

PHIL 110: HUMAN NATURE

WINTER
2016

Brock Baines
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Classroom: 106 FR
0900-0950 MTWR
CRN 24882

Office Hours: TBA, and by appointment (161 Susan Campbell Hall)

Course Description: This course will be a critical exploration of various attempts made by philosophers and scientists both past and present to address the question: What is a human being? It will be especially concerned with the range of answers a number of important intellectuals have given to the question: what -- if anything -- distinguishes the human form of life? Some of the problems to be considered are: Is there a distinctly "human" essence? If so, what implications does this have for how a person ought to live her life? If not, what does this say about the relation of our species to the non-human world? What do we stand to gain from a theory of human nature? Perhaps more importantly, *who* stands to gain from such a theory?

There will be four lectures with time devoted to discussion each class. Reading assignments will be announced in advance, and they are listed in the tentative schedule given below. Every student is expected to attend all lectures each week and to read the assigned texts by the assigned dates (i.e., to have read the text **before it is discussed in the lecture**). Grades will be based on four short essays (approximately 4-5 double-spaced, typewritten pages) and on attendance and performance in discussion. The percentage of the grade for each of these is as follows:

Four 4-5 page essays (20 possible points each)

Discussion participation (20 possible points)

Two-fifths of your discussion grade will be based on attendance (i.e., one point for each section) and the other three-fifths on the quantity and quality of your contribution to the discussion. **Late papers will not be accepted. If the essay is not turned in on time, you will receive no points for that one-sixth of your grade. Only in cases of documented medical excuse or special documented circumstances (e.g., family emergency) will you be allowed to turn in a late essay.** You must submit your essay online through Canvas by the date and time specified for each assignment. Your essay will be evaluated by Vericite, which is a plagiarism detection tool.

Academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating, plagiarism) is strictly prohibited and may result in severe penalties. Definitions, procedures, and penalties for such cases are spelled out on the UO website for Academic Dishonesty.

Topics/Readings: Below is a list of topics for discussion along with a tentative schedule of required readings. There is only one required text:

- Leslie Stevenson *The Study of Human Nature: A Reader* (Oxford: 2000)

Section A. Rationality and the Reflective form of life.

Week I

(Jan. 4) Philosophy and/of Human Nature

(Jan. 5) Plato, *The Republic*

(Jan. 6) Plato, *The Republic*

(Jan. 7) Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics* (Canvas)

Week II

(Jan. 11) Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics* (Canvas)

Section B. Creation and the Faithful form of life

(Jan. 12) Augustine, *Confessions* (Canvas)

(Jan. 13) Augustine, *Confessions* (Canvas)

Section C. Reason and the Self-Conscious form of Life.

(Jan. 14) Descartes, *Discourse on Method*

Week III

(Jan 18) Martin Luther King Day (No Class)

(Jan. 19) Hobbes, *Leviathan*

[First Essay due by 5 p.m. on Canvas]

(Jan. 20) Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*

(Jan. 21) Rousseau, *Emile*

Week IV

(Jan. 25) Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View.*

(Jan. 26) Kant, *Religion within the Bounds of Mere Reason*

Section D. Power and the natural form of life.

(Jan. 27) Marx, *The Materialist Theory of History*

(Jan. 28) Marx, *Consciousness and the Division of Labor*

Week V

(Feb. 1) Nietzsche (Canvas)

(Feb. 2) Nietzsche (Canvas)

(Feb. 3) J.S. Mill, *The Subjection of Women*

Section E. History and the natural form of life

(Feb. 4) Darwin, *The Descent of Man*

Week VI

(Feb. 8) B.A. Farrell, "A Reconstruction of Freud's Mature Theory"

[Second Essay due by 5 p.m. on Canvas]

Section D: Freedom and the transcendent form of life

(Feb. 9) Sartre *Existentialism is a Humanism*

(Feb. 10) Beauvoir *The Second Sex* (Canvas)

(Feb. 11) Beauvoir *The Second Sex* (Canvas)

Section E. Causality and the objective form of life

Week VII

(Feb. 15) Skinner, *About Behaviorism*

(Feb. 16) Lorenz, *On Aggression*

(Feb. 17) Chomsky, "Language and the Human Mind"

(Feb. 18) Machery, "A Plea for Human Nature" (Canvas)

Section F. Society and the self-constructed form of life

Week VIII

(Feb. 22) Hacking, "Making up People" (Canvas)

(Feb. 23) Bracken, "Essence, Accident, Race"

(Feb. 24) Wilson, *On Human Nature*

(Feb. 25) Holmstrom, "Do Women have a distinct Nature?"

Week IX

(Feb. 29) Pinker, *The Blank Slate* (Canvas)

[Third Essay due by 5 p.m on Canvas]

(Mar. 1) Pinker, *The Blank Slate* (Canvas)

(Mar. 2) Dupre, "Making Hay with Straw Men" (Canvas)

(Mar. 3) Rose Et al., *Not in Our Genes: Biology, Ideology and Human Nature*

Week X

(Mar. 7) Oyama, "Essentialism, Women and War" (Canvas)

(Mar. 8) Ridley, "The Origins of Virtue"

(Mar. 9) Neisser, "Five Kinds of Self-Knowledge" (Canvas)

(Mar. 10) Human Nature? Course Review

Week XI

Final Exam Week Mar. 14-18

[Final essay due Thurs., Mar. 17, by 5:00 p.m. on Canvas]