

PHL/NEU 251: NEUROETHICS

Samuel Murray

Philosophy/Neuroscience

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Class time: MWF 11:30 – 12:20 (Harkins LL13)

Office hours: M 9:30 – 11 or by appointment (Siena 125)

Course Description

What should we do with our discoveries in neuroscience? Do discoveries in neuroscience inform what we should do?

Required texts

- Iles, J. & Sahakian, B. 2013. *Oxford Handbook of Neuroethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- May, J. 2023. *Neuroethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Vargas, M. 2013. *Building Better Beings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- Additional readings are available on Canvas as PDFs

Assessment

1. **Campus survey** (10%) – As part of an ongoing effort to measure campus climate, I will have you distribute a survey to 10 people. You will also be asked to take the survey for a total of 11 responses. I will distribute a link to the survey. Responses should be collected by **October 10**.
2. **Discussion pieces** (15%) – Each week, you will submit a short (150-200 word) summary of a “target article” that provides some critical questions to launch discussion during the relevant class meeting. Discussion pieces must be submitted by 5pm the day before the relevant meeting. These pieces should show that you’ve done the reading and spent some time thinking about it. The target article is determined by random draw announced each Friday (so, e.g., if you are assigned to Group 1, your target article is Monday. Group 2? Your article is Wednesday. And 3? Friday. If we have an abbreviated week, then we’ll do two groups). I’ll provide an example summary in Week 2, so this assignment will not start until Week 3. You do not need to work together with people in your group, although it’s fine to talk about the article with others as you prepare your summary.
3. **Mid-term exam** (25%; *due Oct. 10*): There will be a mid-term exam on basic elements of moral theory and neuroscience methodology. The format of the exam will consist of short answer questions, short essays, and one “synthetic” essay.
4. **Research paper** (20%; *due Nov. 24*): You will write one short paper (4 – 6 pages) on an ethical issue covered between Week 7 and Week 10. A rubric will be provided later in the semester. This paper will consist of three stages: (1) a proposal/introductory paragraph, (2) a rough draft, and (3) a final draft. Each stage must be submitted to me for comments.
5. **Final exam** (30%): There will be one cumulative final at the end of the term. A study guide will be made available before the end of the semester. The exam is scheduled for December 19th—this will almost certainly be rescheduled to something more humane!

Schedule (Changes will be announced in class and through Canvas)

<i>Week</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Friday</i>
Sep. 1 – 5 (1)	LABOR DAY	<i>Introduction to Neuroethics</i>	<i>Background Neuroscience</i> - Complete Module 2 of “Medical Neuroscience” in Coursera. <i>Optional:</i> Ruff and Huettel, “Experimental methods in cognitive neuroscience”
Sep. 8 - 12 (2)	<i>Functional neuroanatomy</i> - Kean, “Phineas Gage, Neuroscience’s most famous patient” - Verplaetse, “Conscientiousness or the moral organ in phrenology”	<i>Frontal lobotomies</i> - Szszepanski & Knight, “Insights into human behavior from lesions to the prefrontal cortex” - Taber-Thomas et al., “Arrested development”	<i>Functional neuroimaging</i> Poldrack, “fMRI grows up”
Sep. 15 - 19 (3)	<i>Introduction to agency</i> Vargas, <i>BBB</i> (Introduction and ch. 1)	<i>Ultimate freedom</i> Vargas, <i>BBB</i> (ch. 2)	<i>Situationism</i> Doris, “Persons, Situations, and Virtue Ethics”
Sep. 22 - 26 (4)	<i>Reasons-responsiveness</i> Vargas, <i>BBB</i>, (ch. 5)	<i>Why do we want to blame?</i> Vargas, <i>BBB</i> (ch. 6)	<i>Moral neuroscience</i> Greene et al., “An fMRI investigation of emotional engagement in moral judgment”
Sep. 29 - Oct. 3 (5)	PATIENCE IN ADVERSITY WORKSHOP <i>No class</i>	<i>Do human beings make moral decisions?</i> Greene, “The secret joke of Kant’s soul”	<i>Bypassing?</i> Vargas, <i>BBB</i> (ch. 7)

<i>Week</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Friday</i>
Oct. 6 – 10 (6)	<i>The neuroscience of moral judgment</i> • May, <i>Neuroethics</i> (ch. 6)	<i>Neuroscience and determinism</i> • May, <i>Neuroethics</i> (ch. 2)	MIDTERM EXAM
Oct. 13 – 17 (7)	COLUMBUS DAY	<i>Neuroethics broadly</i> • Farah, “Neuroscience and neuroethics in the 21 st century” (OHN)	<i>Neuroscience and identity</i> • May, <i>Neuroethics</i> , ch. 3 (pp. 70 – 80) • Northoff and Wagner, “Personal identity and brain identity”
Oct. 20 – 24 (8)	<i>Enhancement (I)</i> • Chatterjee, “Cosmetic neurology”	<i>Enhancement (II)</i> • May, <i>Neuroethics</i> , ch. 7	<i>Enhancement (III)</i> • Gordon, “Cognitive enhancement, hyperagency, and responsibility explosion”
Oct. 27 – Oct. 31 (9)	<i>Direct brain stimulation</i> • Roskies, “Agency and intervention”	<i>Neurotechnology and volition</i> • Schönau et al., “Mapping the dimensions of agency”	<i>Stimulation and patient experience</i> • Corrales Taul et al., “Living with deep brain stimulation for Parkinson’s Disease”
Nov. 3 – 7 (10)	<i>Addiction (I)</i> Reske & Paulus, “A neuroscientific approach to addiction” (OHN)	<i>Addiction (II)</i> May, <i>Neuroethics</i> , ch. 5	<i>Addiction (III)</i> Rochette et al., “Addiction and volitional abilities”
Nov. 10– 14 (11)	<i>Mental disorders (I)</i> May, <i>Neuroethics</i> , ch. 4	NEW ORLEANS WORKSHOP ON AGENCY AND RESPONSIBILITY <i>No class</i>	NEW ORLEANS WORKSHOP ON AGENCY AND RESPONSIBILITY <i>No class</i>
Nov. 17 – 21 (12)	<i>Mental disorders (II)</i> Swanson et al., “ADHD: Defining a spectrum disorder and considering neuroethical implications” (OHN)	<i>Mental disorders (III)</i> Shields and Beversdorf, “A dilemma for neurodiversity”	<i>Mental disorders (IV)</i> Arnaud and Gibson, “Neurodiversity, identity, and hypostatic abstraction”
Nov. 24 – 28	THANKSGIVING	THANKSGIVING	THANKSGIVING

<i>Week</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Friday</i>
(13)			
Dec. 1 – 5 (14)	<i>Privacy (I)</i> Farahany, “Mental manipulation”	<i>Privacy (II)</i> López-Silva et al., “Neurotechnological applications and the protection of mental privacy”	<i>Privacy (III)</i> Istace, “Exploring the essence of the Freedom of Thought”
Dec. 8 – 12 (15)	<i>Privacy (IV)</i> Persson and Savulescu, “The impossibility of a moral right to privacy”	<i>Achievement</i> Gordon and Dunn, “Pharmacological cognitive enhancement and cheapened achievement”	<i>Intervention</i> Minerva, “Should couch potatoes be encouraged to use transcranial direct current stimulation?”