

PSY324H1 S

Moral Thought and Behaviour

Winter 2025 Syllabus

Course Meetings

PSY324H1 S

Section	Day & Time	Delivery Mode & Location
LEC0101	Thursday, 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM	In Person: UC 87

Refer to ACORN for the most up-to-date information about the location of the course meetings.

Course Contacts

Instructor: Jason Plaks

Email: jason.plaks@utoronto.ca

Office Hours and Location: by appointment

Course Overview

Moral values vary considerably across individuals, groups, countries, and cultures. What explains the emergence of these differential moral systems? What psychological processes are involved in moral decisions and actions? How might insights from psychological research shed light on contemporary, 'hot-button' moral issues? How are moral decisions similar to – and different from – other types of everyday decisions? What is the role of emotion in moral decision making? As an introduction to the field of moral psychology, this 300-level course will cover research from a range of sub-disciplines within psychology including social-personality psychology, cognitive neuroscience, and developmental psychology. In addition, students will gain exposure to related material in other fields including philosophy, ethology, and economics. Students will gain a firm understanding of the key debates and issues in the study of the moral mind and will gain skills in critical thinking and writing.

This third-year undergraduate course primarily involves reading and discussion of seminal articles on the psychology of morality. The instructor will also deliver a short lecture at the start of each session. A key emphasis of the course will be on identifying specific psychological processes that lead people (a) to adopt the moral positions they do, (b) to translate their moral positions into action, and (c) to communicate their moral positions to others. Students will read seminal articles from a range of disciplines, including social psychology, cognitive neuroscience, animal behavior, philosophy, and evolutionary psychology. Students will gain: (a) thorough background knowledge on the main issues and debates in the field and (b) critical reading and writing skills necessary for understanding and communicating complex ideas.

Prerequisites: PSY201H1/ ECO220Y1/ EEB225H1/ GGR270H1/ IRW220H1/ POL222H1/ SOC202H1/ STA220H1/ STA238H1/ STA248H1/ STA288H1/ ECO220Y5/ PSY201H5/ STA215H5/ STA220H5/ PSYB07H3/ STAB22H3/ STAB23H3/ STAB57H3, **and** PSY220H1/ PSY220H5/ PSYB10H3/ SOC213H1

Corequisites: None

Exclusions: PSYD14H3

Recommended Preparation: None

Credit Value: 0.5

Marking Scheme

Assessment	Percent	Details	Due Date
in-class term test	25%	Students will provide written responses to essay prompts provided by the professor. Responses will be written longhand in the blue essay books, which will be provided by the professor.	2025-02-13
reaction papers	25%	These will be submitted via the online platform Packback. The professor will provide more information in class.	2024-01-16,2024-01-23,2024-01-30,2024-02-06,2024-02-27,2024-03-05,2024-03-12,2024-03-19,2024-03-26,2024-04-02
spoken participation	25%	The professor will not the quality and quantity of each student's contribution to the class discussions.	No Specific Date
Research proposal	25%		2025-04-04

Late Assessment Submissions Policy

2% deduction per unaccounted-for day of lateness

Policies & Statements

Assignment Submission Method

The Research Proposal Paper will be submitted to Quercus on the due date.

Missed term test policy

PSY324H1 S Syllabus – Valid as of 2025-01-03

If you miss the term test, please declare your absence on ACORN within one week, email me, and email the TA to arrange a time and place to take the makeup test. You may only use your ACORN absence declaration once per semester, so if you need to declare a second absence, please provide another form of documentation; i.e., a VOI form or a letter from your College or Accessibility advisor.

Late/Missed Assignments

There is a 2% penalty per day of unaccounted for or undocumented lateness.

Religious Accommodations

As a student at the University of Toronto, you are part of a diverse community that welcomes and includes students and faculty from a wide range of cultural and religious traditions. For my part, I will make every reasonable effort to avoid scheduling tests, examinations, or other compulsory activities on religious holy days not captured by statutory holidays. Further to University Policy, if you anticipate being absent from class or missing a major course activity (such as a test or in-class assignment) due to a religious observance, please let me know as early in the course as possible, and with sufficient notice (at least two to three weeks), so that we can work together to make alternate arrangements.

Students with Disabilities or Accommodation Requirements

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have an acute or ongoing disability issue or accommodation need, you should register with Accessibility Services (AS) at the beginning of the academic year by visiting <https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/accessibility-services/>. Without registration, you will not be able to verify your situation with your instructors, and instructors will not be advised about your accommodation needs. AS will assess your situation, develop an accommodation plan with you, and support you in requesting accommodation for your course work. Remember that the process of accommodation is private: AS will not share details of your needs or condition with any instructor, and your instructors will not reveal that you are registered with AS.

Academic Integrity

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019) (<https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019>). If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, please reach out to me. Note that you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from me or from other institutional resources. For example, to learn more about how to cite and use source material appropriately and for other writing support, see the U of T writing support website at <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca>. Consult the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters for a complete outline of the University's policy and expectations. For more information, please see [A&S Student Academic Integrity](https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/academic-advising-and-support/student-academic-integrity) (<https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/academic-advising-and-support/student-academic-integrity>) and the [University of Toronto Website on Academic Integrity](https://www.academicintegrity.utoronto.ca) (<https://www.academicintegrity.utoronto.ca>).

Specific Medical Circumstances

If you become ill and it affects your ability to do your academic work, consult me right away. Normally, I will ask you for documentation in support of your specific medical circumstances. This documentation can be an Absence Declaration (via ACORN) or the University's Verification of Student Illness or Injury (VOI) form. The VOI indicates the impact and severity of the illness, while protecting your privacy about the details of the nature of the illness. If you cannot submit a VOI due to limits on terms of use, you can submit a different form (like a letter from a doctor), as long as it is an original document, and it contains the same information as the VOI (including dates, academic impact, practitioner's signature, phone and registration number). For more information on the VOI, please see <http://www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca>. For information on Absence Declaration Tool for A&S students, please see <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/absence>. If you get a concussion, break your hand, or suffer some other acute injury, you should register with Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

Accommodation for Personal Reasons

There may be times when you are unable to complete course work on time due to non-medical reasons. If you have concerns, speak to me or to an advisor in your College Registrar's office; they can help you to decide if you want to request an extension or other forms of academic consideration. They may be able to email your instructors directly to provide a College Registrar's letter of support and connect you with other helpful resources on campus.

Make-Up Quizzes/Tests

If you miss the midterm test, please arrange with the TA to establish a time and place to take the makeup test as soon as you can.

Quercus Info

This Course uses the University's learning management system, Quercus, to post information about the course. This includes posting readings and other materials required to complete class activities and course assignments, as well as sharing important announcements and updates. New information and resources will be posted regularly as we move through the term. To access the course website, go to the U of T Quercus log-in page at <https://q.utoronto.ca>. SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT GRADES POSTED ONLINE: Please also note that any grades posted are for your information only, so you can view and track your progress through the course. No grades are considered official, including any posted in Quercus at any point in the term, until they have been formally approved and posted on ACORN at the end of the course. Please contact me as soon as possible if you think there is an error in any grade posted on Quercus.

Mental Health and Well-being

As a student, you may experience challenges that can interfere with learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, substance use, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation, financial concerns, family worries and so forth. These factors may affect your academic performance and/or reduce your ability to participate fully in daily activities. Everyone feels stressed now and then – it is a normal part of university life. Some days are better than others, and there is no wrong time to reach out. There are resources for every situation and

every level of stress.

There are many helpful resources available through your College Registrar or through Student Life (<http://studentlife.utoronto.ca> and <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/feeling-distressed>). An important part of the University experience is learning how and when to ask for help. Please take the time to inform yourself of available resources.

Grade Disputes

You must wait for at least 48 hours following the return of an assignment/assessment before bringing a grade concern to me; use this time to reflect upon your performance and grade. Additionally, grade concerns must be brought to my attention within 14 days of the return of the assignment/assessment. Please write a short paragraph detailing your grade concern, including a copy, photo, or scan of the original assignment, if relevant, and email it to me. Only reasonable and well-justified concerns will be considered, and all decisions are final. Note that in agreeing to resubmit your work for remarking, you are agreeing to a re-evaluation of the entirety of your work; your grade may go up, go down, or stay the same.