Every major horror of history was committed in the name of an altruistic motive. (Ayn Rand)

He who does not live in some degree for others, hardly lives for himself. (Montaigne)

Our task must be to free ourselves by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty. (Albert Einstein)

Always do right -- this will gratify some and astonish the rest. (Mark Twain)
This module seeks to foster understanding of altruism defined as (cognitive, emotional, or physical expression of) *humans’ concern for the positive welfare of others*.

**Lecture**

A 1-hour lecture on Tuesday 24 September, 11-12 (Week 1), Shawcross AS 02.

**Event**

A 1-hour event on Tuesday 22 October, 11-12 (Week 5), Shawcross AS 01.

**Seminars**

One 2-hour seminar in Weeks 2 – 12 (but not in Week 5). Please see Sussex Direct for venues and times.

**Timetable**

- **Week 1 (19/09 – 25/09):** Lecture: All about altruism (No seminar.)
- **Week 2 (26/09 – 02/10):** Academic altruism
- **Week 3 (03/10 – 09/10):** Real world altruism
- **Week 4 (10/10 – 16/10):** Conception and measurement
- **Week 5 (17/10 – 23-10):** Event. (No seminar.)
- **Week 6 (24-10 – 30/10):** Biology
- **Week 7 (31-10 – 06-11):** Understanding
- **Week 8 (07/11 – 13/11):** Motivation and emotion
- **Week 9 (14/11 – 20/11):** Individual and other differences
- **Week 10 (21/11 – 27/11):** Barriers
- **Week 11 (28/11 – 04/12):** Intervention
- **Week 12 (05/12 – 11/12):** Sustainability

**Assessment**

- Autumn Term presentation (30%)
- One 3000-word essay (70%)

**Module Tutor**

Location: Pevensey 1, 1C7
Telephone: 67 8886
E-mail: T.L.Farsides@susx.ac.uk
Twitter: @TomFarsides
Office Hours Wednesday & Thursday, 12-1
About the Module

Module description

This module seeks to foster understanding of (cognitive, emotional, or physical expression of) humans' concern for the positive welfare of others. Within psychology, such concern is usually called altruism. Key antecedents of altruism include sympathy and morality. Key consequences of altruism include helping and other prosocial behaviours, although altruism can also evoke aggression and violence. This module investigates the processes mediating altruism and its antecedents and consequences, as well as the conditions that moderate those relationships. All main sub-disciplines of psychology are extensively represented on the course, e.g., biological, cognitive, developmental, personality, and social psychology, as are contributions from other disciplines including anthropology, economics, geography, marketing, and sociology. The module pays special attention to critically examining how successfully psychological knowledge may be used to promote ‘real-world’ instances of altruism, such as evidenced by emergency intervention, blood and organ donation, charitable giving and volunteering, citizenship and social activism, etc..

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the module, a successful student should be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the scientific underpinnings of the psychological study of altruism and helping behaviour.
- Be able to reason scientifically and demonstrate the relationship between theory and evidence in relation to the study of altruism and helping behaviour.
- Communicate ideas and research findings by written, oral, and visual means.

Each assessment (see below) assesses all three learning outcomes.

This is a 15-credit module. This means that, as a rough guide, students should expect to work independently for this module for about 15 hours each week, in addition to contact hours.

Seminars

Weekly seminars last up to 1 hour and 50 minutes. Exceptions are in Weeks 1 and 5, when there will be no seminars.

Seminars are largely student-run and under the immediate control of the student(s) giving their assessed presentation that week. To gain a lot from the seminar and to be helpful to the person(s) doing their assessed presentation, it is essential that all students come to all seminars having done some reading and thinking relevant to that week’s topic. Everyone should have at least tried to read the ‘Essential Readings’ plus at least something else. Ideally, they will come with questions about that reading and/or points that they would like to make or explore from it.
Any student coming to a seminar without being able to show evidence of having done reading and thinking of appropriate breadth or depth will be invited to engage in private study and to present written material on the topic to the tutor the following week.

Students are not expected to read every text listed below for a particular week. A relatively large number of potential readings have been provided to enable students to ‘follow their interests’. It will be an asset if different students have done different reading!

**Assessment**

**Presentation**

30% of your course grade will come from an assessed presentation scheduled during an Autumn Term seminar. Information and advice about this will be given in Weeks 1 and 2, some of which is shown in the Week 2 material below.

**Essay**

70% of your course grade will come from a 3000 word essay you should submit during Assessment Period 1 (see Sussex Direct for submission date and details). You may select a title from ones suggested below or use an original one that you have received written approval for from the module tutor.

*Essay Assessment Criteria*

http://www.sussex.ac.uk/psychology/internal/students/examinationsandassessment

*Essay writing guide* – written by the module tutor...

http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Users/ssfd0/Feedback.html

*APA style* to be used


http://www.socialpsychology.org/teaching.htm#writingguides

*Academic misconduct* to be avoided, i.e., plagiarism, collusion, and personation. See the *Handbook for Undergraduate Candidates* and

http://www.sussex.ac.uk/s3/index.php?id=33

*Late submission:* If your essay is submitted up to 24 hours late, there will be a penalty of 5%. If submitted more than 24 hours and up to one week late there will be a penalty of 10%.

*Mitigating evidence:* http://www.sussex.ac.uk/studentlifecentre/mitigation
Overlapping material/self-plagiarism: There should be no substantial overlap between the content of your assessed presentation and the content of your essay. Section 7.15 of the Examiners’ Handbook says:

Unless specifically allowed in module or course documentation, the use of the same material in more than one assessment exercise will be subject to penalties. If examiners detect substantial overlap or repetition in the subject matter of a student's assessments within a single module they must adjust the marks of the two (or more) assessments involved so that the student does not receive credit for using the same material twice. The examiners must inform the Student Progress and Assessment Office which will then inform the Deputy Chair of the relevant subject exam board.

Essay word length

The essay maximum word-length is 3000 words. There is no official “10% rule,” whereby essays may be up to 10% longer the set word-length without being penalised. The Students’ Examination Handbook (section 4.2: “Word-length”) says:

The maximum length of formal submissions (e.g. essays or dissertations - see Glossary for definition) is specified in module material. Excessive length may be penalised. The limits as stated include footnotes and/or endnotes, and quotations in the text, but do not include the bibliography, appendices, abstracts, maps, illustrations, transcriptions of linguistic data, or tabulations of numerical or linguistic data and their captions. You will be asked to state on each cover sheet the approximate number of words in the assessment. If the examiners consider that an unfair advantage has been gained by exceeding the given length for an assessment they will reduce the mark for that assessment. This may be by any amount up to, but not more than, 10% of marks available for the assessment concerned. This does not mean there is a 10% word limit margin around the given length of an assessment.

General texts

The following texts provide overviews of altruism and prosocial behaviour.

Module Evaluation

You will be asked to complete a standard evaluation questionnaire at the end of the module. Constructive comments and criticisms will also be welcome at any time; the earlier the better. These may be passed to the module tutor directly, via one of your year’s Student Representatives, or via any other communication channel you prefer. All feedback will be collated and reported to all relevant Psychology Department Meetings. Reactions and responses to the feedback will be reported back to students via the world-wide web and via student representatives (who attend the subject group meetings). We want the module be as good as it possibly can be so all and any feedback is gratefully received.

Contact Information

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Office Hours: 12-1, Wednesdays and Thursdays

WEEK 1 LECTURE: ALL ABOUT ALTRUISM

A lecture in Week 1 will provide all sorts of information that will be essential for students to make the most of the course. Among other things, it will be invaluable in helping students choose which topic they wish to do for their assessed presentation /which week they want to do it in.

Other than an event held in a lecture theatre in Week 5, all contact time will take place in seminars.
WEEK 2: ACADEMIC ALTRUISM

Other than attending the lecture in Week 1, no preparation is required for this seminar.

In the seminar, we will:

- Clarify and stress that the “altruism” studied on this course is (cognitive, emotional, or physical expression of) concern for the positive welfare of another.
- Get to know each other, especially about each other’s particular interest in altruism.
- Decide who is going to give which assessed presentation and when.
- Discuss what is required for presentations and what qualities the best ones will have.
- Provisionally decide what we want to happen in seminars, e.g. how much we want to devote to such things as:
  - Presenters being primary facilitators (a minimum of 20 minutes each)
  - The tutor being proactive and reactive
  - Class discussing Essential Readings
  - Other class discussions, e.g., sharing news, discussing assignments, etc.
- Clarify what preparation is required for Week 3’s seminar activity.
- Address any questions and concerns anyone may have.

More Week 2 information follows below.
Module overview (See information elsewhere in handbook for more information)

Week 3: Real World Altruism

We will discuss single-page (any size) ‘posters’ each student has prepared in advance of the seminar. Each will summarise what a particular student has learned in the previous week about one example of real world behaviour in which altruism might play an important role, e.g., adoption, blood donation, body-part (e.g., organ) donation, business practices, caring, citizenship, (self-) compassion, courageous resistance (including whistle-blowing), courtesy, driving, environmentalism and animal welfare, heroism and emergency intervention, honesty, liberalism, lying, mercy killing, philanthropy (charitable giving), religious action, rescuing, sexual behaviour, shopping, social activism, surrogacy, terrorism, tipping, vaccination, volunteering, working, etc.

From Week 4, seminars will largely be facilitated by the student(s) doing their assessed presentation that week. They will determine the specific content of their presentations and of the activities within and following them. The headings below provide the broad areas that each Week will address. The descriptions or questions under the headings discuss the sorts of specific issues and areas that week’s presenters might focus on.

Week 4: Conception and measurement

Reminder: Altruism on this course is the phenomenon of (cognitive, emotional, or physical expression of) concern for the positive welfare of another

Conceptual issues include: Is altruism necessarily costly? If so, what sorts of costs are required? If an attempt to help makes things worse, is it an example of altruism? Are people only altruistic towards the needy? Is it altruistic to support a group? Are aggression or violence ever altruistic? What is the relationship between altruism and morality? Is the single word “altruism” adequate to do justice to behaviours as diverse as smiling at a crying child and giving up one’s life to save others?

Measurement issues include: How reliable is self-report altruism? What about self-reports of how one might behave in hypothetical scenarios? How valid an indicator of altruism is giving money to a stranger? Is any behaviour an infallible marker of altruism? If so, which? Can and should indicators of empathy, politeness, honesty and other things be included in measures of altruism?

Week 6: Biology

Evolutionary aspects: Examining the relationship between evolutionary processes (including ‘biological altruism’) and concern for the positive welfare of others.

Biological aspects: Looking at the role of genes, neurons, and other biological stuff in altruism.
Week 7: Understanding

Understanding others: The role of perspective-taking, imagination, theory of mind, mirror neurons, inference, and other aspects of ‘cognitive empathy’ on altruism.

Understanding morality: Perceiving responsibility, moral demands, and the like.

Week 8: Motivation and emotion

Caring about others: Sympathy, connection, commitment and similar aspects or determinants of ‘emotional empathy’.

Other moods, emotions, or anticipated moods or emotions that might be related to altruism, e.g., anger, elevation, gratitude, guilt, shame.

Week 9: Individual and other differences

Are there individual differences in altruism? Which is the more altruistic sex/gender? Does altruism alter over the lifespan? Do various clinical populations differ in their ability and propensity to be altruistic, e.g., people with autism, narcissists, psychopaths? How altruistic are various animals, e.g., apes, dogs, dolphins, rats? Are there cross-cultural differences in altruism? What reasons are there for any differences which exist?

Week 10: Barriers

What stops people having or acting on altruistic intentions? Can and do people stop themselves from having or acting on altruistic inclinations? What roles do things like stereotyping, prejudice, and hostility have? Does psychological distance matter? Do people avoid altruism for fear of exploitation? Does power promote or undermine altruism? Are people less helpful when alone or when with or observed by others?

Week 11: Intervention

What situations trigger altruism? Can environments be changed to make altruistic action more likely? Are people more likely to be altruistic after recently being kind or unkind? Can altruism be increased by giving people drugs? Does meditation foster altruism? Will paying people promote or undermine altruism? Can media foster or undermine altruism, e.g., via poems, books, radio plays, films, television, video games, music? What about tweaking people’s moods, priming certain constructs or thoughts, observing people, etc, etc?

Week 12: Sustainability

Can people become more enduringly, generally, and effectively altruistic? Is love all that is needed? Can moral education or character development programmes work? Must other skills and characteristics be fostered to make altruism feasible and sustainable, e.g., tolerance, bravery, resilience, wisdom? What role is played by
cultural influences, e.g., common parenting practices, materialistic values, etc? What roles are played by personal experience, religiosity, etc.?

Assessed presentations

Each student will be scheduled to give an assessed presentation during an Autumn Term seminar.

Before an assessed presentation is given, the tutor must be given a copy of all materials used in the presentation, via email wherever possible. This should include things like Power Point Slides; handouts; descriptions of individual, group, and whole-class exercises; descriptions of and/or links to video-clips used; details of questionnaires, stories, or other ‘stimuli’ used; a narrative plan for the seminar, e.g., of what was to happen and in what sequence. This will be used to help the tutor mark and give feedback for the presentation. It may also be used for auditing the tutor’s marking.

Each presenter must produce a handout and send or give a copy of this to each class member.

Presenters much get advance permission from the module tutor for any planned presentation content or activities that might reasonably be expected to unduly upset class members.

Formal criteria for assessment presentations:

http://www.sussex.ac.uk/psychology/internal/students/examinationsandassessment

A presentation guide – written by the module tutor...

http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Users/ssfd0/presgood.html

This presentation guide is slightly out of date (use APA rather than Harvard style, for example) and is geared mainly towards giving ‘traditional’ presentations. Nevertheless, it is strongly recommended that you read it.

Each week’s topic is broad and presenters should not try to cover everything that could be said. Instead, they should base their presentation on one or more sub-topics from that week that they find particularly important or interesting. The aim should be to “say a lot about a little, rather than a little about a lot”: to ‘go deep’ rather than to ‘skim a lot of surface’.

A copy of the tutor’s presentation assessment aid can be found at the end of this course document. It is strongly recommended that you use this to evaluate your own presentation, ideally both before and after its delivery.

Also at the end of this document is a list of comments the module tutor has made over the years in response to assessed presentations he has witnessed. It would be wise for students to read this prior to giving their own presentations.

The module tutor will aim to provide feedback to each presenter as soon as possible after its delivery, most often well within a few days.
I am done with great things and big plans, great institutions and big success. I am for those tiny, invisible loving human forces that work from individual to individual, creeping through the crannies of the world like so many rootlets, or like the capillary oozing of water, which, if given time, will rend the hardest monuments of pride.

William James, *The art of possibility: transforming professional and personal life* (p. 197)

Before examining predominantly ‘basic’ research concerning the psychology of altruism, it will be instructive to consider how well the psychology of altruism seems to explain various ‘real-world’ caring behaviours.

Each student is invited to choose a behaviour that might be, at least sometimes or in part, motivated by actors’ concern for the positive welfare of someone else, e.g., adoption, blood donation, body-part (e.g., organ) donation, business practices, caring, citizenship, (self-) compassion, courageous resistance (including whistle-blowing), courtesy, driving, environmentalism and animal welfare, heroism and emergency intervention, honesty, liberalism, lying, mercy killing, philanthropy (charitable giving), religious action, rescuing, sexual behaviour, shopping, social activism, surrogacy, terrorism, tipping, vaccination, volunteering, working, etc.

Having chosen an example, students should find out as much as they can about its psychology within the time available to them. Imagine you are a journalist, consultant, or similar, and that you have a week to understand all you can about the topic from a psychological perspective. Ask yourself, ‘Can psychology explain what is going on here?’ ‘Can it make predictions?’ ‘Does it offer possibilities for influencing how much or when people engage in the behaviour?’ ‘How well grounded are the explanations and predictions that psychology offers?’ ‘Are there any glaring inconsistencies among or gaps in the explanations?’ ‘What further research might be both feasible and enlightening on the topic, and why?’

Each student should summarise the main aspects of what they find out on a *single* side of paper (any size), making full use of diagrams (e.g., to show connections between important variables). Having put their name on this, they should bring it to the class this week, so that summaries of different behaviours can be compared and contrasted. (It would be good practice to include an accompanying bibliography of the most important sources used, on the back or on another piece of paper.)
The tutor will collect the posters after class to help with him writing reports on students’ behaviour in seminars. Please note, though, that \textit{this poster does not contribute to formal assessment} of students’ performance on this course.

\textbf{Essential Seminar Readings}

As much as you can on the topic of your choice.

\textbf{Essay Questions}

1. Critically evaluate the usefulness of what is known about the psychology of altruism for understanding and promoting helping behaviour.

2. To what extent is the psychology of altruism in any particular domain (e.g., charitable giving, volunteering, etc.) generalisable across all altruistic behaviour?
WEEK 4: CONCEPTION AND MEASUREMENT

To laugh often and much, to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children, to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends, to appreciate beauty, to find the best in others, to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded!

Ralph Waldo Emerson

This topic explores how altruism and related concepts have been conceptualised and measured. The ‘big question’ here is, “what, precisely, are we trying to understand?” Candidate answers include emotions (e.g., feelings of warmth towards another), cognitions (e.g., beliefs that another should be helped), goals (e.g., intentions to help another), behaviours (e.g., actions intended to and/or that do improve another’s welfare), consequences (e.g., another enjoying improved welfare as a result of something you do), and various combinations of these things. A related issue is what can count as a legitimate beneficiary of altruism, e.g., other individuals; groups; abstract entities (e.g., justice); one future self; and collections of genes, some of which are in the self. Another issue is whether the term altruism is appropriate only in certain circumstances, e.g., when another is in need and/or when improving another’s welfare involves costs to the self. Once we’ve decided what altruism is (and if that is, in fact, what we are interested in, we need to determine whether we can identify and ideally measure it and, if so, how.

Tom Farsides, the module tutor, defines “altruism” as (cognitive, emotional, or physical expression of) **concern for the positive welfare of another**. This definition differs from many important and established uses of the term “altruism”. You do not have to agree with Tom’s definition. However, this is the sort of altruism the current module was designed to try to understand. For many reasons, and unless specified otherwise, this is how the term will ‘typically’ be used during this module, e.g., when the term “altruism” is used without qualification in essay questions.

**Essential Seminar Readings**


**Essay Questions**

1. Compare and contrast ‘altruism’ and ‘aggression’.

2. In what ways, if any, is altruism necessarily costly for the altruist?
Additional readings – Focus on conceptualisation


**Additional Readings – Focus on measurement**


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**WEEK 5: LECTURE**

An event will be held in a lecture theatre in Week 5.
This week’s topic is biological aspects of altruism. One aspects of this is evolutionary theory and areas of psychology particularly influenced by it. Scholars in these areas often use terms such as “altruism” in particular, unusual, and contentious ways. During this module, a large task is to examine how much evolutionary theory can help understand altruism defined as concern for the positive welfare of someone else.

Note: Some of the biological (and related economic/game theory) papers are very mathematical. There are often very good media summaries of them available on the internet. If you come across particularly good ones, please let me know!

Biology is also important when trying to understand the processes by which altruism is manifest in the brain and the body.

**Essential Seminar Reading**


**Essay Questions**

1. What contribution can ‘biological altruism’ make to understanding altruism?

2. To what extent is altruism determined by genes?

**Additional readings – Evolutionary psychology**


**Additional readings – Neuropsychology/physiology**


**Additional readings – Genetic inheritance**


Empathy by itself . . . is ethically neutral. A good sadist or torturer has to be highly empathetic to understand what would cause his or her victim maximal pain. Nor, I believe, is empathy always necessary for compassion: we can have compassion for the sufferings of non-human animals without being able to put ourselves inside their minds.

Martha Nussbaum (cited in Gallacher, reference below)

Is understanding necessary or sufficient for altruism? If so, what sort of understanding? How about understanding what it is like to be someone else? Is that even possible? What about understanding morality? If you understand that someone else has some sort of moral standing, will that make you altruistic towards them? These are the sorts of questions that will be addressed this week.

Essential Seminar Readings


Essay Questions

1. What role does other-understanding play in evoking altruism?
2. When do people feel they should help others and what relation does this have with altruism?

**Additional readings – ‘Cognitive empathy’**


**Additional readings – Moral understanding**


WEEK 8: MOTIVATION AND EMOTION

Sympathies became more tender and widely diffused, so as to extend to the men of all races, to the imbecile, the maimed, and other useless members of society, and finally to the lower animals (Darwin, 1874, p. 283).

This week examines the roles of motivation and emotion in altruism. We will examine a range of emotions that have been claimed to promote altruism under certain circumstances, including at least one you probably haven’t heard of before! We will also examine a claim that different emotions give rise to qualitatively different motivations, especially Batson’s claim that the emotion of motivation gives rise to a form of motivation that is different to our normal one of self-interest.

Essential Seminar Readings


Essay questions

1. To what extent is the ‘empathy’ in Batson’s ‘empathy-altruism’ hypothesis a form of altruism?

2. How justified is the prefix “moral” in “moral emotions”?

Additional reading


WEEK 9: INDIVIDUAL & OTHER DIFFERENCES

…she has a weak chest and a predisposition to tuberculosis, and I feel that. How could I not feel it? And the more I drink, the more I feel. That’s the reason for my drinking. I’m looking for feeling and compassion in it … Not revelry do I seek, but pure sorrow … I drink, for I desire to suffer doubly!

Marmeladov in Dostoyevsky’s *Crime and punishment* (p. 16, Penguin Classic)

This topic explores individual and group differences in altruism: what they are, where they might come from, how amenable to change they might be, and what might be learned from them.

Essential Seminar Readings


Essay Questions

1. Compare and contrast altruistic maturation in two or more clinical populations.

2. What can comparative psychology (animal behaviour) tell us about human altruism?

Additional readings – Comparative psychology


Bekoff, M. (2004). Wild justice and fair play: cooperation, forgiveness, and morality in animals. *Biology and Philosophy, 19*, 489-520.


De Waal, F. B. M. (2012). Moral behaviour in animals. TEDX talk. [http://www.ted.com/talks/frans_de_waal_do_animals_have_morals.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/frans_de_waal_do_animals_have_morals.html)


**Additional readings – Developmental (age) differences (Maturation)**


Additional readings – Personality (‘individual’) differences


Additional readings – Gender differences


Additional readings – Psychopathology


WEEK 10: BARRIERS

If I am not for myself, who will be for me?
And if I am only for myself, what am I?
And if not now -- when?

Rabbi Hillel

Altruism may be disappointingly absent under two circumstances: when it wasn’t there in the first place and when its presence is silenced or overridden by contrary forces. These are the foci of attention this week.

Essential Seminar Readings


Essay Questions

1. When and why are appeals for help sometimes counter-productive?

2. Evaluate evidence that people want to be altruistic enough: no more, no less.

Additional readings


WEEK 11: INTERVENTION

Generosity lies less in giving much than in giving at the right moment.

Jean de La Bruyère

When do specific situations evoke altruism?

Essential Seminar Readings


Essay Questions

1. To what extent and how can altruism be deliberate elicited by ‘social engineers’?

2. Critically compare and contrast any two or more methods of eliciting altruism.

Additional reading


distance to help: highlighting prosocial actions toward outgroups encourages

*Psychological Bulletin, 128*, 796-824.

differentiated response tendencies for injunctive and descriptive social norms. *Journal
of Personality and Social Psychology, 100* (3), 433-448.

when norms do and do not affect behavior. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 26*,
1002-1012.

Konijn, E. A., Bijvank, M. N., & Bushman, B. J. (2007). I wish I were a warrior: the role of
wishful identification in effects of violent video games on aggression in adolescent
boys. *Developmental Psychology* (43), 1038-1044.

Laham, S. M. (2009). Expanding the moral circle: inclusion and exclusion mindsets and the

Liberman, V., Samuels, S., & Ross, L. (2004). The name of the game: predictive power of
reputation versus situational labels in determining prisoner's dilemma game moves. *Personality
and Social Psychology Bulletin, 30* (9), 1175-1185.

Lieberg, S., Klimecki, O., & Singer, T. (2011). Short-term compassion training increases
prosocial behavior in a newly developed prosocial game. *PLoS One, 6* (3), e17798.


prosocial behavior during early childhood: a longitudinal study. *Social Development, 15*,
612-627.

*Human Relations, 59*, 1133-1153.

Shariff, A. F.; Norenzayan, A. (2007). God is watching you: priming God concepts increases

Thomas, S., Bushman, B. J., de Castro, B. O., & Reijnjtes, A. (2012). Arousing "gentle
passions" in young adolescents: sustained experimental effects of value affirmations


year-olds’ social learning of a prosocial act. *Journal of Experimental Child
WEEK 12: SUSTAINABILITY

The best portion of a good man's life:
his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and love.

William Wordsworth

It is impossible to conceive anything in the world, or even out of it, which can be
taken as good without qualification, except a good will. Intelligence, wit, judgement,
or any other talents of the mind we may care to name, or courage, resolution, and
constancy of purpose, as qualities of temperament, are without doubt good and
desirable in many respects; but they can also be extremely bad and harmful when the
will is not good which has to make use of these gifts of nature, and which for this
reason has the term “character” applied to its particular quality.

Kant (Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals, trans. H. J. Paton, 1964, p. 61)

The big question this week is, “Can commitment to altruism be deliberated promoted, in
others and in ourselves?” (“What controllable events and processes tend to make people more
or less dispositionally altruistic?” Don’t forget that there is lots of relevant material to this
topic throughout this document.)

Essential Seminar Readings

decision making in social dilemmas: applying a logic of appropriateness.

for prosocial behavior and its influence on well-being for the helper and
recipient. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 98 (2), 222-244.

Essay Questions

1. How can people successfully choose to become more altruistic?

2. To what extent can altruistic traits be encouraged in others?

Additional readings

relationship and roles in citizenship education. Journal of Moral Education, 35 (4),
495-518.


Tom’s reflections on some particularly good past presentations

When presenters planned to include any ethically sensitive material, they checked them with me first and went on to employ appropriate practices. E.g., If material was presented or discussed that was justifiable but potentially upsetting for audience members, audience members were warned in advance that this would occur and were given dignified alternatives to participating in that part of the seminar.

Any equipment and materials used were prepared and made ready prior to the presentation ‘proper’ beginning. Handouts were prepared so that they could be distributed with a minimum of fuss (e.g., multiple-pages were stapled into booklets).

Handouts were given out early in presentations. These contained information helpful to the audience. Often, they presented extended quotes or complicated diagrams that helped the audience focus on the topic without fear of failing to write down something of interest or importance. Sometimes, handouts contained information potentially useful to students and relevant to the week’s topic but not directly dealt with during the seminar itself. Sometimes they included reference to web pages and other resources. Sometimes they included exercises for audience members to complete during class. Sometimes these encouraged audience members to critique, apply, or otherwise counter the material being presented. Handouts for good presentations always contained a full References section. They were also always tidy, easy to use, and engaging. Audience members were clearly grateful to have these handouts.

Presenters made clear how their handouts related to their presentations, especially any ‘lecturing’ part of it. Where handouts were to be used during the seminar, their content mirrored or otherwise clearly complemented what was going on in class. Audience members were never confused about how the handout content ‘fit’ into what was happening in class.

As presenters started their presentations, they gave the audience instructions about whether and when questions and other possible interruptions would be welcomed (e.g., at any time, only at the end of the presentation section, or whatever).

Early on in the presentation, if not right at the start, presenters gave a formal Introduction. This stated such things as (i) what presenters intended to cover during the presentation (sometimes in the form of aims and objectives, sometimes in the form of an ‘agenda’); (ii) what main critical points they intended to make; and (iii) what conclusion(s) they intended to reach. Such Introductions made clear both the structure of the presentation and the main argument(s) to be made.

Soon after the Introduction, and if it was relevant or useful to do so, presenters explained why they had chosen their topic and/or their method of presenting that topic. Some also highlighted existing (i.e., in the literature) or anticipated (i.e., in the presentation) areas of controversy, contention, or disagreement.

Presentations took the form of arguments, at least in part. The main body of the presentations presented evidence to move linearly and effectively from the stated intentions in the Introduction to justify promised Conclusions. At the very least, the “presenter’s talk” part of presentations ended with a Summary. Thus, presentations were more like conference
presentations (making and justifying claims) than they were like lectures (often merely reporting others’ thoughts and findings).

**Expositions** in presentations were always there for a clear (and sometimes explicitly stated) purpose.

Presentations contained exercises and activities to engage and enthrall the audience. Often these were pairwise, small-group, and/or whole-group exercises. Sometimes there was an exercise or activity before the “presenter’s talk” part of the presentation. Sometimes the “presenter’s talk” part of the presentation was interspersed with one or more exercises or activities. The “presenter’s talk” part of the presentation was always followed by one or more exercises or activities.

The very best presentations included a variety of exercises and activities that generated inclusive, engaged, relevant, and high-level discussion. They avoided techniques that may have been effective earlier in the term but which had become jaded through overuse. Such exercises included having audience members complete questionnaires or apply their knowledge (e.g., from the essential readings) to some real-world issue.

Example exercises and activities have included guided discussion of film or literature excerpts, discussion or reflection questions, self-completion or interviewer-completed questionnaires, reminiscences or speculations, dramatic reconstructions, debates, “devil’s advocacy,” and quizzes.

Material generated during an exercise contributes, or is made to contribute, to the academic purpose of the presentation. Thus, exercises form part of the integral whole of a presentation. For example, if a presenter asks for feedback about what was discussed during a small group exercise, the presenter listens hard to that feedback and ‘uses’ it in some constructive way. In short, there is an academic rationale for and purpose to presentations.

A particular exercise is not employed simply because it has been used successfully in earlier presentations. There is a sense of enjoyment and interest among the class rather than, “Oh no, not this again.”

Presentations have integrated psychological theory and research with ‘real-world’ issues and occurrences. Often, presentations have made use of personal stories: in print, the presenter’s own, and/or ones volunteered or elicited from members of the audience. These stories have been engaging but have also been used to make, illustrate, or challenge academic points.

The audience will appear pleased or excited about their experience in the seminar room. They will appear likely to continue thinking and talking about the content of the presentation after they have left the seminar room.
Marking Aid for *The Psychology of Altruism* (C8014) Assessed Presentations, 2013

0 = Inadequate, 3 = Adequate, 5 = Good, 7 = Very Good, 9 = Exceptional (or n/a)

How **relevant** and helpful to the week’s topic and task were...
- The presenter’s selected sub-topics and exposition
- Class activities and any accompanying materials
- Class discussion
- The handout

How good were the following aspects of the presentation’s **delivery**?
- Amount and depth of material covered
- Structure and narrative of the presentation
- Volume, speed, clarity, and engagingness of the presenter’s voice
- Clarity of handout
- Clarity of Power Point slides
- Clarity of instructions
- Clarity of points and arguments made
- Readiness of any equipment, materials, etc.
- Social interaction
- Time management

How good was the apparent **understanding and insight** of...
- The presenter?
- Class members, as a result of the presentation?

How well did the presenter evidence **critical thinking** in their...
- Use of content and structure to reach one or more conclusion?
- Provision of justification for their claims and conclusions?
- Evaluation of others’ claims and evidence?

To what extent did the presentation facilitate **class members’ critical thinking**?

How **engaged** did class members seem with...
- The process of the presentation?
- Important academic issues?

Additional comments may be made overleaf.

**Overall Grade**

Note 1. The overall grade is determined by the official assessment criteria. Any marks and comments made on this sheet are intended to help (a) the tutor ascertain the extent to which those criteria were met, and (b) the presenter critically reflect on how to maintain or improve their presentation skills.

Note 2. The overall grade is provisional and subject to ratification by the relevant Examination Boards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Date</th>
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The Psychology of Altruism (C8014) Assessed Presentations, 2013

<table>
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<th>(2) Tue 1-3</th>
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<td>Pev 1, 1A3</td>
<td>Pev 1, 1A3</td>
<td>Pev 1, 1B2</td>
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**Week 3: Real world altruism**

Everybody

**Week 4: Conception and measurement**

Presenter 1: __________________
Presenter 2: __________________

**Week 6: Biology**

Presenter 1: __________________
Presenter 2: __________________

**Week 7: Understanding**

Presenter 1: __________________
Presenter 2: __________________

**Week 8: Motivation and emotion**

Presenter 1: __________________
Presenter 2: __________________

**Week 9: Individual and other differences**

Presenter 1: __________________
Presenter 2: __________________

**Week 10: Barriers**

Presenter 1: __________________
Presenter 2: __________________

**Week 11: Intervention**

Presenter 1: __________________
Presenter 2: __________________

**Week 12: Sustainability**

Presenter 1: __________________
Presenter 2: __________________