs 9-11	
	12	W	30	Sept	NO CLASS	FALL BREAK
7	13	M	5	Oct	Wexler, pp 1-36	
		W	7	Oct	Wexler, pp 37-137	
8	14	M	12	Oct	Wexler, pp 141-253	
	15	W	14	Oct	MID TERM EXAM (IN CLASS)	
9	16	M	19	Oct	McKinnon, pp 1-72 / Sterelny Ch 13	
	17	W	21	Oct	McKinnon, pp 73-152	Term paper thesis / outline
10	18	M	26	Oct	Joyce, Ch 1-2	
	19	W	28	Oct	Joyce, Ch 3-4	
11	20	M	2	Nov	Joyce, Ch 5-6	
	21	W	4	Nov	De Waal, ix-xix; 1-58	Term paper bibliography
12	22	M	9	Nov	De Waal, 59-119	
	23	W	11	Nov	De Waal, 120-181	
13	24	M	16	Nov	Presentations	
	25	W	18	Nov	Presentations	Term paper rough draft
14	26	M	23	Nov	Presentations	
		W	25	Nov	NO CLASS	THANKSGIVING
15	27	M	30	Nov	Presentations	Rough draft returned
	28	W	2	Dec	Presentations	
		F	11	Dec	FINAL EXAM (TAKE HOME)	Due by 12:00 noon
		F	11	Dec	FINAL PAPER	Due by 12:00 noon