End of Term Plan for PSYCH 357 (Psychology of Good)

Key Issues:

One week of class has been lost (i.e., March 19th).
There remains course content that has yet to be delivered.
15% of the course mark has yet to be accounted for.
In-class assessments have been suspended until further notice.

How These Issues Will Be Addressed:

As an alternative to an online lecture next week, we offer an overview of the remaining course content on pp. 3-8 of this document. Specifically, we supply you with key references that we would normally describe and discuss in lecture, along with comments intended to draw your attention to the key points that those references make (but without the precision and detail that we try to offer in lecture). For those of you interested in the "rest of the story" that this course has tried to tell, the basics can be found there.

We discussed options with respect to the remaining 15% of the course mark and we also consulted our Academic Dean. With her approval and support given the current circumstances, we think that the best course of action is to ***distribute the remaining 15% across Test #1, Test #2, and the poster project***. In other words, the revised weighting is: Test #1 = 30%; Test #2 = 35%; poster project = 35%.

The biggest advantage of this is that the time that you would normally spend with lecture, readings, and test prep can now be solely devoted to completing the poster project. Given that current circumstances may make collaboration on the poster project more challenging, this seems like a trade-off that's in everyone's best interest.

About the Poster Project (procedures, deadlines, etc.)

Please email the final pdf or PowerPoint version of your poster directly to us (cburris@uwaterloo.ca) and (jrempel@uwaterloo.ca) and make sure that your email is timestamped **NO LATER than 6:30 P.M., Thursday, April 2nd**. We will gladly accept earlier submissions.

Because the poster session has been cancelled, your submission should be formatted to *look* like a poster, but it shouldn't be *poster-sized* (as those can be massive). Rather, size it to make sure that all text and graphics can be easily read (enlarged, if necessary) on a standard laptop.

Each group should have ONE designated presenter/spokesperson – normally, this would be the individual(s) who would stand next to the poster to give a mini-presentation and answer questions about it. Please let us know who that is. We will schedule a video conference with this presenter to give us a short overview of the poster's content and to answer any questions we might have. We'll deal with the logistics of this later.

Access to posters is important for the educational goal of the project, so we will post all submissions on LEARN and we hope that you will take the time to read them. We will also post peer review forms and ask members of each group to send us feedback concerning a subset of posters submitted by other groups. We will take those peer reviews into account when determining final poster marks, so it's important that you take the peer review task seriously. We will provide more details as the due date approaches.

Questions:

If you have questions about any part of this end of term plan, please email us directly.

Key Readings and Key Points that We Would Have Covered in Class

How is Good? Nudges → group domain, small magnitude (<mark>Dr. Burris</mark>)
>   (see the book *Nudge*, by Thaler & Sunstein, 2008)

What is a nudge?
>   It's a change in "choice architecture" (not options or obvious incentives) that leads to behavior change.
>   *Example*: a Dutch airport's addition of a black fly etching in bottom of male urinals led to an 80% reduction in floor spillage in public washrooms. So… having a "target" made a huge difference. (I actually saw "the fly" in a hospital washroom in Indianapolis last fall!)

How do nudges work?

>   Nudges typically target "stupid brain parts" (which are generally focused on adaptation and survival), so their effects are often neither rational nor conscious.

>   **Cognitive nudges** like simple reminders and priming can be useful by drawing attention to something or initiating a planning process.
>   *Example*: A weather forecast coupled with text reminders to use sunscreen daily led to 56% sunscreen use versus 30% use without a reminder (Armstrong et al., 2009)

>   **Social nudges** tap into the desire to be "good enough" to deflect social rejection.

>   *Example*: In an Indian sample, being given a "weekly report card" of energy consumption *with comparison to similar households*, plus reduction tips, led to about a 7% reduction in energy use (Sudarshan, 2017).

What makes for a good nudge? (NUDGES acronym)
i**N**centives – Are they cognitively salient? Is there social accountability?
Understand mappings – How well do people "connect the dots" between their behaviors and
>   (good or bad) consequences?

Defaults – People often prefer the "do nothing" choice (especially if framed as "normal" or
>   "recommended").

Give feedback – People are more likely to adjust their behavior if they know how they're doing.
Expect error – Take into account people's "auto-pilot" tendencies and develop workarounds.
Structure complex choices – People are likely to freeze or be impulsive if they don't know what
>   they're doing, so simplify the process and the options.

Are nudges "ethical"?

That depends on whether they are being used for prosocial ends. They're often more cost-effective than mandates, bans, and economic incentives. Advocates argue that there's no such thing as neutral choice architecture, so it's best to try to engineer it whenever possible – remember, the capacity to choose is not being taken away.

Who is Good? Religion/Spirituality (R/S) (Dr. Burris)

Some good-relevant things that R/S can do:

      1) advocating self-transcendence (including connection and accountability to Unseen)

      2) facilitating SPTs

      3) promoting self-regulation

            The regulation of emotions in particular functions to **(re)affirm religious identity** (see Burris & Petrican, 2014), which seems to tap into humans' core motive to avoid social exclusion (see Burris, Rempel, & Viscontas, 2019).

The power of implied audiences can create challenges for prosocial R/S. Specifically,

      1) Prosociality can often be limited to the religious ingroup (see the assigned chapter by Tsang et al.).

      2) Appeasement of (religious) audiences in the head can sometimes lead people to be more focused on convincing themselves that they're "good" people – even at the expense of actual prosocial behavior (see Burris & Navara, 2002).

Burris, C. T., & Navara, G. S. (2002). Morality play, or playing morality?: Intrinsic religious orientation and socially desirable responding. *Self and Identity, 1,* 67-76. https://doi.org/10.1080/152988602317232812

Burris, C. T., & Petrican, R. (2014). Religion, negative emotions, and regulation. In V. Saroglou (Ed.), *Religion, personality, and social behavior* (pp. 96-122). East Sussex, UK: Psychology Press. (I've posted the prepublication version of this chapter on LEARN.)

Burris, C. T., Rempel, J. K., & Viscontas, T. (2019). Sins of the flesh: Subliminal disapproval by God or people decreases endorsement of hedonistic sex. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality.* Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1037/rel0000267

Who is Good? Heroes (<mark>Dr. Burris</mark>)

The "hero" prototype (Kinsella et al., 2015):

Central features

*protecting, saves others, helpful
        (***what they do: so it's explicitly* PROSOCIAL**)
*self-sacrifice, selfless
        (***why/how they do it: at minimum, not overtly/consciously self-promoting***)
        [**RISK**: physical {disfigurement, death}, social {ostracism, punishment}]
**brave, courageous, determined, moral integrity, conviction, hone*st
        (***what they're like: logical attributions***)
*inspiring (***what effect they have: cf. the experience of elevation***)

Distinctive peripheral feature

*humble (did what was needed just like anybody else)
        congruent with other- (v. self-) focus: REAL heroes don't declare themselves to be.

Subtypes:

impulsive ("without thinking," usu. physical, dramatic; **if not role-based = "purest" form)
**methodical (planning, often less obvious)

Why do heroes exist?

One perspective is that heroic acts are a form of "risky signaling" (Kafashan, Sparks, Rotella, & Barclay, 2016): Willingness to endure risk/costs for OTHERS who aren't kin or able to reciprocate doesn't make survival sense, UNLESS heroic acts are taken as evidence of *hard-to-fake skills and resources coupled with trustworthiness*… in which case, heroes are people that most would want to ally themselves with… and alliances make good survival sense.

Kinsella, Ritchie, and Igou (2015) have suggested that there are at least three psychological payoffs for *having heroes* as well:

*enhancement – motivate, be a role model, inspire, instill hope, improve morale, guide
*protection – save, protect, help, act against evil or danger, do what no one else will
*moral modeling – remind people about the good in the world, make the world a better place,
        show morals and values

A striking example: Sir Nicholas Winton

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c0aoifNziKQ

Who is Good? (Dr. Rempel)

The search for virtue
- is there such a thing as "a virtuous person?" – i.e. someone who shows cross-situational consistency in prosocial intention, feelings, and actions
- virtue, the character trait to respond "correctly" – i.e. self-transcendently, prosocially, etc. (e.g. generosity, courage) – has been a centuries long debate in philosophy
- in your reading, social psychologists Graziano and Habashi basically ask the same question – here are some of the key elements of their chapter
  - they make an important distinction between prosocial vs. altruistic personality
  - they state that *Agreeableness* is the key Big-5 personality trait associated with prosocial behavior and argue that it is a core element of prosocial but not altruistic personality
  - they present the Dual Process Sequential Opponent Motivational System where the first, older, more impulsive component is a *fight-or-flight system* and the second, newer, more deliberative component is *empathic concern* which is part of the care system
- prosocial cognition, affect, and behavior are not unique, special psychological modules, dedicated exclusively to prosocial functions. Instead, they are parts of a generalized system, acquired in part through experience (i.e. socialization) and maintained in *habit*.

Virtues – the example of practical wisdom (Grossman & Oakes, unpublished)
- Grossman defines wisdom as the capacity to balance and integrate others' viewpoints and personal virtues in a manner that enables one to navigate interpersonal challenges adaptively, including conflicts between groups, individuals, or one's priorities – it goes beyond just understanding other's viewpoints and includes seeking to learn from others
- four themes of wise reasoning
  - intellectual humility
  - recognition of the multiple ways that a situation may unfold and change
  - recognition of other's perspectives
  - consideration of conflict resolution and search for compromise
- heightened emotional intensity can reduce perceived psychological distance and heightened anxiety or other uncertainty-provoking emotions can make people egocentric in their judgment both of which may inhibit wise reasoning (e.g. Commander Spock) but emotional diversity (e.g. being "afraid" can take the form of "upset", "worried" and "anxious") is adaptive for mental and physical health (e.g. Yoda)

- so, whose approach wins?

- Grossman and Oakes found that wise reasoning was aligned with greater attunement to one's own emotions – this is consistent with the idea presented earlier in the course where we suggested that *embracing and integrating emotional reactions is better than suppressing them*
- wiser individuals approach past emotional experiences in a way that enables them to see *greater meaning in adversity* – this even goes beyond attempts to engage in positive reframing or other forms of emotional down-regulation – the ability to humbly see others perspectives is less associated with "Here's the upside to this negative event" and more with "Here's what this negative event means for me and what I can learn from it."

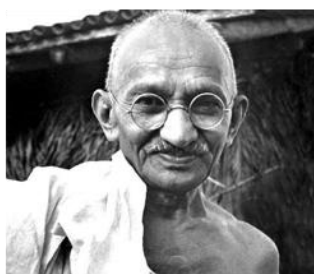The Development of Prosocial Decision-making: Intuitive and Rational Components
- Paul Bloom (2012) considers the intuitionist and rational components of morality to be two foundations of early moral understanding.
  - o he agrees that moral decisions emerge from a set of emotional reactions, such as empathy but argues that we also have a rich capacity for moral evaluation
  - o he argues that our cognitive capacity for moral evaluation has led to our moral progress (or "directional moral change") as a species
    - the circle of moral inclusion started off small and, over a long history, has grown.
    - people generate use reason, emotion, and imagination to develop novel moral insights. This process is similar to what goes on when we generate other philosophical and scientific ideas.

Being *Really* Good
- there are some whose moral goodness is iconic

Martin Luther King Jr.   Mahatma Ghandi   Jesus of Nazareth (as he probably looked and his typical "white" representation)

- they are examples of people who challenged the social order and exposed whole systems of power that were unjust, corrupt, and oppressive
  - the historical Jesus was inclusive of the disenfranchised and oppressed of his day and worked for their equality. His nonviolent defiance of those in power served as the example for both MLK and Gandhi.

- It's not just that these individuals and those like them wanted to change the system, rather it's *how* they went about changing the system
- there have been many violent "system changers" but it was the compassion, nonviolence, and personal sacrifices of these individuals that set them apart as moral giants
- all of these leaders were assassinated for trying to bring justice, equality, and compassion
o their core message was one of "expansive inclusion"
  - for example, one of Jesus' more well-known stories is that of The Good Samaritan
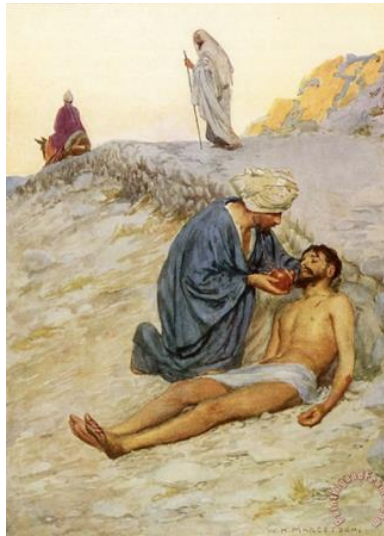
  - in response to a religious leader's question of " Who is my neighbour?" Jesus told the story of robbers stripping, beating, and leaving a Jewish traveller half-dead alongside the road. Two religious leaders come by but both avoid the man. Then a Samaritan traveller comes by and shows the injured man extraordinary compassion, binding his wounds, taking him to an inn, leaving money to pay for his recovery, and promising to return with more money if needed. Jesus then asked "Who was the neighbour?"
  - the common interpretation of this parable is that an outsider shows empathic concern and acts compassionately towards a hurt stranger – the "neighbour" is anyone who needs help
  - however, modern scholars suggest that the story is really much more provocative and politically charged. Samaritans and Jews generally despised, denigrated, and hated each other. In the story a loathed outgroup member shows up the religious leaders of the ingroup. The despised Samaritan is cast as a valued human being – he is the "neighbour"
  - an article entitled All Humanity is My Ingroup (McFarland, Webb, & Brown, 2012) found that people who identify most strongly with "all humans everywhere" were more likely to:
    - have a greater concern for global human rights and humanitarian needs
    - be more likely than those in the general population to be members of human rights and international service agencies (e.g. Human Rights Watch and Church World Service)
    - value the lives of ingroup and outgroup members equally
    - be knowledgeable about global humanitarian concerns and choose to learn about them
    - more willing to contribute to international humanitarian relief
  - those who are *really* good have included "humanity" in the sense of self