

Philosophy 110 Human Nature Syllabus

Summer 2017 | CRN: 41764

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Course Description

Welcome to your online Human Nature course! In this course we will be discussing the particular attributes that define humans and human existence. We will consider the following questions. What is a human being? Where do humans come from? What attributes define humans from other living creatures? Based on these considerations, what kind of lives should humans lead? What sorts of political structures allow us to lead the best lives and are the most justified? What are the forces that shape our identities as humans, and how do we make sense of those identities? Are humans free or are our lives predetermined?

As we delve into an investigation of our human condition, we will consider various facets of human experience in four different units. In the first week we will look at religious, spiritual, and scientific narratives that try to explain how humans came to be. We will consider how these various origins stories have shaped later conceptions of human nature, human ability, and human sociality and politics.

The second unit will consider the social and political aspect of human experience. We will explore the ways in which our human nature is 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? Where do our human rights come from and are they inherent or arbitrary?

Human identity and the aspects of our society that shape that identity will occupy our third unit. In this section of the course we consider whether or not our identities are given to us or if we make them ourselves. We will also look at the social and political forces that determine what is “normal” and what is “abnormal” for human behavior and sociality. What impact does gender, social status, skin color, sexual orientation, and educational background have on our identities? Are we born a certain way or do we choose who we become?

In our final unit we will take an existentialist approach to human nature that raises the question of what it means to be a human being. One of our primary focuses in this unit will be the issue of human freedom and our ability to shape our own identities, futures, experiences, and even human being itself. Through this survey of topics and readings you will have the opportunity to think about how our origin stories help to create a framework for human experience, analyze some of the social and political structures that reflect and reinforce that experience, and then, finally, question the basis of those structures to open up the opportunity for infinite human possibility.

Learning Objectives

- Critical reading: Students will learn to identify the positions being advocated for in each reading, the assumptions being made about human nature by each author, and the implications of each position. Students will take an inquisitive and charitable approach to all readings.

- Critical writing through discussion: Students will 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.

Contacting Your Instructor

Because this is an online course, I will not hold regular office hours. I will be available to meet by appointment only at my office on campus or through the discussion and chat functionalities on Canvas. I will also be reachable by email. Because this is a summer course I may not be able to respond to your emails immediately. During the work week I will respond within 24 hours, and during weekends within 48 hours.

*** Managing Your Time ***

This is an online course. All discussions, quizzes, essays, exams, readings, and lectures will be available through Canvas. **This is a 10 week course condensed into 4 weeks.** Because of this, in order to do well in this course, **you should expect to spend a *minimum* of three hours per day** completing the readings, reviewing the lecture slides, and finishing your weekly assignments. To ensure that you do not fall behind, you should plan to complete one reading assignment and one lecture/set of lecture slides each week day.

Grade Breakdown:

8 Discussion Assignments	4% each	32%
4 Reading Quizzes	5% each	20%
Midterm Essay Exam		24%
Final Essay Exam		24%

Texts and Lectures:

All texts and lectures will be made available on Canvas. Lectures will consist entirely of slides. You will be expected to read the lectures slides and the assigned text. Since each unit is 5 days long, prepare to complete one lecture with its accompanying reading assignments per day. Due to the structure of this course, you are expected to take on the responsibility of self-study.

Weekly Discussions:

You may at any time post a topic for discussion or ask me a question on the discussion board. If you have a question about the text, chances are others in the class have questions about it, too. I will try to clarify any elements of the text or lectures that you find confusing in the discussion threads.

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. You are to contribute to *two discussion* posts per week. They should be thoughtful, articulate, and substantive. **Discussions will be made available by Tuesday of each unit and are due on the Friday of each week by 11:59 PM.**

Each week you will need to write (at least) one of the following types for your two 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 weekly lectures (cite the relevant lecture)

Basic requirements of each post:

- * Posts should be around 150-200 words
- * Each post must be about a **different** reading
- * Use language that is professional and respectful of the texts and your classmates
- * 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 classmate's post

Each post will be graded on a 4-point scale, for a total of 8 possible points per week.

4 = Very thoughtful and well-articulated, makes an original point, offers a clear and strong analysis of a central idea or key passage of the text or raises a relevant and meaningful question, respectful and charitable, shows exemplary understanding of texts and lectures

3 = Thoughtful, offers a clear analysis with textual support or raises a good question, charitable, few writing mistakes, has few inaccuracies, demonstrates good understanding of texts and lectures, meets requirements

2 = Not very clear, provides only a surface analysis or asks a superficial question, meets requirements, is somewhat accurate, has some writing mistakes, demonstrates some understanding of texts and lectures

1 = Poorly articulated and unclear, missing components, inaccurate, disrespectful, does not meet requirements, demonstrates little understanding of texts or lectures

0 = No post

Weekly Reading Quizzes:

These will be *timed, 10 - 15 minute* multiple-choice 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 Friday of each week by 11:59 PM.

Essay Exams:

There will be two take-home essay exams during this course, each equal to 24% of your grade. The exams will consist of several short answer questions as well as two longer essay questions. The first exam will be at the end of the second week. The final exam will be at the

end of the fourth week. You will have 24 hours to complete the exams once you begin. More instructions will be forthcoming closer to the time of the first exam.

Late Assignments and Extensions:

NO late assignments and NO extensions will be given unless you have proof of a documented emergency.

Academic Honesty

There will be zero tolerance for plagiarism in this course. Plagiarized assignments will receive a 0, the student will automatically fail the course, and their name will be given to the university authorities. In order to avoid plagiarizing from a source, both direct quotations and paraphrases or summaries of material found in traditional print media or on the internet must be acknowledged.

If you have any questions about how this definition will be interpreted, please do not hesitate to discuss the matter with me. For more on the University of Oregon policy on plagiarism, see the following website: <http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/>

External Sources

Using sources not listed on the syllabus is fine as long as they are to the point and are properly cited. And at all times, when in doubt, cite your sources! It is the best way to avoid being accused of plagiarism.

Accessibility

If you have a documented disability and require special accommodations for this course, please let me know immediately. I will work with the Accessible Education Center to find a solution for you.

Readings

There are no books or textbooks for this class. All readings will be posted on Canvas. The readings and lecture slides will be available in the Modules section of the course.

An important note: This is a 100 level class, but the readings are not 100-level. They are at times complex and difficult, and studying philosophy at any level requires navigating intricate texts. You should prepare to give yourself plenty of time to complete the readings and even reread them for comprehension.

When writing take-home exams, you should work primarily with the readings, **not** the lecture slides. Depending too much on lecture slides for the exams and discussions will result in a lower grade.

Course Schedule

All readings, lectures, and assignments for a unit (1 week) will be made available no later than the day before the date listed on the schedule below. All discussion posts and quizzes for that unit will be due at the end of the unit (Friday).

Unit 1: Humans as Created Beings, June 26 - 30

7/24: Lecture 1: Introduction; *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures*, “Genesis,” 1 - 4; Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, “Man as Image of God and Creature” pages 161-184 (28 pgs)
Recommended: Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, “The Christian View of Man” pages 12-18 (6 pgs)

7/25: Nasr, *The Heart of Islam*, selections (35 pgs)

7/26: Onieda Indian Nation, “Sky Woman Falls to Earth”; Atleo, *Tsawalk*, “How Son of Raven Captured the Day”; Deloria, *God is Red*, “The Problem of Creation”; Cordova, *How It Is*, “What is the World?” (34 pgs)

7/27: Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, chapter 2 (35 pgs)

7/28: Plato, *Symposium*, “A Gathering of Friends” and “Aristophanes’ Speech” (12 pgs)

First set of weekly discussions and first quiz due 11:59 PM Friday, 7/28.

Unit 2: Humans as Political Beings, July 3 - 7

7/31: Plato, *Republic*, “Book II” to middle of page 1012 (14 pgs)

8/1: Hobbes, *Leviathan* “Introduction” and chapters 13, 14, 17, 18 to page 236 (35 pgs)

Recommended: Chapter 21 (6 pgs)

8/2: Locke, *The Second Treatise on Civil Government*, chapters 2 - 5 (22 pgs)

8/3: Mills, *The Racial Contract*, Chapter 1 pgs 9-19 and 31-40, and Chapter 2 pgs 53-62 and 81-89 (40 pgs)

Recommended: All pages in *The Racial Contract* selection not listed above (31 pgs)

8/4: United Nations, “U.N. Declaration of Human Rights”; Sen, “Elements of a Theory of Human Rights”; Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, “The Perplexities of the Rights of Man” (25 pgs)

Second set of weekly discussions and second quiz due 11:59 PM Friday, 8/4

FIRST TAKE HOME EXAM DUE MONDAY 8/7 at 5:00 PM

Unit 3: Humans as Socially Shaped Beings, July 10 - 14

8/7: Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, “Right of Death and Power of Life” and *Discipline and Punish*, “Docile Bodies” pgs 135-141 (36 pgs)

Recommended: “Docile Bodies” pgs 141-169 and “Panopticism”

8/8: Hacking, “Making Up People” and Liu, *The Accidental Asian* (40 pgs)

8/9: Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality*, “What is Intersectionality?” and “Intersectionality and Identity” (50 pgs)

8/10: Lugones, “Playfulness, ‘World’-Traveling, and Loving Perception” (32 pgs)

8/11: No readings ☺ work on your discussions and quiz

Third set of weekly discussions and third quiz due 11:59 PM Friday, 8/11

Unit 4: Humans as Free Beings, July 17 - 21

8/14: Sartre, “Existentialism is a Humanism” (24 pgs)

8/15: Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, “Introduction” (13 pgs)

8/16: Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, “Introduction” and “The Lived Experience of the Black Man” (38 pgs)

8/17: Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, chapters 1 and 2 (42 pgs)

8/18: Work on your final

Fourth set of weekly discussions and fourth quiz due 11:59 PM Friday, 8/18

FINAL TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE SATURDAY AT 8/19 5:00 PM