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Class meetings: Mondays, 6:15-8:45pm, BioSci 144

Course Description

Fear, love, anger, pride, regret, envy – the emotions seem to play a big role in our lives, as well as in the lives of certain other animal species. But what are the emotions? Are they guides to behavior? Are they judgments, and if so, what is their role in the production of moral judgments? Perhaps they are biases in judgment, deflecting from time to time our otherwise rational decision making. Or maybe they are epiphenomenal – mere side effects of other mental processes, essentially irrelevant to proper mental function as well as to morality. The course explores what the emotions are, what they are for, and how they might have evolved. We begin with readings of some classic treatments of behavior and emotion in certain animal species, including gulls and chimpanzees. We then consider emotions in humans, reading selections from important works in psychology, neurobiology, literature, politics, and ethics. A central issue throughout will be the role of the emotions in behavior and judgment, especially moral judgment.

Required Books

1. Darwin, C. 1859. *On the Origin of Species*. A facsimile of the first edition. Harvard University Press (1964).
(Tentative: The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals may be substituted.)
2. De Waal, F. 1989. *Peacemaking among Primates*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
3. LeDoux, J. 1998. *The Emotional Brain*. Simon & Schuster, New York.
4. Solomon, R. 2007. *True to Our Feelings*. Oxford University Press, New York.
5. Austen, J. *Sense and Sensibility*. Oxford World Classics (1980), Oxford University Press, Oxford.
(Tentative: Another novel may be substituted.)

Other Readings

Other readings (mainly short journal articles and excerpts from books) will appear on Blackboard, under “Course Documents.”

Course Requirements

Papers: Two papers are required, a five-pager due at about the midpoint of the semester and a ten-pager due in the last week. The first will have to do with the emotions and their role in animal thinking and behavior. The second will have to do with the role of the emotions in human morality and moral-decision making. More details on content and format of the papers will be given in class.

Comments and Replies (and other group assignments): The class will be divided into small groups (2 or 3 students each), and a group project will be assigned to each group, every other week, on average. Most of these will take the form of “comment and reply” on the readings. Each week, a group prepares a 300-to-500 word comment on the readings, and posts it on the Discussion Board of Blackboard. (**Comments for each week should be posted by 6pm Saturday.**) That same week, another group writes a 200-300 word reply to the comment, also on Blackboard. (**Replies should be posted by Sunday at 6pm.**) Comments and replies will be discussed in class the following Monday. Open discussion will follow on Blackboard and in class.

Exams: No exams

Grading Scheme: Papers – 30% (#1 = 10%, #2 = 20%); Comments & Replies (and other group assignments) – 30%; Participation in class discussions – 40%