

# **Psych 612. Seminar in Advanced Social Psychology: Moral, Political, and Religious Conviction**

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## **Course Description:**

This course covers empirical approaches to people's deepest convictions – moral, religious, or political – in an attempt to investigate their similarities, differences, and origins. Rather than try to cover the entirety of moral psychology, political psychology, and the psychology of religion, the class will focus on getting to know the current state of the science: ongoing debates and unanswered questions. We will also get to know the people who are at the forefront of this science, focusing each week on a particular person's line of research and interacting with them in class. The primary goal of the course is for students to develop research programs that bridge their existing interests with the methods and theories of moral psychology, political psychology, and the psychology of religion.

## **Course Assignments:**

(1) Discussion Questions: Each week students will submit a discussion question or critique on the week's readings (12 total), to be submitted to session organizer (via Blackboard) by Wednesday at midnight. These should be between 300 and 600 words. These questions, plus class participation, make up 30% of the total grade.

(2) Leading Discussion: Each student in the class will be session organizer for one week. Session organizers will compile the week's discussion questions, organize the questions to promote class discussion (putting questions to be asked of the guest stars first), and lead off class discussion. A word document with the organized questions should be sent out to the class by 3pm Thursday. This task is worth 10% of the total grade.

(3) Research proposal and presentation: The research proposal should raise a question/problem inspired by the class content and propose an empirical study to address that question or problem. The paper should be presented as an empirical report in APA format, and be 15 pages or less (double-spaced; 1" margins; 11-12 point font). In addition to the introduction and methods, a brief results section should report the expected result (hypothetical data), and a discussion should present the implications of the expected finding. Proposals will be presented in class Weeks 14-16. Each student will give a 15-minute powerpoint presentation of the idea, methods, expected results, and implications, followed by 15 minutes of feedback from the class. Feedback should be incorporated into the paper, which will be due at midnight May 8. The paper will count for 40% of the total grade, and the presentation will count for 20% of the total grade.

## **Course Schedule:**

\*Note: Readings not hyperlinked below (or linked with restricted access) will be available on Blackboard. The one exception is the book assigned on Week 11, which is available at [your favorite local bookstore](#).

Week 1 (1/18): NO CLASS (SPSP conference in New Orleans)

Week 2 (1/25): Introduction to course and researchers

Séance Guest Star:

[William James](#), Harvard

Readings:

[James, W. \(1896/1912\). The will to believe. In James, W., \*The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy\* \(pp. 1-32\). New York: Longmans, Green, and Co. \[via Project Gutenberg\]](#)

[Morgan, G. S., & Skitka, L. J. \(2012\). Moral conviction. In D. J. Christie \(Ed.\), \*Encyclopedia of Peace Psychology\* \(Vol. 2, pp. 660 – 664\). West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.](#)

[Graham, J., & Haidt, J. \(2012\). Sacred values and evil adversaries: A moral foundations approach. In P. Shaver & M. Mikulincer \(Eds.\), \*The Social Psychology of Morality: Exploring the Causes of Good and Evil\*. New York: APA Books.](#)

## SECTION 1: MORAL CONVICTION

Week 3 (2/1): Moral Behavior Contra Moral Conviction

Skype Guest Star:

[Dan Ariely](#), Duke

Readings:

[Mazar, N., Amir, O., & Ariely, D. \(2008\). The dishonesty of honest people: A theory of self-concept maintenance. \*Journal of Marketing Research\*, 45, 633-644.](#)

[Barkan, R., Ayal, S., Gino, F., & Ariely, D. \(2012\). The pot calling the kettle black: Distancing response to ethical dissonance. \*Journal of Experimental Psychology: General\*, 141, 757-773.](#)

[Ariely, D. \(2012\). Chapter from \*The Honest Truth About Dishonesty\*. New York: Harper Collins. {Blackboard}](#)

[Gino, F., Ayal, S., & Ariely, D. \(in press\). Self-serving altruism? The lure of unethical actions that benefit others. \*Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization\*.](#)

#### Week 4 (2/8): Social and Political Consequences of Moral Convictions

Skype Guest Star:

Linda Skitka, UIC

Readings:

Skitka, L. J., & Bauman, C. W. (2008). Moral conviction and political engagement. *Political Psychology, 29*, 29-54.

Skitka, L. J. (2010). The psychology of moral conviction. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 4*, 267-281.

Aramovich, N.P., Lytle, B.L. & Skitka, L.J. (2012). Opposing torture: Moral conviction and resistance to majority influence, *Social Influence, 7*, 21-34.

Skitka, L. J. (2012). Moral convictions and moral courage: Common denominators of good and evil. In M. Mikulincer & P. Shaver (Eds.), *Social psychology of morality: Exploring the causes of good and evil* (pp. 349-365). Washington DC: American Psychological Association.

#### Week 5 (2/15): Neuroscience of Intention and Moral Judgment

Skype Guest Star:

Liane Young, BC

Readings:

Young, L., Cushman, F., Hauser, M., Saxe, R. (2007). The neural basis of the interaction between theory of mind and moral judgment. *PNAS, 104*, 8235-8240.

Young, L., Saxe, R. (2011). Moral universals and individual differences. *Emotion Review, 3*, 323-324.

Young, L., Saxe, R. (2011). When ignorance is no excuse: Different roles for intent across moral domains. *Cognition, 120*, 202-214.

Dungan, J., Young, L. (in press). The two-type model of morality. In D. Fassin (ed.), *Companion to Moral Anthropology*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Young, L., & Tsoi, L. (2013). When mental states matter, when they don't, and what that means for morality. Manuscript under review. {Blackboard}

#### Week 6 (2/22): A He Said, He Said on the Structure of Morality

Skype Guest Star:

Kurt Gray, UNC

Readings:

Gray, K., Young, L., Waytz, A. (2012). Mind perception is the essence of morality. *Psychological Inquiry, 23*, 101-124.

Graham, J., & Iyer, R. (2012). The unbearable vagueness of “essence”: Forty-four clarification questions for Gray, Young, & Waytz. *Psychological Inquiry*, 23, 162-165.

Gray, K., Waytz, A., Young, L. (2012). The moral dyad: A fundamental template unifying moral judgment. *Psychological Inquiry*, 23, 206-215.

Graham, J., Haidt, J., Koleva, S., Motyl, M., Iyer, R., Wojcik, S., & Ditto, P. H. (in press). Moral Foundations Theory: The pragmatic validity of moral pluralism. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*.

Gray, K. & Ward, A. (2013). The harm hypothesis: Perceived harm unifies moral judgments. Manuscript under review. {Blackboard}

## SECTION 2: POLITICAL CONVICTION

### Week 7 (3/1): Political Convictions and Political Ideology

Skype Guest Star:

[Jaime Napier](#), Yale

Readings:

Napier, J. L. & Tyler, T. R. (2008). Does moral conviction really override concerns about procedural justice? A reanalysis of the Value Protection Model. *Social Justice Research*, 21, 509-528.

Jost, J. T., Federico, C. M., & Napier, J. L. (2009). Political ideology: Its structure, functions, and elective affinities. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 60, 307-338.

Luguri, J. B., Napier, J. L., & Dovidio, J. F. (2012). Reconstructing intolerance: Abstract thinking reduces conservatives' prejudice against nonnormative groups. *Psychological Science*, 23, 756-763.

Napier, J. L., & Luguri, J. B. (in press). Moral mindsets: Abstract thinking increases a preference for ‘individualizing’ over ‘binding’ moral foundations. *Social and Personality Psychological Science*. {Blackboard}

### Week 8 (3/8): Political Convictions and Automaticity

Skype Guest Star:

[Brian Nosek](#), UVA

Readings:

Jost, J. T., Nosek, B. A., & Gosling, S. D. (2008). Ideology: Its resurgence in social, personality, and political psychology. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 3, 126-136.

Nosek, B. A., Banaji, M. R., & Jost, J. T. (2009). The politics of intergroup attitudes. In J. T. Jost, A. C. Kay, & H. Thorisdottir (Eds.), *The Social and Psychological Bases of Ideology and System Justification* (pp. 480-506). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Nosek, B. A., Graham, J., & Hawkins, C. B. (2010). Implicit Political Cognition. In B. Gawronski & B. K. Payne (Eds.), *Handbook of Implicit Social Cognition* (pp. 548-564). New York, NY: Guilford.

Nosek, B. A., Hawkins, C. B., & Frazier, R. S. (2011). Implicit social cognition: From measures to mechanisms. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 15, 152-159.

Hawkins, C. B., & Nosek, B. A. (2012). Motivated independence? Implicit party identity predicts political judgments among self-proclaimed independents. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 38, 1441-1455.

Graham, J., Englander, Z., Morris, J. P., Hawkins, C. B., Haidt, J., & Nosek, B. A. (2013). Warning bell: Liberals implicitly respond to group morality before rejecting it explicitly. Manuscript under review. {Optional}

#### Week 9 (3/15): Biological Bases of Political Conviction

Skype Guest Star:

John Hibbing, UNL

Readings:

Hibbing, John R., and Kevin B. Smith. 2007. The biology of political behavior. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 617, 6-14.

Oxley, D. R., Smith, K. B., Alford, J. R., Hibbing, M. V., Miller, J. L., Scalora, M., Hatemi, P. K., & Hibbing, J. R. (2008). Political attitudes vary with physiological traits. *Science*, 321, 1667-1670.

Smith, K., Alford, J. R., Hatemi, P. K., Eaves, L. J., Funk, C., & Hibbing, J. R. (2012). Biology, ideology, and epistemology: How do we know political attitudes are inherited and why should we care? *American Journal of Political Science*, 56, 17-33.

Dodd, M. D., Balzer, A., Jacobs, C. M., Gruszczynski, M. W., Smith, K. B., & Hibbing, J. R. (2012). The political left rolls with the good and the political right confronts the bad: connecting physiology and cognition to preferences. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 367, 640-649.

Hibbing, J.R., Smith, K. B., & Alford, J. R. (2013). Liberals and conservatives have different degrees of negativity bias. Manuscript under review. {Blackboard}

#### Week 10 (3/22): NO CLASS (Spring Break)

### SECTION 3: RELIGIOUS CONVICTION

#### Week 11 (3/29): Religious Conviction and Theory of Mind

Skype Guest Star:

Jesse Bering

Readings:

Bering, J. (2011). *The Belief Instinct: The Psychology of Souls, Destiny, and the Meaning of Life*. New York: Norton.

Bering, J. M. (2006). The folk psychology of souls. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 29, 453-462.

{Optional}

#### Week 12 (4/5): Ara Norenzayan

Skype Guest Star:

Ara Norenzayan, UBC

Readings:

Norenzayan, A., & Shariff, A. F. (2008). The origin and evolution of religious prosociality. *Science*, 322, 58-62.

Norenzayan, A., Gervais, W., & Trzesniewski, K. (2012). Mentalizing deficits constrain belief in a personal God. *PLoS ONE*, 7, e36880.

Gervais, W. M. & Norenzayan, A. (2012). Analytic thinking promotes religious disbelief. *Science*, 336, 493-496.

Norenzayan, A., & Gervais, W. M. (2013). The origins of religious disbelief. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 17, 20-25.

Norenzayan, A. (2013). Chapters from *The Making of Big Gods*, forthcoming from Princeton University Press. {Blackboard}

#### Week 13 (4/12): The Origins of Conviction

Skype Guest Star:

Paul Bloom, Yale

Readings:

Hamlin, J. K., Wynn, K., & Bloom, P. (2007). Social evaluation by preverbal infants. *Nature*, 450, 557-559.

Bloom, P. (May 2010). The moral life of babies. *New York Times Magazine*.

Bloom, P. (2012). Religion, morality, evolution. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 63, 179-199.

Banerjee, K. & Bloom, P. (in press). Would Tarzan believe in God? The conditions for the emergence of religious belief. *Trends in Cognitive Science*.

#### SECTION 4: FUTURE DIRECTIONS

##### Week 14 (4/19): Research Project Presentations

Guest Stars:

A randomly-selected third of the class.

##### Week 15 (4/26): Research Project Presentations

Guest Stars:

A randomly-selected third of the class.

##### Week 16 (5/3): Research Project Presentations

Guest Stars:

A randomly-selected third of the class.