



# Ethical Worlds

WITH JAMES!



Overview

This module is taught by James McMurray.

His research has been concerned with questions of different conceptions of good and evil, right and wrong since his fieldwork in Xinjiang, China, where local ideas about what it means to live a good life are often very much at odds with those of the state.

The module will explore different approaches to how we can make sense of the diversity of human ethics, by looking at real-world dilemmas and disjunctures.

It will be of particular interest to students interested in policy and contemporary social issues.



# Core Aims:



To explore how moral systems function in diverse societies using real-world ethnographic examples.

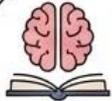


To challenge universalist assumptions (like those of Human Rights) through decolonial, feminist, and Marxist critiques.



To move beyond 'right vs. wrong' to understand ethics as formed and negotiated in specific contexts.

# Outcomes



**Understanding Ethical Theories and Anthropological Approaches:** Students will critically engage with key ethical theories (e.g., deontology, virtue ethics) and anthropological frameworks such as everyday ethics, Foucauldian ethics, and ethics as freedom, applying them to cross-cultural contexts.



**Analysing Ethnographic Case Studies:** Students will evaluate how moral systems operate within different societies, drawing on ethnographic examples to explore concepts like ethical freedom and everyday ethical practices.



**Engaging with Critical Perspectives:** Students will apply decolonial, feminist, and Marxist critiques alongside anthropological approaches to challenge universalist assumptions and explore contemporary ethical debates.



**Reflexive Ethical Practice:** Students will reflect on their own ethical assumptions and understand how anthropological approaches—such as everyday ethics and Foucault's ideas on freedom—shape their research and interactions with the people they study.

# Assessment

100% essay assessment of 7000 words

- An exploration of an ethical issue through the anthropological lens

This essay will require you to critically engage with ethical theories (e.g., deontology, virtue ethics) and apply them to cross-cultural ethnographic contexts.

- It's a good way to critically engage with a real-world issue that you really care about
  - And demonstrate your close familiarity with it when starting your career!

# More questions? Come and ask James!

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