

Evolutionary Ethics: Spring 2001; PSY 1153

Professor Marc Hauser, Room 980 William James Hall; 496-7077; hauser@wjh.harvard.edu

Blurb from course catalog:

Explores the biological foundations of our ethical behavior, integrating theoretical and empirical advances from evolutionary biology, cognitive science, neurobiology, economics, philosophy, and law. Discusses evolution of religion, legal issues, nonhuman morals, and human values.

Speakers:

Howard Rachlin (SUNY, Psych) Self-control, animal learning (HRachlin@psych1.psy.sunysb.edu) Peter Adele Diamond (Shriver Center) development, neurobiology (Adele.Diamond@umassmed.edu) Steve Gould (Harvard OEB) Evolution, race, ethics (no email; NYC fax: 212-925-0459) Herb Gintis (Umass Econ) game theory and cooperation (hgintis@mediaone.net) Peter Gomes (Divinity School) religion and ethics (jan_randolph@harvard.edu) David Haig (Harvard OEB) parent-offspring conflict, selfishness (dhaig@oeb.harvard.edu) Dan Dennett (Tufts Philosophy) Free will (ddennett@tufts.edu) Dan Gilbert (Harvard Psych) Social psych of emotions, inhibition (dtg@wjh.harvard.edu) Steve Pinker (MIT Brain & Cog Sci) Human nature; psychology (steve@psyche.mit.edu) Frank Marlowe (Harvard Anthro) cross-cultural, Evolutionary Psych (fmarlowe@fas.harvard.edu) Alan Dershowitz (Harvard Law) genesis of justice (alder@law.harvard.edu)

Class requirements:

1. Each week, there will be a set of readings and a speaker. 1-2 Students will be responsible for leading a discussion. This entails preparing a set of questions, guiding the discussion among the students and guest speaker, and then, writing up the notes from the entire discussion; these notes should then be handed in (by email to hauser@wjh.harvard.edu using a word processor that Microsoft word can read; usually putting a .doc extension works) by the next class meeting.
2. A final exam that will consist of a moot-court style debate, with the class divided into teams taking sides.
3. Grade break down: a) Class participation: 50%; b) Summary of discussion: 30%; c) Final debate: 20%.
4. To be clear, I see this course as an opportunity to learn how to argue, debate, discuss. Thus, I am only interested in students who both enjoy debating and who want to learn the art. This is why I am weighting the class participation so heavily. The readings will be demanding, and I expect everyone to do all of the reading carefully.

Date	Speaker	Topic
2/5	Hauser	Introduction to the course, mechanics, readings
2/12	Hauser	Conceptual themes and problems in evolutionary ethics
2/19	Rachlin	Altruism and selfishness
2/26	Diamond	The development and neurobiology of self-control
3/5	Gould	Religion, evolution, and ethics
3/12	Gintis	Ethics is Science, not Philosophy
3/19	Gomes	Religion's view of ethics
3/26	Spring Break	No class
4/2	Haig	Asymmetric relations and the horror of incest
4/9	Dennett	The biology of free will
4/16	Gilbert	Emotional forecasting
4/23	Pinker	Blank slates and biological determinism
4/30	Marlowe	Economic games and our hunter gather past
5/7	Dershowitz	The legal side of ethics: insights from the bible