Social Cognition and Moral Development

Syllabus

EDHD 850
Department of Human Development and Quantitative Methodology

Social cognition and moral judgment reflect complex social abilities that are necessary for human development. How do these abilities develop and emerge? This topic involves understanding moral judgment, others’ intentions, theory of mind, goal directed behavior, intergroup attitudes, and group identity. When does a lack of these capacities become barriers for children in social contexts and what age related changes take place from early to late development? How do concepts of fairness and justice emerge in development? What happens when fairness concepts collide with group identity and in-group biases? What is the role of peers and parents in fostering (or inhibiting) this development? These questions are central for understanding the development of social cognition and moral development. Foundational and current empirical work will form the basis for class discussions.

Course Requirements and Grading. Students will be required to give oral presentations, raise discussion questions, and write a research term paper which involves a review and a critical analysis of theoretical frameworks and current research findings. Grading will be as follows: 50% for oral presentations and weekly questions, and 50% for the paper.

Course Structure and Readings. Each week the professor will provide a brief overview and background to the topic, followed by a critical group discussion of the readings from the Handbook of Moral Development (2014) and supplemental articles provided online. Students will take turns leading the class discussions. Student presentations will highlight current research and raise theoretical questions for discussion.

Required Book (available at the UMD bookstore and at Amazon):


Course Objectives. To help students:
- Gain knowledge about theory and research in social cognition and moral development.
- Understand the scientific method and acquire the ability to formulate research questions.
• Develop critical reading, writing, and presentational skills through reading assignments, writing assignments, group discussions of theoretical material, and class presentations of current research findings.

**Class Attendance.** Students should attend each class session, except in the case of illness and/or extenuating circumstances. Please inform the instructor of missed absences with an explanation.

**Academic Dishonesty.** It is assumed that all students understand the consequences of academic dishonesty at the University of Maryland. If you do not, please consult the graduate catalog or course registration booklet to become familiar with how cheating, fabrication, facilitation of academic dishonesty, and plagiarism are defined by the University.

**Students with Disabilities.** If you are a student with a documented physical or learning disability, please contact me by the first week of class so that we can make arrangements for the necessary accommodations.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug 30</td>
<td><strong>Introduction: Social Cognition, Morality, and Moral Development</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep 6</td>
<td><strong>Concepts of Justice, Fairness, and Rights</strong></td>
<td>Turiel, E. <em>Epistemology, Development, and Social Opposition</em>. Chapter 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep 13</td>
<td><strong>Concepts of Justice, Fairness, and Rights</strong></td>
<td>Smetana, Jambon, &amp; Ball. <em>Domain Approach to Children’s Social and Moral Judgments</em>, Chapter 2</td>
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<td>Presenters: __________________________________________________________________</td>
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Socialization, Conscience, and the Family

Helwig, Ruck, & Peterson-Badali, *Rights, Civil Liberties, and Democracy*. Chapter 3


Presenters: ________________________________

Emotions, Prosocial Behavior, and Aggression


Presenters: ________________________________

Culture, Cooperation, and Development

Vaish & Tomasello. *The Early Ontogeny of Human Cooperation and Morality*. Chapter 13


Presenters: ________________________________

CogScience Talk: Mina Cikara, Harvard University
3:30 – 5:30 pm, Bioscience Bldg 1103, “Leveraging Choice Architecture to Alter Social Preferences”

Emotions, Prosocial Behavior, and Aggression

Carlo, G. *The Development and Correlates of Prosocial Moral Behaviors*. Chapter 10

Presenters: ________________________________

Oct 18  Morality, Emotions, and Adversity

Wainryb & Recchia, *Heterogeneity and Conflict*, Chapter 12


Presenters: ________________________________

Oct 25  Prejudice, Social Cognition, and Intergroup Attitudes

Killen & Cooley. *Morality, Exclusion, and Prejudice*. Chapter 16


Presenters: ________________________________

Nov 1  Prejudice, Social Cognition, and Theory of Mind

Lagatutta & Weller. *Interrelations Between Theory of Mind and Morality*. Chapter 18


Presenters: ________________________________

Nov 8  Precursors to Morality: Infancy


Presenters: __________________________________________

Nov 15  Precursors to Morality: Comparative approaches

Jensen & Silk. *Searching for the Evolutionary Roots of Human Morality*. Chapter 22


Presenters: __________________________________________

Nov 22  THANKSGIVING DAY HOLIDAY

NOV 29  Moral Identity and the Personal Domain


Presenters: __________________________________________

Dec 6  Final Research Presentations

Presenters: __________________________________________