The Psychology, Epistemology, & Ethics of Empathy

PHI 535

Note: All texts will be posted to the course’s Canvas site.

Readings are subject to change. Please check the syllabus on Canvas for up to date readings.

To get a unit for this course, you must: submit a first draft, of a minimum of 3,000 words, by Friday, March 18. Submit a final paper, of between 7,000-12,000 words, by Dean’s Date, May 9.

Instructor
Dr. Grace Helton
121 1879 Hall
Office Hours, Wednesday 1:30-3:30

February 2: On the Construal and Possibility of Empathy
Amy Coplan, “Will the Real Empathy Please Stand Up? A Case for a Narrow Conceptualization”
de Vignemont, “The Co-Consciousness Hypothesis,”

February 9: The Empathy-Altruism Hypothesis: For & Against
Batson, “The Empathy-Altruism Hypothesis”
Sober & Wilson, Unto Others: The Evolution and Psychology of Unselfish Behavior 264–271 only
Cialdini et al., “Reinterpreting the Empathy-Altruism Relationship: When One Into One Equals Oneness”
May, Regard for Reason in the Moral Mind, pp. 144-153 only

February 16: “Chimp-athy”? Helping Behavior, Shared Distress, and Empathy in Non-Human Animals
De Waal, “The Antiquity of Empathy”
Webb et al., “Long-term Consistency in Chimpanzee Consolation Behaviour Reflects Empathetic Personalities”

February 23: The Dark Side of Empathy: Group Status, Dominance, and the Limits of Empathy
Bloom, “Empathy and Its Discontents”
Manne, Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny, ch. 6, “Exonerating Men” (TW: sexual assault)

March 2: Imaginative Perspectives in Narrative Fiction (Guest Speaker: Elisabeth Camp)
Camp, “Perspectives in Imaginative Engagement with Fiction”

March 9: The Value of Empathy; Empathy with Vicious Perspectives: Part I (Guest Speaker: Olivia Bailey)
Bailey, “Empathy and the Value of Humane Understanding”
Bailey, “Empathy with Vicious Perspectives? A Puzzle about the Moral Limits of Empathetic Imagination”

March 11-18 Spring Break (NO CLASS)

March 23: The Value of Empathy; Empathy with Vicious Perspectives: Part II
Maibom, “What Can We Learn From Taking Another’s Perspective”
Morton, “Empathy for the Devil”

March 30: Socially Ameliorative Alternatives to Empathy? Young on Asymmetrical Reciprocity, Jones on Self-Empathy
Young, “Asymmetrical Reciprocity: On Moral Respect, Wonder, and Enlarged Thought”
Jones, “Disappearing Black People Through Failures of White Empathy”
  
  
  optional: Silverman et al., “Stumbling in Their Shoes: Disability Simulations Reduce Judged Capabilities of Disabled People”
Woodzicka, “Real Versus Imagined Sexual Harassment”

April 6: Empathy and Self-Transformation

Paul, “The Paradox of Empathy”
Covington, Salvation on Sand Mountain, excerpts

April 13: Awe, Empathy & The Modes of Self-Transcendence

Shiota et al., “The Nature of Awe”
Bai et al., “Awe, The Diminished Self, and Collective Engagement”
Ritter et al, “Lack of Empathy in Patients with Narcissistic Personality Disorder”

April 20: Outrage and Empathy (Guest Speaker: Sukaina Hirji)

Hirji, “Outrage and the Bounds of Empathy”
  
  optional: Effiong et al., “Traumatic Bonding in Victims of Intimate Partner Violence is Intensified via Empathy”

April 27: Is Empathy a Skill? Is it a Virtue?

Battaly, “Is Empathy a Virtue?”
Zaki, “Empathy: A Motivated Account,” excerpts
McRae, “Empathy, Compassion, and ‘Exchanging Self and Other’ in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism”
  
  optional: Ventura et al., “Virtual Reality as a Medium to Elicit Empathy: A Meta-Analysis”