

PHIL 110: Philosophy of Human Nature

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SCH 158

Course Description

Welcome to your online Human Nature course! In this course we will be investigating the nature of the human being. What is it about us that makes us human? On the basis of these definitions of the human, what is our sociality? What political institutions are justified? What is our ethical responsibility to one another? What is nature of our corporeality? How do we write histories of the human? What is the nature of our freedom? How do we demarcate the human from the non-human?

In order to answer these questions, the course will be divided into *three units*. Our first unit, “On the Nature of the Political,” will focus on the political human, that is, we will explore the ways in which our human nature is seen as political by nature, and then also how human nature comes to be seen as both structured and inhibited by political structures. What is the relationship between human nature and modern forms of political organization? Are we inherently good or evil, selfish or social? Is human nature something which needs to be constrained by rules and structures, or do certain economic and political structures *isolate* us from our own selves and disconnect us from our own human nature? These are some of the questions that will be addressed in the first unit of the course. The second unit of the course, “Writing the History of Human Nature,” will consider the tensions that arise between ideas of “civilization” and the individual, taking a further critical approach to thinking about the profound intersection between the two as addressed in the first module. The approach of this module will be to elucidate these very tensions and incompatibilities, and ask ourselves: how have civilization, politics, and discourse, profoundly affected, altered, constrained, or repressed that which is my uniquely human nature? How has the idea of a uniquely human nature been configured by those same powers? The last unit of the course, “The Nature of Freedom,” looks at the ways in which human nature might be critically delimited. In other words, this last module suggests that human nature is the product of the intersection between the natural body (its drives, inclinations, its will, values, and identity) and the forces which constrain and regulate it, forces which— when critiqued— expose the possibility of human freedom.

Course Objectives:

- *Critical reading:* For each reading, it is important that students learn to identify the positions being advocated for, the *assumptions* being made about human nature by each author, and the *implications* of each position.
- *Critical writing through discussion:* Students will be expected to have meaningful, engaged discussions responding to both the discussion prompts and to their colleagues. This means learning to support your own opinions and positions using the arguments presented in both the texts and lectures, and rearticulating the claims and the implications made by your colleagues before assessing your own stance as a response.

- *Critical writing through essay assignments:* Students will show their understanding of the main concepts of the texts through succinct, written assignments. All positions will be adequately supported by drawing on relevant text passages showing an ability to both articulate and evaluate philosophical arguments and positions in an organized manner.
- *Content:* Students will complete the course with a knowledge of some of the most central and pertinent positions addressing the question of what human nature is, and should be able to explain and summarize the different approaches to human nature addressed in the course.

Grade Breakdown

30% Discussion (3/week)

30% Weekly Quizzes (12)

30% Essays (3)

20% Final Exam

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100%

Course Requirements

Lectures: each week, three short lectures will be available to you under ‘Lecture Slides’. You may view the lectures either before or after you complete the assigned readings. Please be aware that you will be responsible for material not covered on the lecture slides. The slides are meant to supplement and clarify the readings—they are not meant to viewed in lieu of the readings.

Weekly Discussions: discussion is an extremely critical component of learning and doing philosophy. Since the course is online, discussion posts will take the place of class participation and will be your way of demonstrating your engagement with the texts and your classmates throughout the course. The class will be divided into four discussion groups (~10 people each) in order to gain a sense of familiarity and comradeship with your classmates, as well as to foster a sense of responsibility to the discussions. You are to contribute **three discussion posts per week**. They should be thoughtful, articulate, and substantive. Each post will be graded on a 3-point scale (0, 1, 2), for a total of 6 possible points per week.

Each week you will need to write (at least) one of the following types of discussion posts:

- (1) A *question* that emerged from the reading
- (2) A *response* to a question posed by a classmate
- (3) A *response* to the discussion question found at the end of one of the three weekly lectures (open-ended question)

Basic requirements of each post:

- * Posts should be between 45-100 words
- * Use language that is professional and respectful of the texts and your classmates
- * Question/Response posts must include at least one quotation from the reading that is accompanied by the page number and a brief explanation of the quotation.
- * Posts that respond to classmates’ posts should begin with a brief statement about what you appreciate or agree with about the post

Weekly Reading Quizzes: These will be timed, 10 minute quizzes geared towards testing your comprehension of the week's readings and lectures. These will be available to you on Canvas and should be taken after you have completed all of your readings, discussion posts, and lectures. Weekly reading quizzes are due on Saturday of each week by 11:59 PM.

Short Essays: You will have three short essays throughout the course of the term. These essays will be 3-4 pages each and will be due in Weeks 5, 9, and 12 respectively. Prompts for the essays will be posted 1-2 weeks before the due date, and further instructions will be elaborated then. These essays are to be turned in on Canvas. All essays will be evaluated through Canvas' plagiarism detection software, Vericite.

Final Exam: There will be one final, cumulative exam.

Important information about the final exam:

1. You must take all of the exams for this course at a University approved secure testing center. *If you cannot make accommodations to take the exam at a university approved secure testing location, you cannot take this course. No exceptions.*
2. If you have never taken an online course at the University of Oregon, the FIRST thing you need to do is create an account through Distance Education (DE) where you will schedule your exams: <https://distanceeducation.uoregon.edu/wizard/index.html>
3. If you are in Eugene during this course, you will take your exams at the SSIL testing center in McKenzie Hall (map here: <https://distanceeducation.uoregon.edu/information/map>).
 - Note: you cannot schedule your exams more than two weeks in advance and you must bring your student ID. For more information about on campus testing policies, see here: https://distanceeducation.uoregon.edu/information/on_campus
4. If you are not in Eugene during the course, it is your responsibility to make arrangements to schedule your exams at a University approved testing center. In addition to the items below, you should read the off-campus testing policies here: https://distanceeducation.uoregon.edu/information/off_campus
 - If you are in Portland, there is a University approved testing center in the White Stag building (more info here: <https://distanceeducation.uoregon.edu/information/portland>)
 - If you are not in the Eugene or Portland area, you MUST obtain a remote proctor who is willing to administer the test through the DE website
 - The University will only verify *one* remote proctor per term for you to take all of your tests through. Please find a proctor that you can use throughout the term. This must be done before the end of the second week of the term. If no proctor can be established, the student must drop the class. If the class is dropped after the first week, the student will *not* receive a full refund. *Begin this process as soon as possible.*
 - A list of previously approved proctors is here: https://distanceeducation.uoregon.edu/information/remote_sites

- *If none of these proctors will work for you, it is up to you to find a proctor.* Searching the websites of academic institutions near you is often an effective way to find out if someone there is willing to proctor students. The NCTA [1] website also has a large list of proctors, *but be aware that often these remote sites have sizable fees.*
- For more information about remote proctors, see here:
https://distanceeducation.uoregon.edu/information/off_campus

Course Information

Readings:

All readings will be available to you as excerpts under *Files*, organized by unit.

Office hours:

I intend on making myself very available to you over e-mail throughout the course. I will do my best to respond to each e-mail in a timely manner, but there will be some times that I will be traveling or otherwise unavailable, so please expect to wait up to *24 hours* for a response during the week and up to *48 hours* for a response over weekends. I will not be holding regular office hours on campus, but can meet in-person by appointment between June 20th-July 5th, and between August 8th-September 10th. Throughout the course I will also be available over Skype.

Academic Honesty:

The University Student Conduct Code (available at conduct.uoregon.edu) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. By way of example, students should not give or receive (or attempt to give or receive) unauthorized help on assignments or examinations without express permission from the instructor. Students should properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas) and use only the sources and resources authorized by the instructor. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the students' obligation to clarify the question with the instructor before committing or attempting to commit the act. Additional information about a common form of academic misconduct, plagiarism, is available at: <http://library.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/index.html>.

By registering in this online course, you are further agreeing that you have only one account, and that no other individual is completing the tasks on your behalf. All discussion posts and assignments must be your own work, and you will sign a document stating such before turning in each written assignment.

Accessibility:

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoacc@uoregon.edu.

Grading rubric for written assignments:

The following rubric reflects the general standards of the Philosophy Department of the University of Oregon:

A= Excellent. No Mistakes, well-written, and distinctive in some way or other.

B= Good. No significant mistakes, well-written, but not distinctive in any way.

C= OK. Some errors, but a basic grasp of the material.

D= Poor. Several errors. A tenuous grasp of the material.

F= Failing. Problematic on all fronts indicating either no real grasp of the material or a complete lack of effort.

Please note: what counts as ‘excellent’ or ‘OK,’ for example, depends in part upon the nature and level of the class in question.

Course Schedule

Unit One: On the Nature of the Political

Week One (6/20-6/24)

Plato, *The Republic* (54pgs)

Book I: 327a-345b; 354a-c

Book II: 368d-381c

Book III: 414d-415d (noble lie)

Book IV: 427d-435b

Week Two (6/27-7/1)

Hobbes, *The Leviathan* (31pgs)

Introduction

Part I: chapters 13, 14

Part II: chapters 17, 21

Week Three (7/4-7/8)

Locke, *Second Treatise on Govt* (35pgs)

Chapters 1-5; 7-9

Week Four: (7/11-7/15)

Rousseau, *Social Contract* (42pgs)

Books I, II

Week Five (7/18-7/22)

Marx, “Estranged Labor” (8pgs)

“On the Jewish Question: Part One” (15pgs)

Communist Manifesto (20pgs)

****Essay #1 due by Sunday, July 24, at 11:59 PM**

Unit Two: Writing the History of Human Nature

Week Six (7/25-7/29)

Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*

Preface; Part One; Part Two

Week Seven (8/1-8/5)

Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*

Week Eight (8/8-8/12)

Foucault, "Right of Death and Power of Life"

"The Body of the Condemned"

"Docile Bodies"

"Panopticism"

"Space, Knowledge, and Power"

Week Nine (8/15-8/19)

Lugones, "Playfulness, 'World'-Traveling, and Loving Perception (16pgs)

"Tactical Strategies of the Streetwalker Theorist" (25pgs)

***Essay #2 due by Sunday, August 21 at 11:59pm*

Unit Three: The Nature of Freedom

Week Ten (8/22-8/26)

Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (43pgs)

"The Origin of Negation," "Negations," "The Origin of Nothingness," "Bad Faith and Falsehood," "Patterns of Bad Faith," "The 'Faith' of Bad Faith," "The Existence of Others," "Freedom and Responsibility"

Week Eleven (8/29-9/2)

Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (36pgs)

"Introduction"

"The Independent Woman"

Week Twelve (9/5-9/9)

Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (34pgs)

"Introduction"

"The Fact of Blackness"

***Essay #3 due by Sunday, September 11 at 11:59pm*

The final exam is to be proctored between September 12-14, times and locations TBD.