# LDST 390/PSYC 449: The Psychology of Good and Evil
## Fall 2005

### Instructor
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Don completed his undergraduate studies at Florida State University and earned his Ph.D. in 1978. He has held teaching positions at Virginia Commonwealth University, University of Kansas, and the University of Richmond (Jepson School of Leadership Studies). He studies reactions to success and failure, individual difference in moral thought, applications of social psychology in educational and clinical settings, and group dynamics. He currently holds the Leo K. and Gaylee Thorsness Chair in Ethical Leadership.

### Class
Monday and Wednesdays 4:15 to 5:30 in Room 102 of Jepson (and 24/7 on the Internet via Blackboard)

### Course description and goals
This course will review and synthesize psychological theory and research into moral (and immoral) thought and action, including developmental, social psychological, evolutionary, and personality perspectives.

### Course goals
This course examines human thought, emotion, and action, as any psychology or leadership course would do. It focuses, however, on actions that are valenced: they aren’t neutrally evaluated, but instead judged to be good or bad sorts of thoughts, emotions, and actions. We will examine questions of human nature, egoism and altruism, responsibility and blame, values and moral choices, communalism and individuality, courage and cowardice, and genocide and moral inclusion, but as psychological phenomena that must be explored through scientific research. We will not only want to understand the nature of people and the causes of actions both good and bad, but also how people feel and think about such actions and their relationship to other types of psychological outcomes. Essentially, we will consider moral being, acting, feeling, and seeing, with applications including human research, environmental ethics, values education, bullying, and the roots of collective violence.

Beyond the content of the course, I hope that you use this course to develop further your already strong scholarly skills, including gains in critical thinking, ethical thought, writing and communication, information search and retrieval, technological skills, scientific skills, and study skills. You may also develop enhanced insight into your own moral values and experiences, and these insights may help you better understand yourself and your relations with others. This is not, however, a course on moral philosophy and religion, or a self-development course: our focus is on studying, scientifically, the good, the bad, and the evil, rather than saving the world or improving ourselves.
### Course topics

- Academic integrity and cheating
- Altruism and helping
- Civility, rudeness, and etiquette
- Cooperation and conflict
- Courage and cowardice
- Creativity and banality
- Cults
- Environmental ethics
- Evil and good people
- Generosity and avarice (greed)
- Genocide
- Happiness (positive emotions) and unhappiness (negative emotions)
- Helping and harming
- Human nature: motives and needs
- Humility and boastfulness (narcissism)
- Humor and moroseness
- Justice and fairness
- Love and hate
- Lying and deceit
- Meditation
- Moral codes and values
- Moral cognition (thought) and judgment
- Moral development
- Moral emotions (empathy, compassion)
- Moral leadership
- Murder
- Obedience to malevolent authority
- Optimism and hopelessness
- Personality and individual differences
- Power of the situation
- Prejudice
- Prejudice and tolerance (pluralism)
- Productivity and laziness
- Research and medical ethics
- Resilience after loss
- Responsibility and denial (excuses, illusions)
- Self-esteem, egoism, self-aggrandizement, and self-deception
- Selfishness and collectivism
- Service and selfishness
- Sexual violence
- Social support
- Spirituality
- Stealing
- Violence and nonviolence
- Virtues: forgiveness
- Virtues: gratitude
- Virtues: humility
- Virtues: optimism and hope
- Virtues: wisdom, emotional intelligence
- Volunteering and donating
- Volunteerism
- Well-being and happiness
- Wisdom and ignorance

### Teaching and learning methods

This course will operate as a seminar, with all members participating in the discussion and analysis of each day’s topic. Each member of the group will contribute to the discussion, through presentations of particular studies, commentaries on issues, discussions of one’s own personal insights, and guided review of the text material. Topics for discussion will be drawn from selected readings, the primary texts, and a number of secondary texts. Discussions will provide you the opportunity to express your understanding in your own words, and to raise questions that you find personally interesting. In addition to discussion, we will also spend our classroom time in lecture, demonstrations, activities, and audiovisual events. All activities are designed to stimulate critical thinking. If you need additional information about a topic mentioned in the text, or you have a problem understanding a particular portion of the text, just ask.

This class also uses World Wide Web-based instruction extensively. In some cases I will email additional materials to you, and if class must be cancelled I will hold the session on-line instead. Some discussions will occur on line as well, and so will office hours. Many of the activities, papers, quizzes, and supplemental readings will also take advantage of the WWW, primarily Blackboard.
| Textbook and readings | Research suggests that students acquire as much as 50% of their learning in a course directly from the textbook! We are fortunate, then, to have available two excellent books on negative and positive psychology, written and edited by some outstanding researchers.  
- *The social psychology of good and evil*, edited by A. G. Miller, published by Guilford.  
We will also supplement these books with other readings. (Note: The reading load for this class will be fairly heavy, both in terms of quantity and in terms of level). |
| Activities and assignments | Many, many assignments will be given through the semester, such as readings, writing reaction papers, reading and identifying weaknesses in an article, interviewing people about some class-relevant issue, conducting informal surveys, and so on. Many of these activities will involve substantial amounts of writing, including formal critiques of articles, cogent summaries of published studies, and brief reaction papers. The word "avalanche" aptly describes the density of these experiences. Occasionally the class will also undertake more unusual activities as they become available.  
Semester-long tasks will include the development of a paper pertaining to morality (or a portfolio of papers); (b) a powerpoint-based summary of that proposal or portfolio to be delivered to class during the final 2 weeks of the semester; and (c) journaling. Details on these major projects will follow. |
| Feedback about progress | Your progress toward the goals of the class will be checked through quizzing and testing. Quizzes will usually be administered using the Blackboard, but occasionally in class. In-class quizzes will be closed-book, but Blackboard quizzes will be open-book. We will also have 2 examinations. All tests and quizzes will be announced, in advance, through e-mail. Naturally, items on the tests will cover all course material, no matter what its source (e.g., lecture, text, or film). The final examination will include some cumulative material, but you will be provided with a study preparation sheet for the cumulative portion of the final examination (only). Exams will be a mix of multiple choice and short answer. |
| Grading | The default grade in the class is a C. Students who perform well or show growth over time will earn higher grades, and individuals who miss class, contribute little, generate low-quality products, and do not take advantage of feedback to improve will receive even lower grades. I will warn you, by the date for withdrawal, if I consider your work to be of failing quality. However, because much of your grade in class is based on material turned in after that date (e.g., your final paper) this feedback will not be dispositive. The distribution of grades will be based on a standard criterion referenced grading system. If you earn a certain number of points needed for a grade, you will receive that grade. Cut offs for grades are etched in stone, and based on the standard A = 90-100%, B = 80-89%, etc. approach. If technical or logistical problems arise (or errors in planning must be corrected), then this system may be revised. You will be notified, in class, of any changes. |
| Policies | - Please plan to arrive on time and remain until the final minute of class. I am careful to make certain that class does not run over, but I expect your attention for the entire class period.  
- Attendance is urged, but is not mandatory. If you must be absent for religious reasons, because you are involved in University-level athletics, or some other good reason, inform me by email of the conflict.  
- Some quizzes and in-class activities can not be made up if you miss them (because they will be based on in-class discussions and activities) but “replacements” for a limited number missed activities will be provided at the semester’s end. If you are ill on the day of an examination, please leave me a voice mail message prior to the class. You will have 1-week to make up the test.  
- The No-no’s: IMing, celling, emailing, text-messaging in class (and no extra credit).  
- Please be certain to review and comply with the University of Richmond academic integrity policy. |
| Disabilities | Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 require I provide academic adjustments or accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students seeking such adjustments or accommodations should follow the procedures established by the University, and contact me as soon as possible so that adjustments or accommodations can be arranged. |
Sensitivity

This course examines many aspects of human behavior, so students should realize that they may acquire insight into their own personalities, actions, and tendencies as a result of participation. In some cases we will complete questionnaires that measure aspects of your personalities, and our classroom discussions, the videos, and the activities will focus on many disappointing, shocking, or even disgusting aspects of human behavior. In all instances the knowledge you gain about yourself and others should be positive and useful, but it may be surprising as well. In general the goals of any particular exercise will be described beforehand except when full disclosure will undermine the educational or scientific value of the experience.

The course also examines sensitive topics and ones where different people adopt widely differing interpretations and outlooks, including prejudice, religious values, spirituality, morality, and values. All of us should strive to remain sensitive to the feelings and perspectives of others during these discussions—but also respect each others right to express their views. We must show respect for one another and for people in general, and strive at all times to avoid the use of stereotypes, labels, and personal attacks. Feel free to debate and criticize ideas, but not individuals.

Normative Assumptions

1. The central goal of this class: To examine positive and negative forms of human thought, action, and emotion from a dispassionate, scientific perspective.

2. Wax on, wax off, or: Time on task is essential; this course will require at least 9 percent of our time. Please do not miss classes and please arrive on time.

3. Our motivation is intrinsic. We study for the love of the knowledge, rather than the rewards that study will yield.

4. We are a collective, so all share responsibility for the exploration of leaders and leadership. Please be prepared to discuss all assigned texts. If you have questions or thoughts about the readings jot them down and bring them to class.


6. It is fine to focus on the details (the devil is, after all, in the details) while on your way to seeing the “big picture.”

7. Openness to experience is the 5th factor.

8. Don’t let it bring you down.