Proposal for a Junior-Senior Cluster Course

Title of proposed course: PSY 407: Moral Development

When will this course be offered? Once a year beginning 1996-1997

Title of cluster: Morality

Name of cluster proposal coordinator: Byron L. Haines

A. Course Description (100 words or less).

This course will focus on the development of morality across the human lifespan. Using scientific research evidence, we will examine the biological and social basis of caring behaviors (such as helping, sharing, and comforting) and of "conscience," i.e., the self-regulatory abilities that make possible the inhibition of antisocial behavior. We also will look at the development of moral reasoning and moral judgment in children and adults, and explore the question of gender and cross-cultural differences in moral development. Applications in terms of the structures and procedures that foster the moral development of individuals in families, schools, and workplaces will be highlighted.

B. Course Development

This is a new course developed specifically for this cluster. The instructor will co-teach the Sophomore Inquiry course on Morality and has over twenty years of research experience in the topic.

C. General Education Goals

I. Inquiry and critical thinking. The major theoretical positions in the scientific study of moral development (i.e., psychoanalytic, social learning, cognitive-developmental, sociobiological) will be compared and contrasted, and the emerging contextual/dialectic (i.e., systems) paradigm will be introduced. In addition, students will be exposed to the primary investigational approaches in moral development research and will learn the advantages and drawbacks of each, as well as the circumstances under which each would be used. Attention to the method, i.e., experimental vs. correlational (the latter including case study, observational, interview, and survey methods), to the setting, i.e., field vs. laboratory, and to the time frame, i.e., cross-sectional vs. longitudinal, will be given. The criteria with which we evaluate scientific findings, and especially issues of reliability and validity, will be discussed. Readings on this topic already make heavy use of graphical displays; thus students will gain extensive practice interpreting visual presentation of results. Class time will be structured to include frequent use of free-writes, microthemes, and other writing-to-learn techniques.

II. Communication. In addition to the writing-to-learn techniques and graphical data displays already mentioned, the class format will include extensive use of small and whole group discussion. Students will gain practice in communicating ideas in small (4-5 person) groups as well as to the entire class (the latter both informally and in formal oral presentations). Assessment of students will include evaluation of both their written and oral communication skills.
III. Human experience. An examination of the structures and processes that have been demonstrated empirically to foster human development across the lifespan in Western industrialized societies in the twentieth century is the immediate subject matter of this course. Where research information is available we will deal as well with these structures and processes in other cultures and across time. Naturally, the controversy surrounding possible differences in male and female moral development will have to be addressed. The lifespan perspective around which the course is organized and the contextual/dialectic paradigm toward which the course builds ensure that the student gains appreciation (as well as explanations!) for the enormous diversity in human moral experience.

IV. Ethical issues and social responsibility. The subject matter of this course is devoted to an examination of what we know about how to foster social responsibility and ethical judgment in families, schools, and workplaces. Students will reflect on ethical dilemmas directly as they learn how individuals at various stages of moral reasoning development differentially resolve those issues, and they will be exposed to a model of ethical decision-making (borrowed with permission from the Oregon Ethics Commons) and gain practice in using it to resolve an actual moral dilemma. Both the ethic of care and the ethic of justice will be confronted directly in the examination of prosocial and moral reasoning development, respectively.

D. Course Outline
(Preliminary version only. The instructor has secured release time fall quarter 1995 to develop both this course and the Sophomore Inquiry course.)

(1 week) Setting the stage. Conceptual and empirical distinctions among the following: prosocial behavior, moral development, altruism, conscience, etc.

(1 week) The sociobiology of altruism.

(1 week) Benevolent babies? The earliest expressions of care and conscience. Will include a discussion of temperamental (i.e., biologically-based) factors that have been implicated in early manifestations of prosocial behavior and conscience.

(2 weeks) Prosocial development: learning to engage in caring behaviors and to have prosocial emotions (e.g., empathy)

(2 weeks) Conscience development: learning how to resist temptation and refrain from antisocial behavior

(2 weeks) Moral development: the development of moral thinking, reasoning, and decision-making

(1 week) Applications: Families, schools, and workplaces as contexts for "character education."
I do not know of a text that adequately covers these topics; thus I suspect that I will have to build a course packet of readings (largely in the form of book chapters) from diverse sources. At this point I imagine I will have students read Trivers, Wilson, and Rushton on the sociobiology of altruism, Rheingold/Hay, Rothbart, and Kochanska on benevolent babies, Eisenberg and Hoffmann on prosocial development, Freud and Patterson on conscience development, Kohlberg and Gilligan on moral development, and Eisenberg and Grusec, Likona and DeVries/Zan, and Rest, respectively, on applications in families, schools, and workplaces.

[Signature]
Professor of Psychology
1) Course Description

LAW AND MORALITY surveys the variety of relations that exist between law and morality. The course draws from a long list of subjects historically and analytically associated with the relation between political authority and individual moral autonomy. A partial listing of these topics includes: natural and positive law; the legal enforcement of conventional morality; civil disobedience; tolerance; law and the frontiers of morality; paternalism; the law of duress and necessity; and the legalization of "victimless crimes."

The course has an obvious niche in the Morality Cluster. Morality is a social phenomenon with obvious political and legal implications. This course should help students understand how moral matters inform both legal principle and political policy. It should also help students appreciate the problems associated with thinking of ourselves as autonomous moral beings and as citizens subject to political and legal authority. This, of course, introduces a package of problems and issues associated with making sense of freedom, as a political and moral ideal, within the context of civil association.

2) Course Reading Materials

The reading list changes depending upon the specific topics the course addresses when offered. Decisions about topics are made arbitrary and with malice aforethought by the instructor. However, some of the following usually appear on the syllabus: Devlin, THE ENFORCEMENT OF MORALS; Hart, LAW, LIBERTY, AND MORALITY; Dworkin, THE PHILOSOPHY OF LAW; George, MAKING MEN MORAL; Lyons, ETHICS AND THE RULE OF LAW; Baird and Rosenbaum, MORALITY AND THE LAW.

3) Course Instructor: Craig L. Carr, PS