

Education for Justice (E4J)
University Module Series: Integrity & Ethics

Module 6

Challenges to Ethical Living^{*}

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Introduction

The Module seeks to help students understand some of the psychological mechanisms that can lead one towards unethical behaviour in certain circumstances. By discussing several well-known psychological experiments, the Module highlights certain basic human features which, while often working in our favour, can sometimes lead us to act unethically. The Module seeks to motivate students to take responsibility for their lives by avoiding common pitfalls that can impair their ability to

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act ethically. Experimental research suggests that self-control is essential to ethical behaviour, but that self-control is like a muscle that develops with exercise and becomes fatigued by overuse (Baumeister, 1999). This shows the extent to which keeping out of harm's way is perhaps as important as working to strengthen our capacity to control ourselves. For the purposes of this Module, taking responsibility for ethical behaviour in our lives means strengthening our self-control 'muscle' and learning how to avoid situations that may lead us to do things that we would later regret. The experiments discussed in the Module were chosen because of their pedagogical value, the issues they highlight, their relevance to the lives of students, and the diversity of useful materials (including videos) available for them. There are many other psychological factors that influence ethical behaviour, which are outside of the scope of this Module (some of them are explored in [Module 7](#) (Strategies for Ethical Action) and [Module 8](#) (Behavioural Ethics) of the E4J Integrity and Ethics University Module Series).

The Module is a resource for lecturers. It provides an outline for a three-hour class but can be used for shorter or longer sessions, or extended into a full-fledged course (see: Guidelines to develop a stand-alone course).

Learning outcomes

- Understand mechanisms that lead us to act unethically and identify their impact on one's own life
- Explain and demonstrate how these mechanisms can play both positive and negative roles in our lives
- Understand the relationship between taking responsibility and being ethical, and how this applies to one's own life
- Gain insights that could facilitate working towards ethical improvement

Key issues

Mainstream approaches to ethics education often ask students to reflect on ethical matters in the hope that they will thus learn to live more ethically. This Module offers an alternative approach by focusing on the close relationship between ethical living and living without self-deception. The approach of this Module is based on the observation that a mere intellectual commitment to being ethical does not have a measurable impact on ethical conduct. Thus, for example, a [study](#) by philosophers Eric Schwitzgebel and Joshua Rust has shown that moral philosophers are on average no more ethical than anyone else (2013). This suggests that things other than having an intellectual understanding of ethics seem to be required to translate this intellectual commitment into action. In this light, we may wish to reconsider the standard way in which we teach ethics, and move beyond discussing ethics as an intellectual exercise. This Module aims to unsettle student understanding of what they should be looking for when seeking to improve themselves from an ethical point of view.

The approach of this Module draws inspiration from diverse thinkers from around the world that do not necessarily fit comfortably into any of the standard ethical theories

discussed in Integrity and Ethics [Module 1](#) (Introduction and Conceptual Framework), namely: utilitarianism, deontology or virtue ethics. One philosopher that has influenced this Module's approach is Albert Camus (1913-1960). For him, ethical living amounts to living lucidly, that is, without self-deception. Camus has little interest in finding theoretical foundations or ultimate justifications for ethics. Rather, his aim is to invite us to see and feel how ethics is part of the human condition. He shares this approach with philosophers as diverse as Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), Mary Midgley (1919-) and Philip Hallie (1922-1994).

Steve Biko (1946-1977) and Frantz Omar Fanon (1925-1961) are also significant influences given the central role that they attribute to social conditions in forming minds and their concern for what could be described as self-ascribed bigotry (inferiority complex, as they call it). Related to Biko's and Fanon's concerns are those of social psychology and behavioural economics. Both of these empirical disciplines have played significant roles in inspiring the approach to ethics informing this Module. The reason for listing these thinkers here is to invite lecturers to engage with them to deepen their understanding of the material covered in this Module. However, one can teach the course without having engaged directly with the work of the above philosophers and social scientists.

This Module examines some of the internal and external forces that can threaten our autonomy as agents and undermine our ability to drive our lives as ethical beings. It shows that these forces, while typically playing very positive roles in our lives, can lead us to act unethically if we are not attentive and if we cannot resist becoming passive followers of the norms of our times, places and natural inclinations. The Module aims to inspire students to become aware of these pitfalls, become committed to avoiding them, and live ethically as responsible agents. It will give students a taste of the complexity of living ethically and show them the extent to which taking responsibility for our lives is a central aspect not only of living ethically, but also, more broadly, living lives that we will deem worthwhile.

The challenge of living ethically

We are ethical creatures by nature, guided through life by normative considerations. As shown in this [video](#), research suggests that even pre-linguistic infants exhibit signs of possessing ethical prototypes that become ethical in the full sense after a long process of socialization (see also Bloom, 2013). Another example that illustrates the claim that at a basic level we all strive to be ethical is that people almost always rationalize (i.e. use reasons to trick ourselves into believing what is not the case) in the direction of making themselves seem better from a moral point of view than they actually are (Ariely, 2012; Tavriss and Aronson, 2015). This is not simply because we want to be acknowledged by others, but it is also a matter of self-esteem, of avoiding painful inner conflicts.

Take the following example: when some accountants adjust the accounts to deceive, they seldom - if ever - do so out of ignorance, in the sense of failing to understand that this is unethical. Trying to enlighten such accountants by informing them that they violated the moral law is not typically an effective strategy for behavioural modification. At some level, they realize that they are doing wrong, but they tell

themselves dissonance-reducing stories, or rationalizations that make it seem as if their behaviour is not only acceptable, but even perhaps heroic.

We tell ourselves these sorts of stories all the time. Perpetrators of atrocities typically describe themselves as freedom fighters or something very similar to this from their perspective (Sereny, 1995). Everyday criminals tend to find attenuating circumstances, that is, excuses, for their crimes (Baumeister, 1999). They might say things like: “I did it, but that is because forces that I have little or no control over, such as upbringing and bad company, led me to do it.” One thing corrupt accountants, perpetrators of mass atrocities and common-variety criminals have in common is that they rationalize their behaviour, as does everyone else.

It is worth noting that rationalization typically happens in the direction of exculpation (Ariely, 2012; Tavris and Aronson, 2015). We rarely come across morally exemplary individuals who try to convince themselves that they are morally bankrupt. This is further evidence that at a basic level we all seek to be ethical. Related to the concept of rationalization is the ‘Fudge Factor’, a term referring to the extent to which one can cheat and still feel good about oneself because of the pull of powerful countervailing desires (Ariely, 2012).

If it is true that we are ethical by nature, then why is *living* ethically a problem for all of us without exception? It is a problem because, among other things, we are not only ethical beings. We are other things as well. We are, for instance, rational, pain-avoiding, pleasure-seeking, creative-storytelling, social, status-concerned, self-loving, and driven by powerful desires. We are also living in various contexts that influence how we behave and can cause us to violate our intrinsic values out of fear. Ethics is largely there to regulate our impulses, dispositions and behaviour. It arguably brings everything together into a semi-coherent tapestry called the self, something that demands ongoing concerted effort (Midgley, 2001). Things can go wrong very easily, and part of the problem is that aspects of ourselves that are typically identified as good can play dirty tricks on us.

Here are some examples: rationality is typically a positive quality, but, as we have seen, it also allows for the possibility of rationalization, that is, reason brought to the service of self-deception aimed at pain avoidance, particularly pain caused by the conflict between the desire to be good and the fact that we have done or want to do wrong (Ariely, 2012). In Benjamin Franklin’s words:

“So convenient a thing is it to be a reasonable creature, since it enables one to find or make a reason for everything one has a mind to do” (1962, p. 43).

Creative storytelling – also generally considered a positive quality – can lead us to form fantasies about ourselves that lead to unethical action. We are social beings, indeed, caring beings. But our sociality can lead us to join an unthinking mob. We care about status. This is part of caring for the self and seeking self-improvement. It is also tied up with our social natures; part of being social is that we need affirmation from others. But status concerns can lead to out-of-control materialism and an unhealthy obsession with power. Similarly, self-concern is a condition for caring for the self, for having the motivation to meet our basic needs and flourish as human

beings, but it can lead to excessive self-concern, to a form of narcissism that makes us struggle to grasp others as genuine human beings. And, of course, our powerful passions can be both deeply rewarding and deeply destructive.

The remainder of this section explores some of the mechanisms that undermine our ability to drive our lives as ethical beings. It is important to reiterate that these mechanisms also play important positive roles in our lives. This suggests that taking responsibility for our lives requires ongoing vigilance to stop mechanisms that typically serve us well from undermining our ability to act ethically. There are many other mechanisms that affect our ability to act ethically that are outside the scope of this Module, but the discussions will ideally trigger long-term interest in exploring such mechanisms further. Lecturers can encourage students to enhance their understandings by engaging with the readings, documentaries and movies listed in this Module.

Selective attention and psychological distance

When we look at a particular scene, we never grasp everything that is there. Instead, we see some things and not others. Typically, we tend to see what solicits our attention, but what does and what does not stand out for us is largely interest relative. Selective attention plays an important positive role in our lives. It allows us to pay attention to that which interests us. If one is busy studying, then zoning out background distractions may be a very successful learning strategy. However, this ability to zone things out may blind us to other things that may be happening that demand our immediate attention (such as the presence of someone in need of urgent help). Selective attention establishes a hierarchy of relevance, indeed of value (the belief that *this* is more important than *that*), which may not accord with what we genuinely value. Importantly, selective attention is not a mechanism we have full control over. It operates largely in the background and does the job for us without our knowledge, unless we make an effort to observe its operation.

In a short [video](#), Daniel Simons explains this mechanism through an experiment that provides a powerful visual representation of selective attention. Simons stresses the positive role of selective attention. He also suggests that we tend to think that we see more than we actually do. Simons observes that we need to focus our attention on something in order to see it. Exercise 1 of this Module allows the students to experience this mechanism first hand.

Sometimes we may see something problematic unfolding right in front of us, but we are unable to fully grasp its significance and therefore do not respond or react properly. This basic feature of our lives, the ability to attend to some things and not to others, may not *prima facie* seem terribly relevant for understanding ourselves as ethical beings. However, the famous [Good Samaritan Experiment](#) shows that we may miss many ethically salient things that present themselves to us because we are in too much of a rush (for example, to get to an appointment) to fully grasp their significance.

In the experiment, which is the focus of Exercise 2 of the Module, a group of theology students see a person posing as someone in need of urgent help, but many

of them fail to offer assistance. This case may not, strictly speaking, be a case of selective attention, at least not in the perceptual sense (all students see the person posing as someone in need of urgent help), but it is a case of not being able to *properly* attend to what is right in front of us. It could be argued that the students who did not aid the person in need failed to grasp salience. The failure here is not a failure of commitment or understanding, but a failure stemming from circumstances, specifically being in a rush.

We may miss many ethically salient things that present themselves to us because our attention is drawn away from our immediate surroundings, impairing our ability to fully grasp what we would want to grasp if we were not in a rush. What does this say, for example, about workaholic professionals and others working under extreme time pressure? As in the case of selective attention, being able to focus on the task at hand is also a very useful skill, and it is important that in most instances what goes in or what goes out of our spheres of attention happens automatically, behind our backs, so to speak. Were this not so, the business of living our day-to-day lives would be extremely difficult and time-consuming. In fact, without selective attention we would probably not be able to get on with the actual business of living our lives. Therefore, shortcuts are required. In the literature, these shortcuts are known as heuristics - rules of thumb that guide our lives. They normally serve us well, but at times they can be great hindrances. The rule in this case goes something like this: focus on the task at hand and attribute less importance to those things that do not contribute directly to achieving your aims.

Relatedly, we can also miss the importance of something because of a phenomenon known as psychological distance, which is one of the reasons that modern warfare - for example drone warfare - is so pernicious. The physical distance of attacking parties also distances soldiers emotionally from the event, blinding them to the full significance of their actions. Psychological distance can also lead to moral apathy, without us even knowing that this mechanism is largely responsible for the apathy. Students who are interested in exploring these issues further can watch the 2015 film [Eye in the Sky](#) that illustrates some of the ethical challenges of drone warfare including issues related to privacy, surveillance and human rights.

Conformity, obedience, and the bystander effect

The influential [Solomon Asch experiment](#) vividly shows the extent to which we tend to model our judgments on the judgments of others. One of the reasons it is such a powerful experiment is its simplicity. Asch asks experimental subjects to compare line lengths and to match lines of equal length with one another. In each enactment of the experiment, all but one of those answering questions are confederates of the experiment (that is, actors who are instructed to deliberately give wrong answers). Only one participant is the subject of the experiment, the person whose reactions are being measured. The subject of the experiment does not know that all other participants who are asked to give answers are confederates of the experiment. In most cases, subjects of the experiment repeated the replies of the actors, showing the extent to which peer pressure can affect our ability to see what is right in front of us. Even in basic low-stake situations, such as those created in Asch's experiment, we observe that people tend to follow the lead of the group. Asch's experiment also

shows that either we tend to conform because we do not want to create conflict by disagreeing with others (normative conformity) or because we genuinely come to see things in the wrong way because of group pressure (informational conformity). Normative conformity is driven by the explicitly endorsed norm that we should not puncture group conformity. Informational conformity is named as such because the failing happens at the level of perception. The information given to us by the senses is distorted. Asch's experiment also shows us how the pull of conformity can be weakened by the presence of a partner (an actor) who is asked by the experimenter to give the right answers to the questions regarding line lengths. Another variation of the experiment shows that asking subjects to give their answers in writing rather than orally radically changes the results of the experiment. This experiment is the focus of Exercise 3 of the Module. For more information on the experiment see Asch's "[Opinions and Social Pressure](#)".

We move on now from conformity to obedience to authority. In Stanley Milgram's controversial [obedience experiment](#), "teachers" were asked by the "authority figure" to punish "learners" by flicking a switch which they thought produced escalating electrical shocks. This experiment, which is the focus of Exercise 4 of the Module, shows that there is a strong tendency among humans to follow the dictates of authority figures, including when following the instructions of an authority figure can be extremely harmful, even lethal, to others. Milgram's conclusion is not that people tend to be morally bereft. Rather, his conclusion is that obedience can lead good people to do bad things. Obedience, like conformity, plays a very important positive role in society, but we can end up doing terrible things if we blindly succumb to the pull of obedience. This has serious implications for leadership and hierarchy in organizations (Milgram, 1973).

It should be noted that only a minority of experimental subjects unquestionably flicked the switches. Typically, experimental subjects try to resist the pull of authority figures. In the end, however, well over 50% of experimental subjects, teachers as they are called in the experiment, ended up punishing the learner with what they thought were potentially lethal shocks (even more staggeringly, most subjects tended to continue punishing the learner with shocks of increasingly higher voltages, even after they thought that the learner was unconscious, completely defeating the aims of what they were told the experiment was about). The pull of authority figures tends to trump countervailing forces within us and one sees this clearly when observing the tremendous amount of dissonance typically experienced by participants.

One key factor playing a role in participant behaviour is a common psychological mechanism which could be described as "passing the buck", or deferring responsibility to others. Having a sense that the responsibility is entirely on the shoulders of an authority figure can relieve us from the unpleasantness of guilt, making it easier for us to act in ways that we would regret if we had a chance to sit back and reflect on our actions (for a rich and influential discussion of this topic see Arendt, 2006, particularly where the author addresses the inability of Adolf Eichmann to take responsibility for his actions). Similarly, we often pass on the responsibility to groups, feeling that "if everyone else is doing it, then why can't I?" It should also be stressed that psychological mechanisms such as these are triggered in specific

circumstances. In the case of the Milgram experiment, participants were put under considerable pressure by an authority figure. They could, however, only be put under pressure because we are prone to follow the dictates of those we consider to be authority figures. Psychological and environmental factors act together to produce these sorts of results.

If we are thinking of avoiding situations, such as those present in the Milgram experiment, we need to think both about training ourselves to recognize when and where not to succumb to the pressure of authority figures as well as about changing environmental circumstance and, for instance, considering leadership styles that are less prone to encourage obedience beyond the limits of the acceptable.

A related phenomenon worth discussing is that of diffusion of responsibility, for example where subjects tend to feel less responsible for helping someone in need if others are also present. Taking responsibility can be a difficult and sometimes risky affair, so we often prefer to pass on the responsibility to others. However, it is also the case, and this speaks to the issue of conformity, that when others are present we tend to mirror our behaviour on that of others, something that does not happen as readily when there is only one potential helper available. It has also been shown that the phenomenon of diffusion of responsibility is punctured when someone takes the lead and helps. The phenomenon of diffusion of responsibility is one of the principle mechanisms that accounts for the [Bystander Effect](#) (Garcia, 2002). A thought-provoking case that triggered bystander research is the case of the murder of [Kitty Genovese](#).

Situationism

Another feature that can have a deep impact on how we behave, often driving unethical behaviour, are the roles we play in specific environments. This has been illustrated in the [Stanford Prison Experiment](#). In this experiment from 1971, which is the focus of Exercise 5 of the Module, the psychological effects of perceived power and related environmental or situational factors were investigated. The experiment involved volunteer students who assumed the roles of guards and prisoners. While this was one of the most controversial psychological experiments ever conducted, there are many extremely interesting insights that we can draw from it. These reveal the extent to which situational factors can influence behaviour, including the extent to which the roles we play in specific environments can have a deep impact on how we behave. This is known as the problem of situationism.

Although the experiment has recently come under scrutiny in the media, its results are consistent with many other experiments the results of which are widely accepted by the scientific community, some of which are included in this Module (Selective Attention, Conformity, Solomon Asch's Experiment, The Milgram Obedience Experiment and The Bystander Effect). Click [here](#) for the journalistic piece critiquing the experiment and click [here](#) for a reply from Zimbardo. It may be worth discussing this controversy with students. Even Zimbardo agrees that his experiment is unethical, and it is clear that the experiment is, to put it mildly, irregular from the scientific point of view, but it has captured the imagination of generations, arguably because it highlights the extent to which acquiring mastery over our lives is always

an imperfect achievement and the consequences of losing control over our lives can be extremely high. Much cutting edge work in psychology and cognate disciplines is pointing in this direction. So, although Zimbardo's experiment is questionable from the ethical and scientific points of view, it nevertheless nicely exemplifies features of our lives that may be hard to accept, but which we ought to accept if we are genuinely committed to doing the hard work of bettering ourselves from the moral point of view.

The pull to conform, to defer to authority, to pass the buck, to focus too much on the specific task at hand, and to lose ourselves in our roles, impaired the abilities of the experiment participants to distance themselves from the forces pushing them to act as they did, setting them down the path of becoming ruthless guards or humiliated and emotionally broken prisoners. The uniforms—reflective sunglasses, batons, chains, and prisoner gowns—the replacement of names for numbers and of real names for nicknames, such as 'John Wayne', helped participants forget that they were in a mock prison situation. Some scholars, most notably John M. Doris (2002), defend the view that experiments such as this one show that people do not really have characters. If circumstances play such a decisive role in affecting the ways we behave, Doris argues, then it is not character that motivates people to act, but circumstances. This extreme position, however, can certainly be questioned. After all, not all guards behaved in the same way and the same can be said about the prisoners. In fact, behaviour patterns varied significantly among participants, although they were all in one way or another deeply influenced by their particular situation.

It should be stressed that conformity plays an extremely important positive social role. The power of situation is also important in a positive way. It allows us to adapt quickly to situations, for instance. The ease with which we adapt, however, has pitfalls that are highlighted by the Stanford Prison Experiment. It should be noted that this discussion is related to debates about the impact of the environment and design of a particular organization on ethical behaviour, which are explored in Integrity and Ethics [Module 8](#) (Behavioural Ethics).

Dishonesty

The tendency discussed earlier to pass on the responsibility to groups can also lead to dishonest behaviour. It is easy to steal a little if everyone is doing it, the adverse consequences of stealing are minimal and, crucially, if we are able to tell ourselves stories that make us look like good honest people *and* steal at the same time. However, as the Fudge Factor tells us, the cost of stealing a little and thinking of ourselves as good honest people is that we end up distorting the lenses through which we see the world and, perhaps most importantly, ourselves.

In his book [The \(Honest\) Truth About Dishonesty](#), Dan Ariely (2012) identifies a dissonance between wanting to be good and wanting to have things that we desire. This dissonance accounts for the fact that very few people will become hardened crooks. It also accounts for the fact that many of us are little cheaters, as this dissonance leads us to see the world and ourselves through distorted lenses living as little cheaters. In other words, dishonesty is everywhere but it is almost always

kept within bounds. He also explains why in some cases small cheaters become big ones, why a series of small temptations motivate some to switch over and become big cheaters, to give in to temptation. In typical circumstances the pull to look good in our own eyes is not completely defeated by our rationalizing tendencies, but in some cases it can be.

In such cases the “solution” to the dissonance-producing competition between the desire to look ethical in our own eyes and to get what we want is found in the rationalization that the good thing from the moral point of view coincides with our need to satisfy a desire by illicit means. He calls the mechanism involved the “what the hell effect”. Click [here](#) for a fun illustration of the effect in action. In the illustration provided the competition is between a prudential rather than ethical “ought” (avoid eating cake either because it is not yours or because it is not good for you, or for some other reason) and the powerful desire to eat mouth-watering cake in abundance.

Ariely suggests that in order to diminish crime we need to change incentive structures, to create social conditions where dissonance-producing conflicts of interest are minimized, thus helping to neutralize the effect of our rationalizing tendencies. Ariely’s book and the above issues are the focus of the Pre-class exercise of the Module.

The fact that we like to look good in our own eyes is a positive thing. It highlights just how important ethics is to us and it tends to limit bad behaviour to some extent. It can also, however, become contaminated by our need to rationalize, which protects us from the psychological unease. It is generally a good thing that we have desires that we believe will bring us advantages. However, ethical oughts and wants, in conjunction with the protective work of rationalizations, can also play distorting roles in our lives, as studied by Ariely, among others.

Concluding remarks

This Module highlights the extent to which taking responsibility for our lives is central to being ethical. Not to take responsibility amounts to letting internal and external mechanisms drive our lives to an unacceptable degree, as when one is led by one’s group to commit unspeakable acts perhaps only later to realize the extent to which one has betrayed one’s own most deeply held values by letting the natural inclination to conform rule supreme.

One thing that should be stressed is the extent to which ethical failures are common and the extent to which our ability to take responsibility for our lives is diminished by ethical failures of the sort discussed in this Module. This Module could be used to trigger a process of ethical improvement – a process that requires students to commit themselves to working against the corrupting tendencies of many of the mechanisms that typically serve us well.

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Exercises

This section contains suggestions for in-class educational exercises, while a post-class assignment for assessing student understanding of the Module is suggested in a separate section.

The following six exercises are designed to allow the students to gain a meaningful understanding of the psychological mechanisms that are the focus of this Module. The exercises are highly interactive and build on each other. The Module should ideally be taught through these interactive exercises, and very little time should be spent lecturing to students. The lecturer, rather, is encouraged to present the material and highlight key themes and then facilitate student conversation. Each exercise starts with a short video clip that could be used to stimulate discussions about the mechanisms and forces motivating people to act in ways that they would not want to act if they were fully aware of what they are doing. The videos selected do not require prior knowledge of relevant topics.

To maximize the effectiveness of the discussions, the lecturer could encourage the students to share examples from their own lives that illustrate how the relevant psychological mechanisms can play both positive and negative roles in our lives. Students should be encouraged to discuss how these mechanisms can affect their ethical orientations, both in general and in specific instances. How can the negative effects of these mechanisms potentially be avoided? What can each of us do to make sure that these forces can be put to work for our benefit?

The exercises in this section are most appropriate for classes of up to 50 students, where students can be easily organized into small groups in which they discuss cases or conduct activities before group representatives provide feedback to the entire class. Although it is possible to have the same small group structure in large classes comprising a few hundred students, it is more challenging and the lecturer might wish to adapt the facilitation techniques to ensure sufficient time for group discussions as well as providing feedback to the entire class. The easiest way to deal with the requirement for small group discussion in a large class is to ask students to discuss the issues with the four or five students sitting close to them. Given time limitations, not all groups will be able to provide feedback in each exercise. It is recommended that the lecturer make random selections and try to ensure that all groups get the opportunity to provide feedback at least once during the session. If time permits, the lecturer could facilitate a discussion in plenary after each group has provided feedback.

Whenever possible, all students should get a chance to participate. If the class consists of up to 20 students, the lecturer could facilitate a discussion with the entire group. In larger classes, the lecturer could break the class up into discussion groups after presenting the material for discussion, and ask each group to appoint a spokesperson who can relay a summary of the group discussion to the entire class once students have regrouped. In classes of up to 20 students, the last five minutes of each exercise could be dedicated to summarizing the conclusions reached, particularly regarding how the issues discussed pertain to the concrete lives of students present in the class. In larger classes that have been divided into groups,

ten minutes could be dedicated at the end to discussing the findings of each group or of a selection of these.

All exercises are appropriate for both graduate and undergraduate students. However, as students' prior knowledge and exposure to these issues varies widely, decisions about appropriateness of exercises should be based on their educational and social context.

Pre-class exercise: Understanding dishonesty

Have students watch the [RSA Animate video](#) on Dan Ariely's book [The \(Honest\) Truth About Dishonesty](#). Ask them to consider, after watching the film, why is dishonesty everywhere but almost always kept within bounds? Why, in other words, are there many little cheaters and few big cheaters?

➤ Lecturer guidelines

As explained in the introduction to the Module, Dan Ariely identifies a dissonance between wanting to be good and wanting to have things that we desire. This dissonance helps explain why few people will engage in criminal behaviour. But it is easy to steal a little if everyone is doing it, if the consequences for others are minimal, if the adverse consequences of stealing are minimal and, crucially, if we are able to tell ourselves stories that make us look like good honest people *and* steal at the same time. Indeed, the cost of stealing a little and thinking of ourselves as good honest people is that we end up distorting the lenses through which we see the world and, perhaps most importantly, ourselves.

If time allows, lecturers may wish to conduct the exercise in class. In that case, after showing the video, the lecturer can discuss with the students key aspects of Ariely's research, and consider the cases of little cheaters that Ariely discusses. This will involve understanding the "what the hell effect" that allows small cheaters to become shameless criminals. Consider asking the students the following questions:

- What is the "what the hell" effect and how does it work?
- What does Ariely say about the Catholic confession and why it may work to diminish dishonesty?
- Why do we tend to steal only a little?
- What can we do to diminish crime? Ariely suggests that we need to change incentive structures.
- If incentive structures are a central aspect of changing the way people behave, what does this say about the idea that we can be the drivers of our lives? It is easy to think that this means that we are not free at all in this way. But is this truly so? Experiments such as these show that we are free in a limited sense, but this does not mean that we are not free at all. Remember that not everyone reacts the same to the pressure of external circumstances.
- In case this exercise is conducted after discussing the Stanford Prison Experiment, ask the students how the issue of incentive structures relates to the Stanford Prison Experiment.
- In case this exercise is conducted after discussing the Good Samaritan Experiment, ask the students whether there is a contradiction between

Ariely's findings and those in the Good Samaritan Experiment. Focus particularly on the idea of turning another leaf.

Exercise 1: Failing to see what is right in front of you

Have the students watch [The Monkey Business Illusion](#) and ask them to count the number of times players in white pass the ball. Make sure not to spoil the exercise by telling students what to expect. After the students finish counting the passes, facilitate a discussion about the mechanism of selective attention and its potential to induce unethical behaviour.

➤ Lecturer guidelines

The discussion should start with students explaining the experiment, particularly explaining what they understand selective attention to be. The lecturer can then pose questions such as these:

- Why do we focus our attention on some things and not others?
- What things could impair our ability to see, or properly to see, what is right in front of us?
- In what ways does selective attention play positive and negative roles in our lives? Consider specific examples from your own life.
- Although it is true that selective attention should do its job behind the scenes for the most part, sometimes it probably should not (consider selective attention informed by bigotry). What can one do to make sure that one sees what one ought to see in specific circumstances? Consider examples from your own lives.
- What does the phenomenon of selective attention say about our ability to take responsibility for our lives?
- How can we avoid being adversely affected by the phenomenon of selective attention?

The Monkey Business Illusion shows the extent to which selective attention can affect us. The exercise therefore provides a good lead into discussing this mechanism and its potential to induce unethical behaviour. In the specific case of the Monkey Business Illusion we may miss the gorilla because we are too busy counting passes. The aim of counting passes blinds us to details of what is right in front of us. Selective attention, as explained in the Key Issues section of the Module, establishes a hierarchy of relevance. This translates into a hierarchy of value (*this* is more important than *that*), which may not accord with what we genuinely value. For example, most of us would have probably liked to see the gorilla and we feel somewhat disappointed for missing it because the mechanism of selective attention blinded us to the obvious. We may be looking at the gorilla - most people doing the experiment actually do - but fail to see it. Importantly, selective attention is not a mechanism we have full control over. It operates largely in the background and does the job for us without our knowledge, unless we make an effort to observe its operation.

If time allows, have students watch the short [video](#) in which Daniel Simons stresses the positive role of selective attention and observes that we need to focus our

attention on something in order to see it.

An interesting essay about the Monkey Business Illusion that can be discussed with student is [The fallacy of obviousness](#) by Teppo Felin, published by Aeon on 5th July 2018.

Additional video clips that can be used to illustrate the selective attention mechanism are the Moonwalking Bear Test (see [here](#)) and the Whodunnit Awareness Test (see [here](#)).

Exercise 2: The Good Samaritan Experiment

Show the students [this](#) short video clip about the famous Good Samaritan Experiment conducted by J. M. Darley and C. D. Batson. Ask the students to explain the experiment and relate it to the phenomena of selective attention and psychological distance.

➤ Lecturer guidelines

The Good Samaritan Experiment illustrates a basic feature of our lives: the ability to attend to some things and not to others. While this feature may not *prima facie* seem terribly relevant for understanding ourselves as ethical agents, Darley and Batson's experiment shows to what extent being in a hurry can blind us to what is right in front of us because we are in too much of a rush to get to an appointment. After showing the clip, discuss with the students the phenomenon of psychological distance, which is another mechanism that can cause us to miss the significance of ethically salient things. For example, the physical distance of attacking parties also distances them emotionally from the event, thus blinding soldiers to the full significance of their actions. Similarly, the suffering of distant strangers tends to affect us far less than the suffering of those who are closer to us, or those who we can relate to more easily.

Subsequently, facilitate a discussion about our ability to attend to some things and not to others, and the potential effects of this mechanism on ethical behaviour. Consider asking the following questions:

- If being in a hurry can adversely affect our attitudes and behaviour, what does this say about the idea that to be ethical is largely about following rules of conduct? Note that experimental subjects were theology students, that is, individuals allegedly deeply committed to living ethically.
- Would you like to be someone who stops to help?
- If so, what do you think you need to do to avoid the distorting work of external factors such as being in a rush?
- In what ways have you seen psychological distance operating in your lives? Give examples of how they help you along and how they can hinder your ability to live in ways that you consider appropriate.
- Consider, for instance, the tension between care for those closest to you and a commitment to justice. Care demands that we are close to those we care for, and that we are willing at times even to act unjustly on behalf of them (for example by unjustly distributing our time and resources), whereas justice

demands impartiality (fairness). Care is in a sense nepotistic and in this regard it is in tension with the demands of justice. How can this tension be negotiated? It would be too simple to say that we should do away with care or with justice. Both play crucial roles in our lives, one predominantly in the private realm and the other predominantly in the public realm. This tension, it should be noted, depends on the phenomenon of psychological distance, for care depends on the fact that I care more for those closer to me, much more in fact, than I care for most.

- What does this experiment say about our ability to take responsibility for our lives?

A good case study for exploring intuitions about the care/justice tension would be a version of the [trolley problem](#). If time allows, ask students to imagine what they would do if they had to choose between killing several strangers or one beloved person. Alternatively, consider the case, mentioned above, of a mother who has exhausted all other options, and must steal life-saving medications that will save her sick daughter's life.

Exercise 3: Asch's Conformity Experiment

Either reproduce the Conformity Experiment, if you have time, or have the students watch the video that describes [Solomon Asch's influential experiment](#).

As explained in the Key Issues section of the Module, Asch's experiment shows us how we will either tend to follow the lead of the group because we do not want to rock the boat (normative conformity) or because we will genuinely come to see things in the wrong way because of group pressure (informational conformity). It also shows us how the pull of conformity can be punctured with the presence of a partner who gives the right answers to the questions regarding line lengths. It also shows how it is that giving answers in writing rather than orally radically changes the results of the experiment.

➤ Lecturer guidelines

If time allows, students could also enact Asch's experiment. The lecturer could pretend to be Solomon Asch and a group of students could either be confederates of the experiment or subjects of the experiment. Students should record how hard it is for them to remain honest to the evidence of their senses or, most typically, honestly report on what they see. Ask the students what ethically relevant lessons can be drawn from this experiment. How, for instance, can they avoid the pull of conformity when required? Pay attention to specific examples provided by students, focusing in particular on what they felt when refusing to conform.

Questions to facilitate student discussion of these issues could include:

- Who would you rather be, someone who resists the pull of the group or someone who does not? Substantiate your reply.
- Who would you rather be, someone who conforms because she does not want to rock the boat or someone who is genuinely muddled by the replies of the other participants? Substantiate your reply.

- Why do you think it is that having a partner makes it easier for participants to answer the questions correctly?
- Why do you think writing replies rather than voicing them in public tends to make it easier for participants to avoid the pull to conform?
- How can the pressure to conform lead to unethical action? Substantiate with concrete examples, ideally from your own lives.
- What does Asch's Conformity Experiment say about our psychological freedom? It is tempting to think that this means that we are not free at all in this way. Experiments such as these show that we are free in a qualified sense, but it does not follow from this that we are not free at all. Remember that not everyone reacts the same to the pressure of external circumstances.
- What strategies can we come up with to avoid conforming when our considered judgment would be that we should not conform?

Exercise 4: The Milgram Obedience Experiment

Show students the video about Stanley Milgram's controversial [obedience experiment](#). After they watch the video, ask the students to explain the Milgram Experiment.

As explained in the Key Issues section of the Module, the Milgram Experiment shows that there is a strong tendency among humans to follow the dictates of authority figures, even if following the instructions of an authority figure can be extremely harmful, even lethal. Milgram's conclusion is not that people tend to be morally bankrupt. Rather, his conclusion is that obedience can lead perfectly good people to do bad things.

➤ Lecturer guidelines

To facilitate a discussion about the phenomenon of obedience, diffusion of responsibility, and the Bystander Effect, consider asking students the following questions:

- What would you do if you were a "teacher"?
- What can we do to make sure that the pull to follow the orders of authority figures does not undermine our ability to act in accordance with our better judgment?
- Think of circumstances in your own lives in which insights drawn from the Milgram Experiment play themselves out.
- Have you ever passed responsibility for your actions to a group or an authority figure? Illustrate with examples.
- What do you think would happen if the learners were in the same room as the teacher? What would happen if shocks were administered by hand rather than indirectly through a switchboard? Allude to the mechanism of psychological distance.
- What can you do to avoid the pull of authority when the authority figure is demanding something of you that you believe is wrong?
- How does the phenomenon of diffusion of responsibility relate to Asch's Conformity Experiment and to the Good Samaritan Experiment? Consider in particular cases in which conformity is punctured.

- What does the Milgram Experiment say about our capacity to take responsibility for our lives? Remember that not everyone reacts the same to the pressure of external circumstances. Consider those who reached a point at which they refused to follow the instructions of the authority figure.
- Do you think this experiment is ethically dubious? If so, why do you think this is so? See related discussion [here](#) (scroll to “Ethical Issues” towards the end).

Exercise 5: Zimbardo’s Stanford Prison Experiment

Show the students the short video of the controversial [Stanford Prison Experiment](#), which demonstrates the problem of situationism – i.e. the extent to which external circumstances can influence behaviour. This problem is discussed in further detail in the Key Issues section of this Module.

➤ Lecturer guidelines

Ask the students to explain the experiment, focusing in particular on the specific mechanisms that led guards and prisoners to adopt their roles. Facilitate a discussion by posing the following questions:

- What difference in behaviour can you detect among prisoners and among guards?
- What particular details in the environment motivated prisoners and guards to act as they did?
- What insight can you draw from this experiment that speaks to your own lives? Give examples relating specifically to your lives.
- What particular design features of your specific environment do you think have had a powerful impact in guiding your behaviour?
- What does this experiment tell us about our ability to take responsibility for our lives, its character and how to preserve it?
- What, if anything, does this experiment tell us about the relationship between society and the individual?
- How can we live so that we do not fall prey to conditions analogous to those present in the Stanford Prison Experiment?
- Discuss ‘John Wayne’s’ own reflections on his behaviour as a guard. Relate your insights to specific examples from your own lives.
- Consider how ‘worked up’ people get when watching a particular sports match or in other circumstances, such as a party or a celebration. To what extent has your behaviour and your inner world changed significantly in such environments, and what do you think accounts for the differences?
- To what extent can you observe how your behaviour changes when you move from one set of circumstances to another and try to identify reasons for such changes? Fear of being singled out or even shamed could be one factor, but there could be others that have less to do with deliberation and may even subconsciously impact our behaviour. How much does clothing, for instance (including sunglasses), affect how you feel about yourself?

If time allows, spend some time discussing whether or not the experiment is unethical. Facilitate a discussion by posing the following question:

Zimbardo retrospectively acknowledges that his experiment is ethically problematic, despite the fact that none of the participants suffered long-term harm and it is clear that the experiment could not be reproduced today. What are your views? If time permits, discuss the latest controversy over the experiment outlined above.

Possible class structure

This section contains recommendations for a teaching sequence and timing intended to achieve learning outcomes through a three-hour class. The lecturer may wish to disregard or shorten some of the segments below in order to give more time to other elements, including introduction, icebreakers, conclusion or short breaks. The structure could also be adapted for shorter or longer classes, given that class durations vary across countries.

The three-hour session should be interactive and fun and lecturers should bring their own creative input into the classroom, informed by his or her own familiarity with local practices, beliefs and sensitivities. Ideally, students should be focusing on specific aspects of their lives in light of material presented at the beginning of each exercise, paying particular attention to strategies they might come up with to avoid the traps and snares that are part and parcel of living humanly. The Module is aimed at making students reflect on their own lives in relation to the material presented, and for this to happen students should be given a platform to share ideas and experiences, with the aim of co-creating understandings.

Introduction (10 min)

- The lecturer introduces the Module, explaining its approach and rationale, focusing on the ambivalent nature of the features of ourselves being discussed (for instance, selective attention, conformity, the power that authority figures have over us, how being in certain situations pushes us to act in some ways and not others, and the role of good and bad incentive regimes).

Exercise 1: Failing to see what is right in front of you (20 min)

- The lecturer presents the video material, offers a brief introduction of the issues to be discussed, and facilitates an interactive discussion.

Exercise 2: Darley and Batson's the Good Samaritan Experiment (30 min)

- The lecturer presents the video material, offers a brief introduction of the issues to be discussed, and facilitates an interactive discussion.

Introduction and Exercises 1 and 2 should be conducted in one sitting of one hour as they work well together. Exercise 1 highlights the role, both positive and negative, of selective attention and Exercise 2 transposes the issue of selective attention into the moral sphere. Exercises 1 and 2 also introduce key themes that this Module aims to expose students to: the extent to which acting ethically is a matter of recognizing how basic psychological features about ourselves interact with environmental conditions (people passing balls or being in a rush) and how those psychological features are able to distort our ability to properly grasp what, from our own

considered points of view, is ethically salient.

Exercise 3: Asch's Conformity Experiment (45 min)

- The lecturer either presents the video material or pretends to be Solomon Asch and re-enacts the experiment with students (some students would have to be briefed beforehand).
- The lecturer offers a brief introduction of the issues to be discussed, and facilitates an interactive discussion.

Exercise 4 or 5 (60 min)

- Exercise 4: The Milgram Obedience Experiment - The lecturer presents the video material, offers a brief introduction of the issues to be discussed, and facilitates an interactive discussion.
- Exercise 5: Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment - The lecturer presents the video material, offers a brief introduction of the issues to be discussed, and facilitates an interactive discussion.

Exercise 3 *and* Exercise 4 (or Exercise 5) should be done in one sitting of one hour as Asch's experiment illustrates the issue of conformity in a really stark and somewhat light-hearted way, while Milgram's and Zimbardo's experiment delve into the dark side of conformity to authority. Exercises 4 and 5 highlight many of the issues discussed previously and place emphasis on how the interrelationship between psychological mechanisms and external circumstances (a mock prison or incentive structures) deeply affect how people tend to act.

Conclusion (15 min)

- The conclusion should emphasize how mechanisms that serve us well can also play tricks on us. Discuss with students the Module as a whole, focusing on strategies for avoiding the nefarious work that basic forces in us can do without us even noticing, particularly when reacting to corrupting environmental pressures. Focus also on the relationship between taking responsibility for our lives and ethical living.

Core reading

This section provides a list of (mostly) open access materials that the lecturer could ask the students to read before taking a class based on this Module. These readings could potentially form the basis for a longer course on the subject.

Tavris, Caroll and Elliot Aronson (2015). *Mistakes Were Made (But Not by Me): Why We Justify Foolish Beliefs, Bad Decisions, and Hurtful Acts*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. *This book explains key moral failings by appealing to cognitive dissonance and the confirmation bias. It is suggested to focus attention on Chapters 1 & 2. If this book is not available then an alternative reading is the article by Epley and Gilovich listed below. For a lecture by Tavris to complement the readings click [here](#). Additionally, Julia Galef provides a lecture on the topic of motivated reasoning (reasoning informed by the confirmation bias) [here](#).

Epley, Nicholas and Thomas Gilovich (2016). "The Mechanics of Motivated Reasoning." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 30, no 3, pp. 133–140. This can be an alternative reading in case the book by Tavris and Aronson is not available.

Ariely, Dan (2012). *The (Honest) Truth About Dishonesty: How We Lie to Everyone—Especially Ourselves*. London: HarperCollins Publishers. *This book explores the how and why of dishonesty. It appeals to the result of psychological experiments to build the account. It is suggested to focus on Chapters 1, 2 (not 2B) & 10. If unable to get this book, click [here](#) for an alternative reading. The documentary [\(Dis\)honesty: The Truth About Lies](#) complements the reading material.

Rorty, Amélie Oksenberg (2001). How to harden your heart: six easy ways to become corrupt. *The Many Faces of Evil: Historical Perspectives*. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, ed. London: Routledge. *This piece shows how basic psychological mechanisms that lead people to commit bereft acts operate to make us do things that go against our better judgment. A slightly different take on Rorty's concerns can be found in the open access paper *Corruption in the Context of Moral Tradeoffs*, authored by James Dungan, Adam Waytz and Liane Young, which can be accessed [here](#).

Advanced reading

The following readings are recommended for students interested in exploring the topics of this Module in more detail, and for lecturers teaching the Module. These readings are less directly related to the Module than the Core Readings, but they will help students deepen their understandings of the relevant issues.

Arendt, Hannah (2006). *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. London: Penguin.

Bazerman, Max H. and Ann E. Tenbrunsel (2011). *Blind Spots: Why We Fail to Do What's Right and What to Do About It*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Bloom, Paul (2013). *Just Babies: The Origins of Good and Evil*. London: Random House.

Felin, Teppo (2018). [The fallacy of obviousness](#). Aeon.

Gobodo-Madikizela, Pumla (2004). *A Human Being Died Last Night: A South African Story of Forgiveness*. Cape Town: David Philip.

Haidt, Jonathan (2006). *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom*. New York: Basic Books.

Kahneman, Daniel (2011). *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

- Liebermann, Matthew D. (2013). *Social: Why our brains are wired to connect*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Marion Young, Iris (1980). "Throwing like a girl: a phenomenology of feminine body comportment, motility and spatiality." *Human Studies*, vol. 3.
- Midgley, Mary (2003). *Wickedness: A Philosophical Essay*. London: Routledge.
- Milgram, Stanley (2004). *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View*. New York: Perennial Classics.
- Pinker, Steven (1997). *How the Mind Works*. London: Penguin.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul (1995). *Anti-Semite and Jew: An Exploration of the Etiology of Hate*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Sereny, Gitta (1995). *Into That Darkness: From Mercy Killings to Mass Murder*. London: Pimlico.
- Sunstein, Cass R. and Richard H. Thaler (2008). *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth and Happiness*. London: Penguin, (Introduction and Part 1).
- Zimbardo, Philip (2007). *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil*. New York: Random House.

Student assessment

This section provides a suggestion for a post-class assignment for the purpose of assessing student understanding of the Module. Suggestions for pre-class or in-class assignments are provided in the Exercises section.

To assess the students' understanding of the Module, the journal format is ideal. The aim is to invite students to think about key issues that will help them to understand the complexities, indeed the attentive effort, involved in living in ways that they genuinely want to live. The journal offers students the possibility of learning how to engage with insights derived from the Module that will better help them navigate the vicissitudes of life. If possible, feedback on journals should be provided and students should be given the opportunity to engage with the feedback and improve the quality of their work. For instance, students could be given a week or two to work on their journals before submitting them for feedback. Then they could be given a similar period of time to make a final submission. Journals should include short summaries of all material presented in the Module, explaining how basic features of our lives, which typically play positive roles, can function to blind us. Stress should also be placed on the idea that living ethically, indeed living lucidly as free agents, requires ongoing vigilant and attentive effort. Their journals could include discussions on how they are going to weave the material covered in the Module into their lives and what further steps they intend to take to learn more about pitfalls of the sort that undermine our ethical agency.

The journal differs from the standard essay. Students are not required to develop a cohesive argument so much as reflect on their personal lives in relation to the material discussed in class. A journal does not necessarily have a clear endpoint, although lecturers may wish to limit its size for the purposes of assessment. The different elements of a journal are not meant to lead to a specific conclusion that ties all the material together, although it could. Instead, the journal is a format that invites continuous reflection on the material covered in the course and how it impacts the lives of students. Students can potentially continue writing in their journals long after they have completed the Module. A journal must also be distinguished from class notes. Class notes aim to summarize what is discussed in class whereas the journal aims to give students the opportunity to use what is discussed in class to gain insights about the life of its author. Class summaries will inevitably play an important role in helping students gain insights about their lives, but summaries are only the starting point for intimate, careful and sensitive reflection.

For guidelines on how to assess journals, refer to the assessment rubric below. Students would benefit from having access to the grid before commencing work on their journals.

Assessment Rubric for Journals

Categories	75-100	60-74	51-60	< 50
Critical self-reflection (on beliefs, values, desires, assumptions)	Seeks to understand topics and concepts by critically examining beliefs, values, desires, and assumptions as they relate to the topic. Demonstrates an open, non-defensive ability to critically self-appraise, discussing both growth and frustrations as they relate to learning in Module 6.	Seeks to understand topics and concepts by guardedly examining one's own beliefs, values, desires and assumptions as they relate to the topic. Sometimes defensive or one-sided in the analysis. Asks some probing questions about the self, but does not (always) seek to answer them.	Little examination of the self, minimal work in connecting concepts from class to own beliefs, values, desires, assumptions.	Demonstrates little to no self-examination.
Connection between life experiences and Module 6	In-depth synthesis of thoughtfully selected aspects of experience(s) related to the topic. Makes clear connections between what is learned from outside experiences and the topic.	Goes into some detail explaining some specific ideas or issues from outside experiences related to the topic. Makes general connections between what is learned from outside experiences and the topic.	Identifies some general ideas or issues from outside experiences related to the topic.	Draws no connections between experience and Module 6.

Additional teaching tools

This section includes links to relevant teaching aides, such as PowerPoint slides and video material, that could help the lecturer teach the issues covered by the Module in an interactive and engaging manner. Lecturers can adapt the slides and other resources to their needs.

PowerPoint presentation

- [Module 6 Presentation on Challenges to Ethical Living](#)

Video material

- Roy Baumeister, whose work appears in the Key Issues section of the Module, on self-control and will power:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RICxYzTL_Ps&t=56s
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m0jDxFZTJVY&t=712s>
- The Marshmallow Test, which connects to Baumeister's work as well.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yo4WF3cSd9Q&t=13s>
- Yale Infant Cognition Center, illustrating the possibility of innate ethics.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HBW5vdhr_PA
- Carol Tavis on the ideas from her book *Mistakes Were Made (But Not By Me)*, referenced in the Key Issues section of the Module.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9wRMm0VzzY>
- Julia Galef's Ted Talk on Scout Mindset and Soldier Mindset, which highlights the dangers of motivated reasoning.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MYEtQ5Zdn8>
- YouTube channel on the subjects covered in the Module.
https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=iintetho+zobomi

Documentaries and movies

The following documentaries and movies grapple with issues pertinent to the Module:

- Kyle Patrick Alvarez's *The Stanford Prison Experiment*
- Bill Duke and D. Channsin Berry's *Dark Girls*
- Yael Melamed's [\(Dis\)honesty: The Truth About Lies](#).
- *Winter Soldier*, produced by the Winterfilm collective
- Rithy Panh's *S21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* and *Duch: Master of the Forges of Hell*
- Joshua Oppenheimer's *The Look of Silence* and *The Act of Killing*
- Nisha Pahuja's *The World Before Her*
- Alex Gibney's *The Armstrong Lie*
- Daren Brown's *The Push*

Guidelines to develop a stand-alone course

This Module provides an outline for a three-hour class, but there is potential to develop its topics further into a stand-alone course. The scope and structure of such a course will be determined by the specific needs of each context, but a possible structure is presented here as a suggestion, based in part on the Core Readings and on the materials presented in the Module. A longer version of this Module would allow for a more in-depth exploration of the issues being raised in this Module, in addition to dealing with some other relevant issues. There is also the potential of combining material from other modules of the E4J Module Series on Integrity and Ethics, such as [Module 8](#) (Behavioural ethics). Extending the Module to a stand-alone course could also potentially include an experiential learning component, such as community engagement, in which students are given the opportunity to engage in activities that invite reflection on the topics discussed in the course.

Session	Topic	Brief description
1	The <i>why</i> of this course	Based on the underlying approach to ethical living described in the first three sections of this Module. One thing that needs to be stressed is how basic features about ourselves that work in our favour can play tricks on us unless we take responsibility for the shape of our lives. The idea of taking responsibility should be explored. The course could be seen as an occasion to show students the extent to which our ability to be responsible for our lives can be refined. Watch Why “Scout Mindset” is Crucial to Good Judgment . This course encourages students to develop a scout mindset.
2	Failing to see what is directly in front of you	Based on the Monkey Business Illusion and the Good Samaritan Experiment.
3	Cognitive dissonance and the confirmation bias	These two quirks of our psychology account for a large array of moral failings in addition to playing extremely important positive roles in our lives. Explore how rationalization, which also plays the important role of protecting us from the pain caused by dissonance, can play tricks on us. Read from <i>Mistakes Were Made, But Not By Me</i> .
4	Conformity: Asch’s Experiment	Re-enact the experiment and use the video resource on the experiment to start a conversation.
5	Obedience: The Milgram Experiment	Use the video of the Milgram Experiment to trigger discussion on the power of obedience.

6	Stanford Prison Experiment	Watch the video resource provided above and, if possible, the movie, <i>The Stanford Prison Experiment</i> , also listed above.
7	Dishonesty	Use the video resource provided in Exercise 6 and the documentary, <i>(Dis)honesty: The Truth about Lies</i> . Also base discussion on readings from <i>The (Honest) Truth about Dishonesty</i> .
8	Colourism and throwing like a girl: exploring self-directed prejudice	Start by asking people to solve the following “riddle”: A father and his son are in a car accident. The father dies at the scene and the son is rushed to the hospital. At the hospital the surgeon looks at the boy and says "I can't operate on this boy, he is my son." How can this be? Watch the documentary <i>Dark Girls</i> and the advert Always #LikeAGirl . Also watch the YouTube video Feminine Beauty: A Social Construct? and the documentary The World Before Her . Discuss.
9	Doll Test	See the following video showing how the Doll Test works. Discuss.
10	Moral Corruption	Read Rorty’s ‘How to Harden Your Heart’ (listed above), highlight the different psychological mechanisms discussed there, and watch a selection of the following documentaries: The Armstrong Lie , Winter Soldier , Duch: Master of the Forges of Hell and The Act of Killing . Discuss these documentaries in light of what has been discussed above, paying particular attention to psychological mechanisms, highlighting how they are beneficial but can also play us tricks.
11	Conclusion	Concluding remark and discussion based on a viewing of The Push and This is Water . Discuss. How does the commencement speech in the latter film speak to the aims of the course?