

PHL 2/492: NEUROETHICS SEMINAR

Univ. of Alabama at Birmingham | Spring 2015

1. BASIC COURSE INFO

Prof. Information:

Prof: Dr. Joshua May

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Office Hours: Tues/Thurs 2-3pm (& by appt.)

Lecture Info:

Time: Mon. 5-7:30pm (sect. 7M)

Location: HB 425A (Philosophy Library)

Course Website: Canvas

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Neuroethics studies moral issues arising in connection with neuroscience, particularly research on the brain. This is a relatively new interdisciplinary field covering two main areas. The first is the ethics of neuroscience, which deals with the moral dilemmas that arise from emerging technologies and findings of neuroscience. The second is the neuroscience of ethics, which applies research on the brain to morality (e.g. what drives moral judgment and behavior).

This seminar will cover several topics in each area, likely to include: Moral responsibility and free will: Does subconscious neural activity determine our behavior prior to conscious awareness? Is, e.g., a pedophile morally responsible if the behavior is the result of a brain tumor? Is addiction a neurologically real phenomenon? Moral cognition: Which areas of the brain are responsible for moral thought and action? Emotional areas? Rational/cognitive areas? Brain reading: Can the results of a brain scan constitute self-incrimination (thus violating the 5th amendment)? Does correlating a psychological symptom (e.g. depression) with a brain structure enhance its reality? Moral enhancement: Is there something wrong with making oneself a better person (e.g. more caring and generous) by altering one's brain directly (e.g. via pills or deep brain stimulation)?

Students will learn about such topics and evaluate arguments on different sides of the issues. Discussing various particular topics will also allow us to address the more overarching question: How and to what extent can neuroscience shed light on moral questions?

Note: The 492 version of this course fulfills the Capstone Requirement.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- (1) Understand major theories, methods, and concepts.
- (2) Explain and critically assess moral arguments.
- (3) Evaluate and justify one's moral beliefs.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- (1) *Brain, Body, and Mind: Neuroethics with a Human Face* by Walter Glannon, Oxford University Press, 2011 (ISBN: 978-0199315796). [Available at the book shops or online—about \$30 on Amazon].
- (2) Additional readings will be available on the Canvas course page (as PDFs).

ASSESSMENT

1. Engagement	(both)	10% of grade	(Due: N/A)	[weekly]
2. Discussion Piece	(online)	20% of grade	(Due: TBD)	[N/A]
3. Quizzes (x4)	(in class)	30% of grade	(Due: see schedule)	[~biweekly]
4. Essay Outline	(online)	5% of grade	(Date: 4/6)	[13 th Week]
5. Essay	(online)	35% of grade	(Due: 4/20)	[15 th week]

Note: These due dates are pretty firm, but they are subject to minor changes.

UPDATES

Electronic announcements and updates will be made occasionally on the course website. So do check the site frequently.

MATERIAL COVERED

We will be discussing material primarily from the text. However, *we may not cover everything in the assigned reading, and sometimes material will be brought up in lecture that is not in the readings.* So it's crucial that you come to class. Likewise, there may be some material in the readings you'll be accountable for that we don't discuss in great detail in lecture.

COURSE MATERIALS: HANDOUTS, LECTURE SLIDES, ETC.

To help students, I will provide handouts, slides, and so on. I hope providing handouts/slides in particular will allow students in class to participate in discussion rather than write down everything I say. Keep in mind, though, the handouts/slides will be rather *barebones*. You will likely want to supplement them with your own *notes* from class.

Copyright Notice: The course materials that I create (e.g. handouts, recordings, exams) are a kind of intellectual property. They are for you to use in this class only, during this semester, and not for others to use (e.g. they're not to be posted on other websites or otherwise shared with others).

BUDDY SYSTEM

Early in the semester, I'll set aside time for you to exchange contact information with some fellow classmates. When needed (e.g. if you have to miss class), get in touch with them to share notes or discuss the course material. [QEP working in teams!]

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

During class, turn off and put away your phone. You may use your computer or tablet to access notes or the PDF readings. Of course, do not engage in texting, instant messaging, web surfing, message checking, e-mailing, etc. These are all distractions to you *and your fellow classmates*. Think of the class meetings as a "philosophy retreat" where you focus on only philosophy. That's not too much to ask. (If you have a special need for some such device, talk with me and of course we can make exceptions as needed.)

Penalties: Poor classroom behavior can affect your score on Engagement.

2. ASSIGNMENTS

ENGAGEMENT

Students are expected to attend all class meetings and to do so on time. I will do roll call and track attendance (this isn't just part of your grade; it's also for me to learn names). More than about 5 minutes late for class will be counted "absent," although that shouldn't discourage you from coming that day.

Your Engagement grade will primarily be determined by Attendance and Participation in seminar discussions.

Attendance: We'll have about 12 regular class meetings. Ultimately, acquiring a couple of unexcused absences isn't extremely detrimental, especially if you contribute well in class. But do note that missing a number of classes would likely make it difficult for you to do well in the course overall, simply because you will miss discussion of important material.

Excused absences: These require proper documentation for either jury duty (note from the court), military service (note from military superior), or required university-sponsored activities (documentation from UAB official or supervisor). Remember, students with excused absences are still required to complete work and readings by the required due dates.

Participate in discussion: I'm very interested in what you think of our readings and any light you may have to shed on them. For example, ask questions in class (even if just about clarification) and make comments (such as criticizing one of the authors we're discussing). Moreover, for each meeting, you must post at least one discussion question on the relevant part of the Canvas site *by 12pm [noon] the day of the seminar meeting [Monday]*. (Note that your Discussion Piece counts as your question for the relevant week.) The questions are meant to stimulate discussion in the seminar. They can be clarificatory (e.g. "What exactly is...?") or critical (e.g. "Couldn't she respond by saying...?"). It is recommended that you elaborate on your question/comment, but it's not exactly required.

DISCUSSION PIECE

During the first seminar meeting, you will be assigned one article to briefly summarize and provide some critical questions for discussion in the relevant seminar meeting (this will count as your discussion question for that week). [Note: The article will be one of the PDF readings, not a chapter from the textbook.]

Discussion pieces must be *no more than 500 words* and submitted on the Canvas site *by 11pm the day before the relevant meeting [Sunday]*. Your piece will be evaluated on the quality of exposition and critical questions raised. You should demonstrate that you've done the reading and spent time thinking about it carefully. These short assignments are meant to provide a springboard for discussion during the relevant seminar meeting and also to help you prepare for the kind of work required for the essay (exposition and critical evaluation).

QUIZZES/IN-CLASS WRITING

These will be either *multiple choice, short answer, or short essay* (or some combination), depending on the week. I'll mix it up so there are a number of different testing methods used. So these may involve some essay writing. The quizzes occur about every other week. In the end, I'll drop your lowest quiz score. Thus, you can miss one quiz without any penalty. *No quizzes can be made up without very special circumstances.*

ESSAY

You will be required to write a substantial research essay. *For 292 students*, it will be about 1500 words (5-7 pages if double-spaced) and will *not* require substantial critical evaluation and only minimal references. *For 492 students*, the essay will be about 2500 words (between 9-11 pages if double-spaced) and will require substantial critical evaluation and engagement with the relevant literature.

Additionally, both sets of students will submit an outline of the essay for a grade and you will be paired with one other student to provide feedback on this outline [QEP teamwork!]. More details on what is required for the outline and feedback will be provided later in the semester.

LATE & MAKE-UP ASSIGNMENTS

In-class assignments (e.g. exams): You can make up such assignments only if you have very extenuating circumstances (e.g. medical, military, jury duty) that you can document. Make sure you let me know *as soon as such special circumstances arise*; otherwise I might not be able to work something out with you. Moreover, make-ups are conditional on our being able to schedule a mutually convenient time for it and a time that is either soon before or after the original assignment occurred. For example, don't expect to be able to take an exam two weeks after (or before) the rest of the class takes it.

Take-Home Assignments (e.g. essays): Without an agreed extension in advance, a 5% penalty applies for the first day late; a subsequent penalty of 2% per day will be applied for the next 13 calendar days after the due date (including Saturdays and Sundays). No assignment can be accepted after more than 14 calendar days except in exceptional circumstances and in consultation with the professor.

CHEATING (INCLUDING PLAGIARISM)

Don't cheat. I warn against this at the beginning of every semester, and still nearly every time at least one person gets caught! *I take this extremely seriously*. I will give all cheaters a failing grade and report the incidents to the university.

Note that if you cut something from a Web document and paste it into your paper, you are plagiarizing (even if you mix up the wording a bit). The papers you will be asked to write are *not research papers* in that there is no need to look to outside sources (including anything on the Internet); you just need to read the material required for class, attend the lectures, and take your time thinking it all through. But if you do poke around the Web, you must of course diligently cite and quote all consulted sources.

Furthermore, it's *your responsibility* to make sure that your work doesn't violate university policies about plagiarism and other academic cheating. (Compare: Ignorance of the law does not excuse.) If you need any help in understanding these standards or are in any doubt about whether your work for this course violates them, check with me. For your convenience, here is the link to UAB's page on academic integrity:

<https://www.uab.edu/students/academics/honor-code>

All UAB students are expected to be familiar with the *UAB Academic Honor Code*, as well as any honor codes that are specific to their schools or disciplines. The code represents a commitment to integrity in the academic community and a respect for an individual's educational endeavors:

I have read and, by choosing to become a member of the UAB academic community, accept the UAB Academic Honor Code. I understand that violation of this code will result in penalties as severe as expulsion from the university. I promise and confirm that I will not, at any time and under any circumstances, involve myself with abetting, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, or misrepresentation while enrolled as a student at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

CALCULATING YOUR GRADE

All scores will be out of 100 (in other words, a percentage). To calculate your grade, multiply the percentage weight for each assignment by your score (out of 100) for that assignment, then add up the results for each assignment. Finally, convert that total score for the course into a letter grade using standard conversions (e.g. 92%=A-, 87%=B+, etc.). The following chart is an example to help illustrate how to do the calculation.

	Score	Multiplier	Result
Assignment 1	85	.15	12.3
Assignment 2	72	.25	18
Assignment 3	77	.25	19.25
Final Exam	87	.35	30.45
	Total:		80 (B)

Note: For final grades, UAB only uses A, B, C, D, F (no +/-).

3. STUDENT SUPPORT

OFFICE HOURS

I encourage you all to *talk with me outside of class* (e.g. in office hours). If you are unable to see me during my regular slot or talk to me before or after class, I'm happy to schedule a mutually convenient time. Talking to me about the material, especially in preparation for an upcoming assignment, is not just for those who fear failing the course; it's also for those who want to secure an "A" (or whatever your goal is).

EMAILING ME

I'm available to contact by email. I can even answer relatively short and specific questions that way. If you have a more detailed and lengthy question, talk to me in person.

WEBSITE

The website for this class has some links that may prove useful in the course.

(Note: My personal website also has some information and links to several resources for philosophy. But what is particularly useful for this course will be provided on the web page for this course, not my personal website.)

See also the Library's Philosophy Guide: <http://www.mhsl.uab.edu/2009/guides/philosophy/>

WRITING SUPPORT

I will be expecting you to write *college-level papers* for this course, so I will be expecting few errors in the areas of spelling, grammar, professional academic style, and so on. Furthermore, writing in philosophy is often very different from writing in other disciplines. Since philosophy

requires the clear communication of often difficult and subtle ideas, weak writing renders high level performance impossible. So I encourage you to talk to me about your essays (and exams) before the due date if you have any questions. [More details on requirements for papers will be provided later on in the course.]

In general, I am happy to discuss with you drafts of your papers before they are turned in. However, I will *not* accept emailed or dropped off drafts. Instead, you are welcome and encouraged to bring your drafts into office hours (or make an appointment) to *discuss* them.

IF YOU FACE MAJOR DIFFICULTIES

If for any reason you are struggling—due to medical issues or otherwise—get in touch with me as *soon as possible*. I'm happy to work with you to find the best course of action and, if possible, to help you complete the course successfully. But you must get in touch as soon as you know there is a problem. Waiting until the last minute, for example, might mean we can't work anything out.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you are registered with Disability Support Services (DSS), please make an appointment as soon as possible to discuss accommodations that may be necessary for this course. If you have a disability but have not yet contacted DSS, please contact them as soon as possible (934-4205) or visit them (at 516 Hill University Center). Remember that special accommodations for students with disabilities are not retroactive. Students must obtain an accommodation letter from DSS at the *beginning* of each semester, get that letter to the instructor, and contact the instructor several days before the accommodation is required. Please see DSS FAQ's at:

<https://www.uab.edu/students/services/disability-support-services>

4. READINGS

WHEN TO READ

Students are expected to *do the assigned reading*. You should aim for doing the reading *the day it's covered* in class—or at least around that time. The point of this is: *don't give up on the reading*. If you didn't get to it before we covered it in class, make sure you do it after. This is especially important because philosophy involves close examination of often fairly dense arguments. However, you aren't expected to have figured it all out before the relevant lecture. That's what we're going to try to do in class. (Notice also that I've provided the page numbers of each reading so you can see the length and plan ahead.)

Some Advice: Don't underestimate the power of mental fatigue. When reading, if you find that you can't process it, try reading it again. If you still feel rather lost, it might be that you're getting mentally exhausted. Try putting the book down and coming back to it later, even perhaps the next day. It's quite likely that you'll find it much easier after a break.

READING LIST

The list of readings below is subject to change. All readings by Glannon (2011) are in the course text; all others will be made available to you online as PDFs. We'll try to go through these articles following this exact schedule, but it is not set in stone. You'll need to come to class to know where we are exactly.

PART A: INTRODUCTION**1. What is Neuroethics?**

1. Roskies, Adina (2002). "Neuroethics for the New Millenium." *Neuron* [3pp.].
2. Glannon, W. (2011). "Introduction." *Brain, Body, and Mind* [7pp.].

PART B: THE NEUROSCIENCE OF ETHICS**2. Brain, Self, and Mind Reading**

1. Glannon, W. (2011). "Our Brains Are not Us." Ch. 1 of *Brain, Body, and Mind* [29pp.].
2. Levy, N. (2007). "Reading Minds/Controlling Minds." *Neuroethics* [21pp.]

3. Brain Images as Evidence

1. Two short videos on mind-reading using EEG and fMRI.
2. Sinnott-Armstrong et al (2008). "Brain Images as Legal Evidence." *Episteme* [15pp.]

4. Free Will and Moral Responsibility: An Illusion?

1. Glannon, W. (2011). "Neuroscience, Free Will, and Moral Responsibility." *BB&M* [30pp.].
2. King, M. & Carruthers, P. (2012). "Moral Responsibility and Consciousness." *Journal of Moral Philosophy* [22pp.].

5. Criminal Responsibility & Psychopathy

1. Glannon, W. (2011). "What Neuroscience Can (and Cannot) Tell Us about Criminal Responsibility." *BB&M* [20pp.].
2. Fine, C. & Kennett, J. (2004). "Mental Impairment, Moral Understanding and Criminal Responsibility: Psychopathy and the Purposes of Punishment." *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry* [19pp.].

6. Moral Reasoning [3 weeks]

1. Glannon, W. (2011). "Neuroscience and Moral Reasoning." *BB&M* [1st part: pp. 93-99].
2. Greene, J. (2014). "Beyond Point-and-Shoot Morality." *Ethics* [31pp.].
3. Mikhail, J. (2008). "Moral Cognition & Computational Theory." *Moral Psychology* [11pp.].
4. Kahane, G. et al (2012). "The Neural Basis of Intuitive and Counterintuitive Moral Judgment." *Social Cognitive & Affective Neuroscience* [9pp.].

5. Glannon, W. (2011). "Neuroscience and Moral Reasoning." *BB&M* [2nd part: pp. 99-114].
 6. Klein, C. (2011). "The Dual Track theory of Moral Decision-Making." *Neuroethics* [17pp.]
 7. Sinhababu, Neil (2013). "Unequal Vividness and Double Effect." *Utilitas* [25pp.].
 8. Nussbaum, M. (2004) "Emotions as Judgments of Value and Importance." *Thinking About Feeling* [17pp.].
- Optional:* Goldie, P. (2007). "Emotion." *Philosophy Compass* [11pp.].

PART C: THE ETHICS OF NEUROSCIENCE

7. Cognitive Enhancement [2 weeks]

1. Glannon, W. (2011). "Cognitive Enhancement." *BB&M* [30pp.].
2. Kamm, Frances (2005). "Is There a Problem with Enhancement?" *Amer. J. of Bioethics* [19pp.]
3. Crockett, M. et al (2010). "Serotonin Selectively Influences Moral Judgment...." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* [6pp.].
4. Persson, I. & Savulescu, J. (2008). "The Perils of Cognitive Enhancement & the Urgent Imperative to Enhance the Moral Character of Humanity." *J. of Applied Philosophy* [18pp.].

8. The Brain, Survival, & Agency

1. Glannon, W. (2011). "Brain Injury and Survival." *BB&M* [27pp.].
2. Strohminger, N. & Nichols, S. (2014). "The Essential Moral Self" *Cognition* [20pp.].

9. Stimulating Brains: DBS, TMS, & Ethics of Experiments

1. Glannon, W. (2011). "Stimulating Brains, Altering Minds." *BB&M* [27pp.].
2. National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. "The Belmont Report." (1979).
3. Fins, J. J. (2013). "Romanian Orphans: A Reconsideration of the Ethics of the Bucharest Early Intervention Project" *Bioethics Forum* [6pp.].

10. Regenerating the Brain: Aging, Healthcare, and Personal Identity

1. Glannon, W. (2011). "Regenerating the Brain." *BB&M* [23pp.].
2. Hardwig, J. (1997). "Is There a Duty to Die?" *Hastings Center Report* [8pp.].

SCHEDULE

(Note: Subject to minor revision. Keep coming to class to know where we are.)

Wk	Date	Topic	Readings*	Key Events
1	1/5	1. What is Neuroethics?	Roskies Syllabus, Glannon	
2	1/12	2. Brain, Self ...and Mind Reading	Glannon Levy	<i>Brian</i>
3	1/19	3. Brain Images as Evidence <i>No Class (MLK Holiday)</i>	Sinnott-Armstrong et al	Online Engagement
4	1/26	4. Free Will & Moral Responsibility ...An Illusion?	Glannon King & Carruthers	<i>Mike [King visits]</i>
5	2/2	5. Criminal Responsibility ...and Psychopathy	Glannon Fine & Kennett	Quiz 1 <i>Codrin</i>
6	2/9	6a. Moral Reasoning: The Attack on Deontology	Glannon Greene	<i>Hannah</i>
7	2/16	6b. Moral Reasoning: Responses to Greene	Mikhail, Kahane et al Glannon, Klein	<i>Dylan, Blake</i> <i>Jui</i>
8	2/23	6c. Moral Reasoning: Reason vs. Emotion?	Goldie, Nussbaum Sinhababu	Quiz 2, Rebecca
9	3/2	7a. Cognitive Enhancement: For & Against	Glannon Kamm	<i>Neha</i>
10	3/9	7b. Cognitive Enhancement: The Present State & Future	Crockett Persson & Savulescu	<i>Karan</i> <i>Melanie</i>
11	3/16	8. The Brain, Survival ...and Agency	Glannon Strohmingner & Nichols	Quiz 3 <i>Ramona</i>
<i>Spring Break: 3/23 - 3/27</i>				
12	3/30	9. Stimulating Brains: DBS, TMS ...& How to Write an Essay	Glannon Handout	
13	4/6	...& Ethics of Experiments 10. Regenerating the Brain	Belmont, Fins Glannon	<i>Christiaan [Pence visits]</i> Outline
14	4/13	...and Ethics of Aging Essay Outline Discussions	Hardwig	<i>Clint</i> Quiz 4
15	4/20	<i>Paper Due: April 20th (first day of finals week)</i>		

* Read the listed pieces for the corresponding lecture. Match authors' last names with the Reading List.