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### The Construction of Morality in *Crime and Punishment*

Ethan Collins

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Ethan Collins (B.A. in English Literature)

Dr. Austin Riede

Senior Seminar

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The Construction of Morality in *Crime and Punishment*

Doestoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* is a contemplation on Nihilism. The protagonist Raskolnikov gives five reasons for why he commits his famous double murder, but he later admits that all of these reasons are insincere. This paper is a reevaluation of Raskolnikov's motive (or lack thereof) for killing Alyona and her sister. Many different readings of Raskolnikov use the entire book as evidence to decide which one of his excuses was his actual motivation. These readings of Raskolnikov have a category problem. With all of the false reasons that Raskolnikov gives, why should a reader believe that any of them were his actual motivation? Many critical readings ask the wrong question. The question is not: Why did Raskolnikov murder Alyona and her sister? The question is: Why not? Using a Nietzschean analytical lens, this paper considers whether Raskolnikov had a motive, or whether the murder was a result of his inability to find any meaning in the life he leads.