

## **Course Assistant for Econ 1436: Economics and Morality**

Prof. Ben Enke is looking for a course assistant for Econ 1436: Economics and Morality. The class is empirical in nature and covers the intersections of research on morality, politics, and economics. Responsibilities of the course assistant will include a subset of:

- Teaching 1-2 sections on a bi-weekly basis, 10 hrs a week, **\$19/hour**
- Grading problem sets and exams
- Holding office hours to help students with data analyses in Stata

Course assistants must have a solid background in Stata and must be able to document the ability to implement simple analyses (regressions, figures, maps etc) on the fly. Basic econometrics skills are also required.

Students who are interested in assisting with the course are asked to submit a CV that clearly explains relevant econometrics and Stata skills, as well as a transcript. Applications should be sent to [enke@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:enke@fas.harvard.edu) ASAP.

# ECON1436: Economics and Morality

Fall 2019  
Harvard University

Benjamin Enke  
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## **Teaching Fellow:**

Awa Ambra Seck, [aseck@g.harvard.edu](mailto:aseck@g.harvard.edu)

## **Hours:**

- Class: Tuesday / Thursday, 10:30-11:45 am; Sever 213 (FAS)
- Sections: Tuesday 5:00-6:15 pm, Thursday 9:00-10:15 am; Room TBD
- Office hours Ben: Thursday 2:30-4:30 pm. Schedule on my website. Please make sure to sign up for an “Economics and Morality” slot rather than a graduate student slot
- Office hours Ambra: Wednesday 8:30-9:45 am. Schedule a 15 minutes slot using the link <https://my.timetrade.com/book/PZM9N> .

**Prerequisites for enrollment: None**

## **Course overview:**

Questions related to morality pervade the economic and political discourse. However, traditionally, economists have paid little attention to the structure and consequences of people’s moral concerns. This course introduces students to research in an emerging field that studies the determinants and consequences of heterogeneity in moral reasoning through the lens of economics. The main objective of the class is to highlight (i) how moral reasoning matters for economic and political outcomes, and (ii) how economic needs in turn generate particular moral systems. To understand the bidirectional relationship between economics and morality, we will study questions such as: What is the difference between universalistic and relational approaches to moral reasoning, and how do these matter for economics? How do Americans’ moral intuitions vary across space and over time? What is the role of moral values in U.S. presidential elections, or for policy preferences related to redistribution or the military? What are people’s fairness views on distributive justice in light of increasing inequality and low social mobility? What are the functional economic origins of morality? How and why are moral systems culturally variable? How do economic incentives, institutional features, or social networks shape morality? From a methodological viewpoint, the class uses empirical techniques to study morality-related concepts and ideas from psychology and anthropology.



## **Methods and course format:**

The course focuses on discussing empirical research. This is not a class in philosophy or ethical reasoning. Thus, the class provides basic training in the standard empirical toolbox of economists: regression analysis with large-scale datasets, lab experiments, field experiments, surveys, and text analysis. Students are not expected to be familiar with the tools mentioned above, but they are expected to be willing to learn them to some extent. The class is lecture-based.

## **Course assignments and grading:**

- Five problem sets (9% each)
- In-class group presentations of an empirical project (20%)
- Final exam (30%)
- In almost all classes, we offer quiz questions which count towards the final grade. You receive 5% if you participate in 90% of all quizzes, and nothing otherwise.

## **Course Policies**

- I am committed to offering an entertaining class that will hopefully change the way you look at and think about the world. I invest a lot of effort into teaching. I hence expect that students are active and contribute to class discussions.
- In case of excess demand for the course, we will lottery the slots.
- Late assignments will receive a 25% deduction for each 24 hours delay.
- I strongly discourage students from bringing laptops or other electronic devices such as iPads to class. A lot of evidence shows that these inhibit learning and active participation. If you still feel like you have to bring your device, you need to register this with me at the beginning of the second week of class, and all students who bring laptops will be seated in a separate part of the classroom.
- We take attendance on those days on which our world-class guest lecturers contribute their precious time to our learning experience. Unexcused no-shows on such days receive a 1% deduction on the final exam.
- Otherwise we do not take attendance, though note that we offer quiz questions at the end of each class that count towards your final grade.

## **Accommodations for students with disabilities**

Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability must present their Faculty Letter from the Accessible Education Office (AEO) and speak with me by the end of the second week of the term. All discussions will remain confidential, although Faculty are invited to contact AEO to discuss appropriate implementation.

## **Problem sets**

- There will be a total of five problem sets
- These will be relatively short assignments where you apply the ideas and concepts from class to specific problems
- The problem sets will partly ask you to conduct some empirical analyses on morality-related concepts

## **Empirical group project**

- We will randomly form groups of 2-4 students, depending on class size
- We will upload datasets that include both moral and economic / political variables. You are welcome to use some of the other datasets that you will come across in section instead, if you like
- You then need to think about which types of questions could be asked and answered with these datasets
- Your output will consist of a paper (jointly written) that is up to six pages long, excluding cover page and references
- The write-up should contain:
  - An explanation of the research question
  - A description of how the empirical analysis tackles those questions
  - A summary of the empirical results, potentially including output that summarizes the results (such as tables or figures)
- Students will jointly present the results of their project in class

## **Course outline:**

### **PART I: HETEROGENEITY IN MORALITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS**

#### **Weeks 1—2: Foundations**

*Guiding questions: What are different dimensions of morality? How can we measure them in surveys, experimental games, or online tools? How would you program a self-driving car?*

9/3 Course overview

9/5 Conceptualizing and Measuring Morality using Economic and Psychological Tools

9/10 Me vs. You: Experiments on Moral Wiggle Room and Diffusion of Responsibility

9/12 Cognition and Moral Reasoning

*Guest lecture by Fiery Cushman, Harvard Psychology Department*

#### **Weeks 3—4: Us vs. Them: Moral Universalism**

*Guiding questions: What is the core of the philosophical debates between moral universalists and communitarians? Empirically, how does Americans' universalism vary across individuals and space? How has universalism changed over time and how does this relate to the "loss of community" in the U.S.?*

9/17 In-Group Favoritism, Communitarianism, and Universalism

9/19 Moral Universalism in the United States I: Individual-Level Heterogeneity

9/24 Moral Universalism in the United States II: Variation Over Time and Across Space

#### **Weeks 4—6: Moral Universalism and Politics**

*Guiding questions: How do moral values affect voting behavior? How do politicians cater to the moral needs of their constituents? Which moral concerns drive support for specific policies? Do Conservatives and Liberals exhibit different patterns of giving, and why?*

9/26 Moral Values in U.S. Presidential Elections

10/1 The Geography of Us versus Them

*Guest lecture by Ryan Enos, Harvard Government Department*

10/3 Moral Universalism and the Structure of Political Ideology

10/8 Immigration, Cultural Backlash, and Political Decision-Making  
*Guest lecture by Marco Tabellini, Harvard Business School*

### **Weeks 6—7: Distributive Justice: Lab Experiments and Political Implications**

*Guiding questions: What are key facts about the national income distribution and social mobility? What are leading theories of distributive justice? Which principles of distributive justice do most people actually believe in, and which types of inequalities are they willing to accept? How does this vary across countries? What determines people's support for redistribution?*

10/10 Distributive Justice and Redistribution I

10/15 Distributive Justice and Redistribution II

10/17 Digression: Motivated Reasoning and Prosocial Behavior  
*Guest lecture by Christine Exley, Harvard Business School*

### **Weeks 8: Student Presentations of Empirical Group Projects**

10/22 Student presentations I

10/24 Student presentations II

## **PART II: ECONOMIC, CULTURAL, AND INSTITUTIONAL DETERMINANTS OF MORALITY**

### **Weeks 9—10: Cultural Variation and Evolutionary Origins of Morality**

*Guiding questions: Why do people have such strong feelings about “right” and “wrong” in the first place? Is morality functional and serves an economic purpose? How do cultures differ in the types of moral reasoning they emphasize? How does historical heterogeneity in family systems affect the structure of morality? What are moralizing gods?*

10/29 Moralizing Gods and the Evolutionary Origins of Morality

10/31 Cultural Variation in Moral Reasoning

11/5 The Role of Kinship Systems

## **Weeks 10—12: Institutional and Economic Determinants of Prosociality and Values**

*Guiding questions: How and why do human institutions like markets or religion shape people's moral concerns? Do political outcomes feed back into people's moral views? How does parental and non-parental upbringing affect prosociality?*

11/7 The Effects of Religious Institutions

11/12 The Effects of Mixing Rich and Poor Kids on Prosocial Behavior  
*Guest lecture by Gautam Rao, Harvard Economics Department*

11/14 Peer Effects: Mentoring Programs, Early Education and Election Outcomes

11/19 The Psychological Effects of Propaganda in Authoritarian Regimes  
*Guest lecture by David Yang, Harvard Economics Department*

11/21 Morality and Market Integration

## **Weeks 13-14: Finishing up**

11/26 Review: Key themes and exam prep

11/28 No class: Thanksgiving

12/3 Q&A

TBA Final exam

## **Tentative section outline**

**Week 1: No sections**

**Weeks 2—3: Basic Statistical Tools**

*Guiding question: What are basic statistics concepts that I will need for this class?*

*Note: You need to attend only one of the sections on 9/10 or 9/19. They cover the same material.*

9/10, 9/11      Summary statistics of one variable: mean, median, standard deviation, cumulative distribution function, probability density function → How can we use this information to learn about one variable of interest?  
Relationship between variables: correlation coefficient, joint distribution and marginal distributions

**Weeks 4: Stata Tutorial**

*Guiding question: how do we use STATA to implement what we have learnt last section?*

9/24, 9/26      Learn STATA commands that allow you to produce the summary statistics of a variable and to study the relationships between two variables (plus graphs).

**Week 5: Regression Analyses of Morality-Related Concepts I**

*Guiding question: what is a regression and how can I use it to learn from the data?*

10/1, 10/3      Introduction of regression coefficient and definition of covariates. Golden rule of covariates (when to include them and what?). Stata intro to regressions, how to run a regression in STATA and how to interpret the results, scatter plot and regression line.

**Week 6: Regression Analyses of Morality-Related Concepts II**

*Guiding question: How do moral attitudes in the World Values Survey correlate with socio-demographics and political attitudes, or with country-level variables?*

10/8, 10/10      Introduction to World Values Survey, regression analysis, constructing figures and maps.

**Additional sections TBA**

## **Problem set outline**

Note: Due dates refer to 11:59 pm of a day.

1<sup>st</sup> PS: Distributed 9/10; Due 9/23

2<sup>nd</sup> PS: Distributed 9/24; Due 9/30

3<sup>rd</sup> PS: Distributed 10/1; Due 10/7

Empirical project: Distributed 10/8; Write-up due 10/21 (presentations on 10/22 and 10/24)

4<sup>th</sup> PS: Distributed 10/29; Due 11/4

5<sup>th</sup> PS: Distributed 11/12; Due 11/25

## **Readings**

There is no textbook. As general readings I recommend the following books that touch upon some of the themes that we cover in class:

Haidt, Jonathan. *The righteous mind: Why good people are divided by politics and religion*. Vintage, 2012.

Fukuyama, Francis. *Identity: The demand for dignity and the politics of resentment*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018.

Putnam, Robert D. *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon and Schuster, 2001.

Greene, Joshua David. *Moral tribes: Emotion, reason, and the gap between us and them*. Penguin, 2014.

Norris, Pippa, and Ronald Inglehart. *Cultural backlash: Trump, Brexit, and authoritarian populism*. Cambridge University Press, 2019.

### **Weeks 1—2: Foundations**

Haidt, Jonathan. *The righteous mind: Why good people are divided by politics and religion*. Vintage, 2012.

Greene, Joshua David. *Moral tribes: Emotion, reason, and the gap between us and them*. Penguin, 2014.

Haidt, Jonathan. "The new synthesis in moral psychology." *Science* 316.5827 (2007): 998-1002.

Graham, Jesse, et al. "Moral foundations theory: The pragmatic validity of moral pluralism." *Advances in experimental social psychology*. Vol. 47. Academic Press, 2013. 55-130.

Falk, Armin, Thomas Neuber and Nora Szech. "Diffusion of being pivotal and immoral outcomes." *Working Paper* (2019).

Awad, Edmond, et al. "The moral machine experiment." *Nature* 563.7729 (2018): 59.

### **Week 3: Moral Universalism**

Enke, Benjamin, Ricardo Rodriguez-Padilla and Florian Zimmermann. "Moral Universalism: Measurement and Heterogeneity." *Working Paper* (2019).

Enke, Benjamin. "Moral Values and Voting." *Working Paper* (2019).

Bernhard, Helen, Urs Fischbacher, and Ernst Fehr. "Parochial altruism in humans." *Nature* 442.7105 (2006): 912.

Goette, Lorenz, David Huffman, and Stephan Meier. "The impact of group membership on cooperation and norm enforcement: Evidence using random assignment to real social groups." *American Economic Review* 96.2 (2006): 212-216.

Bauer, Michal, et al. "Social contagion of ethnic hostility." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 115.19 (2018): 4881-4886.

Putnam, Robert D. *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon and Schuster, 2001.

Jackson, Joshua Conrad, et al. "The loosening of American culture over 200 years is associated with a creativity–order trade-off." *Nature human behaviour* 3.3 (2019): 244.

Grossmann, Igor, and Michael EW Varnum. "Social structure, infectious diseases, disasters, secularism, and cultural change in America." *Psychological Science* 26.3 (2015): 311-324.

#### **Weeks 4—6: Moral Universalism and Politics**

Enke, Benjamin. "Moral Values and Voting." *Working Paper* (2019).

Enke, Benjamin, Ricardo Rodriguez-Padilla and Florian Zimmermann. "Moral Universalism and the Structure of Ideology." *Working Paper* (2019).

Graham, Jesse, Jonathan Haidt, and Brian A. Nosek. "Liberals and conservatives rely on different sets of moral foundations." *Journal of personality and social psychology* 96.5 (2009): 1029.

Enos, Ryan D. *The space between us: Social geography and politics*. Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Tabellini, Marco. "Gifts of the immigrants, woes of the natives: Lessons from the age of mass migration." *Harvard Business School BGIE Unit Working Paper* 19-005 (2019).

#### **Weeks 6—7: Distributive Justice**

Cappelen, Alexander W., et al. "Just luck: An experimental study of risk-taking and fairness." *American Economic Review* 103.4 (2013): 1398-1413.

Almås, Ingvild, et al. "Fairness and the development of inequality acceptance." *Science* 328.5982 (2010): 1176-1178.

Alesina, Alberto, Stefanie Stantcheva, and Edoardo Teso. "Intergenerational mobility and preferences for redistribution." *American Economic Review* 108.2 (2018): 521-54.

Alesina, Alberto, and Paola Giuliano. "Preferences for redistribution." *Handbook of social economics*. Vol. 1. North-Holland, 2011. 93-131.

### **Weeks 9-10: Cross-Cultural Heterogeneity and Evolutionary Origins of Morality**

Enke, Benjamin. "Kinship, cooperation, and the evolution of moral systems." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 134.2 (2019): 953-1019.

Tomasello, Michael. *A natural history of human morality*. Harvard University Press, 2016.

Fei, Hsiao-t'ung, et al. *From the soil: The foundations of Chinese society*. Univ of California Press, 1992.

Henrich, Joseph, Steven J. Heine, and Ara Norenzayan. "The weirdest people in the world?." *Behavioral and brain sciences* 33.2-3 (2010): 61-83.

Gelfand, Michele. *Rule Makers, Rule Breakers: Tight and Loose Cultures and the Secret Signals That Direct Our Lives*. Scribner, 2019.

Gächter, Simon, and Jonathan F. Schulz. "Intrinsic honesty and the prevalence of rule violations across societies." *Nature* 531.7595 (2016): 496.

Christakis, Nicholas. *Blueprint: The evolutionary origins of a good society*. 2019.

Fiske, Alan Page, and Taze Shakti Rai. *Virtuous violence: Hurting and killing to create, sustain, end, and honor social relationships*. Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Nisbett, R. E. (2018). *Culture of honor: The psychology of violence in the South*. Routledge.

Sapolsky, Robert M. *Behave: The biology of humans at our best and worst*. Penguin, 2017.

Norenzayan, Ara. *Big gods: How religion transformed cooperation and conflict*. Princeton University Press, 2013.

Wade, Lizzie. "Birth of the moralizing gods." (2015): *Science* 918-922.

Schulz, Jonathan, et al. "The origins of weird psychology." (2018).

Awad, Edmond, et al. "The moral machine experiment." *Nature* 563.7729 (2018): 59.

## **Weeks 10—12: Institutional and Economic Determinants of Prosociality and Values**

### Religion:

Clingingsmith, David, Asim Ijaz Khwaja, and Michael Kremer. "Estimating the impact of the Hajj: religion and tolerance in Islam's global gathering." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 124.3 (2009): 1133-1170.

Bursztyn, Leonardo, et al. "Moral incentives in credit card debt repayment: Evidence from a field experiment." *Journal of Political Economy* 127.4 (2019): 000-000.

### Social networks and peer effects:

Bursztyn, Leonardo, Georgy Egorov, and Stefano Fiorin. *From extreme to mainstream: How social norms unravel*. No. w23415. National Bureau of Economic Research, 2017.

Rao, Gautam. "Familiarity Does Not Breed Contempt: Generosity, Discrimination and Diversity in Delhi Schools." (2018).

Kosse, Fabian, et al. "The formation of prosociality: causal evidence on the role of social environment." (2017).

Alexander W. Cappelen, John A. List, Anya Samek, and Bertil Tungodden: "The Effect of Early Education on Social Preferences" (2019).

Cantoni, Davide, et al. "Curriculum and ideology." *Journal of Political Economy* 125.2 (2017): 338-392.

### Markets:

Jha, Saumitra, and Moses Shayo. "Valuing peace: the effects of financial market exposure on votes and political attitudes." (2018).

Henrich, Joseph, et al. "Markets, religion, community size, and the evolution of fairness and punishment." *science* 327.5972 (2010): 1480-1484.

Banerjee, Abhijit V., et al. "Changes in social network structure in response to exposure to formal credit markets." *Available at SSRN 3245656* (2018).