

Philosophy of Human Nature Syllabus

Phil 134 – Philosophy of Human Nature

Professor Jordan Daniels

MWF 1:00pm-1:50pm

Rich Building 211

Office: Bowden 109

Office Hours: 12:00-12:45pm T, 2:00-3:00pm W, by appointment

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Course Description and Objectives:

Philosophy poses such questions as: “What is truth?” “What is just?” “What can we hope for?” “Who are we?” The task of philosophy is to maintain these questions and their rich history of answers to better understand our reality. In this course, we will pursue these questions as they relate to the issue of human nature, while we simultaneously examine how we are to understand claims about human nature. The objective for this class is that you develop a more sophisticated understanding of what it means to pose the question of human nature. Another desired outcome of the class is that with careful attention to the texts, each student will discover what it means to read and write philosophically while pursuing these questions. To this end, I will give extensive feedback on the series of one page responses and your midterm paper. This class should function as an introduction to these themes and to philosophical questions and methods more broadly.

In this class, we will first look at how Kant conceives of human nature, especially in relation to morality. We will then read Nietzsche’s analysis of the development of morality in *history*, paying particular attention to the consequences of such a refocusing for a conception of human nature. Once we have a grounding in a historical context for the question of human nature, we will explore what kind of being the human is in relation to labor, psychological drives, and gender. Using these tools, in the last several weeks we will then analyze human beings under specific social and political structures, namely capitalism and colonialism.

Required Texts:

Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy) ISBN-13: 978-1107401068

Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo* (Vintage) ISBN-13: 978-0679724629

Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Norton) ISBN-13: 978-0393007695

Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (2nd Edition) (Beacon) ISBN-13: 978-0807014172

Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Grove Press) ISBN-13: 978-0802141323

PDF Articles—on Canvas, print copies and bring them to class

It is crucial that you purchase or rent these editions. You **must** bring hard copies of the text to class. You may find these books in the Emory bookstore, or you may opt to buy them online (and eBay is a great resource here!). You may also want to consider renting these books

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from the library, even requesting them via interlibrary loan. Computers will not be allowed in class, so please remember to print the pdf readings off canvas.

Course Requirements:

1. **One Page Responses:** You will be asked to write three responses—**no more than one page, single spaced**—that are due at the start of class on the days noted on the syllabus. The assignments will be provided in class. The purpose of these responses is for you to practice a method of close, exegetical reading and interpretation of the texts. The one page responses are graded according to accuracy (4 points), organization (4 points), and depth (4 points).

2. **Short Paper:** A short paper of around 4 pages will be due **via email** at the start of class on March 26, 2018. In this paper, you will be asked to compare and contrast the positions we will have worked through in class, and you will receive a prompt in the weeks before. You will be asked to take a position and argue for it, so please meet with me if you would like to discuss your thesis. This paper will be graded according to the following rubric: accuracy (3 points), organization (3 points), depth (3 points), and argument (3 points).

3. **Final Paper:** A final paper of 6-7 pages will be due **via email** at the end of the term by 11:59 pm on May 8, 2018. The final paper may build on the ideas present your shorter papers, but it must be a distinct piece of writing. Prompts will be provided, but we can discuss if you would like to write on your own topic. This will be graded again according to the following rubric: accuracy (3 points), organization (3 points), depth (3 points), and argument (3 points). We will discuss more in class.

4. **Participation:** While there will be some lecturing, much of this course will be discussion-based and there will occasionally be group work. Courteous and active engagement in class discussion is a big part of this course, although active participation may take different forms for each student, such as active listening, participation in class discussion, attending office hours, etc. Even if shy, I encourage each student to try to speak more over the course of the semester, whether that means offering your own interpretations to the whole class or in group work a bit more often, posing questions (not necessarily answers!) to me or your peers, or coming to discuss the readings with me one-on-one. It is essential that each member of the class treat one another **with respect**.

5. **Attendance:** For each unexcused absence beyond three, your grade will go down one full letter. Unexcused tardiness beyond 15 minutes counts as an unexcused absence.

6. **Critical Thinking Component = Pass/Fail**

This is a four-credit class. Attendance and participation, writing assignment and exams will comprise three out of the four credits. Students will earn their fourth credit by completing a mandatory online component designed to equip them with basic critical thinking skills. All students in introductory philosophy courses are required to complete this online component. It is a self-guided course, located on the course's Canvas site, that focuses on informal logic. It has 13 short online tests, all of which must be passed by two weeks before the end of the course. While this component is not graded, it is a condition of passing the course as a whole. In other words, **failure to complete this component will result in the**

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student not passing the course, regardless of grades earned on other course requirements.

Grades:

3 One Page Responses: 30%

Short Paper: 20%

Final Paper: 40%

Participation, Preparation, Attendance: 10%

Critical Thinking Component: P/F

For your papers, you will be graded on the following categories:

Accuracy – clear, concise, excellent grasp of the material, free of errors

Organization – well-structured presentation of your ideas, proper length, compliance with assignment

Depth – sophistication of analysis, critical engagement with the ideas and questions involved

Argument – unique thesis of your own, coherence of argumentation (*not applicable to one page responses)

Non-Sexist Use of Language: We academics no longer use “man” or “mankind” to refer to the entirety of humanity or a hypothetical person. This extends to written work as well as discussions, and it will serve you well throughout the rest of your professional lives.

Students with Disabilities: Emory University complies with the regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and offers accommodations to students with disabilities. If you are in need of a classroom accommodation, please make an appointment with me to discuss this as soon as possible. All information will be held in the strictest confidence. Please visit this website to learn about Emory’s Office for Accessibility Services and its resources and guidelines:

<http://equityandinclusion.emory.edu/access/students/index.html>

Technology in the Classroom: You are not allowed to use any electronic instrument during class, unless it is to accommodate a certified disability. Students who use their phones or laptops during class will be marked absent for the day.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else's product, words, ideas, or data as one's own work. When a student submits work for credit that includes the product, words, ideas, or data of others, the source must be acknowledged by the use of complete, accurate, and specific references, such as footnotes. By placing one's name on work submitted for credit, the student certifies the originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgements. On written assignments, if verbatim statements are included, the statements must be enclosed by quotation marks or set off from regular text as indented extracts. If you are caught plagiarizing, you will fail the assignment. Stress and time-management issues are often what lead to thoughts of plagiarizing. If these are problems surrounding a particular assignment, speak to me and DO NOT PLAGIARIZE.

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Resources:

- Emory Honor Code: <http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policies-regulations/honor-code.html>
- Emory Writing Center: <http://writingcenter.emory.edu>
- Emory Peer Tutoring (EPASS): <http://college.emory.edu/oue/student-support/epass/tutoring.html>

Late Papers: Late papers will not be accepted, unless we have come to a prior agreement at least 72 hours prior to the deadline. A late paper is one turned in after the class session on the date it is due or the time given, if specified. For the sake of fairness, extensions will only be given for reasons of illness, academic conflict (too many exams and papers being due on a given day), or unusual circumstances. Again, you must speak to me well before the due date and provide a compelling reason in order to secure an extension.

I encourage all to meet with me when you are writing your responses and papers, but I will stop giving input on drafts of responses and papers starting 48 hours before their due dates.

This syllabus is subject to revision. CHECK CANVAS REGULARLY for possible changes to the schedule.

Reading Schedule:

Week One: Introductions; Morality

- January 17: Snow day
- January 19: Introduction

Week Two: Morality

- January 22: Kant, *Groundwork*, Preface, Section I
- January 24: Kant, *Groundwork*, Section I
- January 26: Kant, *Groundwork*, Section I

Week Three: Morality

- January 29: Kant, *Groundwork*, Section II
- January 31: Kant, *Groundwork*, Section II
- February 2: Kant, *Groundwork*, Section II

Week Four: Morality

- February 5: Langton, "Duty and Desolation" (on Canvas)
- February 7: Langton, "Duty and Desolation" (on Canvas)
- February 9: Kant conclusion **One page response (on Kant) due**

Week Five: Genealogy

- February 12: Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, Preface & First Essay
- February 14: Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, Preface & First Essay
- February 16: Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, Preface & First Essay

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Week Six: Genealogy

- February 19: Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay
- February 21: Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay
- February 23: Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay

Week Seven: Laboring Humanity

- February 26: Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844)*, 283-301 (on Canvas)
- February 28: Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844)*, 301-314 (on Canvas)
- March 2: Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844)*, 283-314 (on Canvas)

One Page Response (on Nietzsche) due

Week Eight: Natural Drives

- March 5: Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 3-25
- March 7: Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 26-51
- March 9: Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 52-78

Week Nine: Spring Break

- March 12: No class
- March 14: No class
- March 16: No class

Week Ten: Gendered Nature

- March 19: Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Introduction (on Canvas)
- March 21: Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Introduction (on Canvas)
- March 23: Beauvoir, Ethics of Ambiguity selections (on Canvas)

Week Eleven: Nature and Society

- March 26: Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, Ch. 1 **Short Paper due via email**
- March 28: Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, Ch. 1
- March 30: Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, Ch. 1

Week Twelve: Nature and Society

- April 2: Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, Ch. 3
- April 4: Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, Ch. 3
- April 6: Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, Ch. 3

Week Thirteen: Political Subject

- April 9: Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Ch. 1
- April 11: Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Ch. 1
- April 13: Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Ch. 1

Week Fourteen: Political Subject

- April 16: Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Ch. 1
- April 18: Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Ch. 5
- April 20: Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Ch. 5

One Page Response (on Fanon) due

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Week Fifteen: Political Subject

- April 23: Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Ch. 5
- April 25: Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, conclusion
- April 27: Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, conclusion

Week Sixteen: Conclusion

- April 30: Wrap-up, evaluations

May 8th: **Final Paper due by 11:59 pm.** Submit electronically.