

EMORY UNIVERSITY  
BASIC PROBLEMS OF PHILOSOPHY:  
ON NATURE

Summer 2019

PHIL-100-1

Synchronous Sessions: 1:00 – 2:00 MTWTh

Virtual Office Hours: by appointment

Professor Jordan Daniels

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Philosophy poses such questions as: “What is truth?” “What is just?” “What can we hope for?” “Who are we?” Philosophy continues to pose these questions and maintains their rich history of answers to better understand our reality. In this introductory course, we will pursue these themes alongside this central framing question: *What is nature?* And why would one call it a “problem” for philosophy?

We will tackle these questions in four modules. In the first module, we will unpack the relation between two key concepts for the class—nature and history—with special attention to the ways some scholars think these terms to have changed in our time of anthropogenic climate change. We will compare the usefulness of the terms “Anthropocene” and “Capitalocene” for understanding our geological and historical moment. In Module 2, we will interrogate how gendered, cultured, and raced differences are “naturalized.” We ground our inquiry in Simone de Beauvoir’s distinction of sex and gender in *The Second Sex*. In Module 3, we will address the question of whether morality is a distinctly human trait or if it is shared by some of our closest relatives in the animal kingdom by reading Frans de Waal’s book, *Primates and Philosophers*. Are we moral by nature or are we moral *despite* our nature? At stake in this question is whether it is reason alone that grants us the status as moral beings, or if emotions are also morally relevant. In the final module, we will read two works of fiction alongside Emerson’s seminal essays *On Nature*, and we will discuss different ways in which nature appears to us in our everyday, first-person lives.

**AN EXPLANATORY NOTE: THE ONLINE ASPECT**

In this unusual summer, all courses have been transferred to an online format, and this course, like all others, will be 100% online. We will cover the normal amount of material,

but we only have class meetings online for 4 hours per week (over six weeks). These “real-time” meetings (or synchronous sessions) will serve an important role for this class – allowing the usual give and take found in a traditional classroom.

The relatively short time devoted to synchronous sessions (and the limited material they can cover) means that a substantial portion of the course will involve work that you will do on your own. This work will, of course, involve the usual class readings, but it will also involve the digesting of the material via postings and online discussions. These are the “asynchronous” portion of the online class.

Both these components are very important for us to develop the kind of learning community and philosophical skills in introductory course provides.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**Participation:** Given how few synchronous sessions we have for this summer session, I expect regular attendance at those. You are allowed one unexcused absence from a synchronous session without penalty. **You will receive a deduction of 4 points from your final grade for every unexcused absence from the synchronous sessions.** I also reserve the right to add short quizzes prior to the online sessions if students do not seem prepared. These quizzes will count towards your participation grade. Please note that if I take roll during a synchronous session and you do not respond promptly, you will be counted as “absent.”

**Quizzes:** You will take 2 short quizzes. The first quiz covers the syllabus and course requirements. The second quiz covers the main concepts in the De Waal readings.

**Daily Quotes:** For almost every class session, you will be required to post a “Daily Quote” on Canvas. For this assignment, you submit a 1-2 sentence quote from the reading that captures the author’s main argument (or an important part of the main argument). Please make sure to include the page number and citation for the quote. In past classes, the Daily Quote requirement has enabled students to focus on the readings more closely. There are 10 Daily Quotes due, plus three optional Daily Quotes. You can complete the optional Daily Quotes for extra credit or to make-up for a previous Daily Quote that you did not submit. Daily Quotes are worth 1 point each.

**Canvas Discussions:** These are chances for you to engage with your peers and synthesize the material we have been covering in the readings and in course meetings. Each

discussion is worth 5 points, 3 of which are based on your response to the discussion prompt, and 2 of which are based on your replies (2 minimum) to your peers' posts.

**Assignments:** You will complete two assignments during this summer session – a creative project and a final comparative paper of 5-7 pages. You will receive more information about these assignments in class.

Students are expected to adhere to the [Emory Honor Code](#) when completing all aspects of the class, including the assignments and final project.

ACTIVITY	SOFTWARE	POINTS
<u>Participation in online sessions</u>	Zoom	10
<u>Quizzes</u>	Canvas	3
<u>Daily Quotes</u>	Canvas	10
<u>Discussion Posts:</u>	Canvas	16
<u>Visualize the Anthropocene Assignment:</u>	Canvas	25
<u>Final Project:</u>	Canvas, Word	
- Project topic		1
- Project thesis		5
- Final project		30

### Late Assignment Policy

You will lose 50% of the possible points for any assignment that you submit late. The window for “late” depends upon the assignment. Canvas Discussion posts and Daily Quotes are considered “late” if they are submitted after the time that they are due (the software automatically gives your post a time and date stamp). If you post before our online class session, you will receive partial credit. Daily Quotes submitted after the synchronous class session begins (1:00 pm) will receive no credit. The Visualize the Anthropocene Assignment is considered late if it is submitted after the time/date that it is due.

### COURSE RESOURCES

As the semester progresses, class materials (e.g., asynchronous materials, lecture presentations) will be posted on [Canvas](#).

The assigned readings are drawn from many sources, so there is no textbook. Instead, the required readings will be available on our Canvas site and at [Woodruff Library's](#)

[online reserves](#). Check the Course Reserves tab on the left of the Canvas page and/or click on the Content and Resources tab under each week's headings. The week's readings or films will be available via ONE of those sources, so check BOTH before emailing. Also, I have listed instructions for you to access the entirety of Frans de Waal's *Primates and Philosophers* via Emory Libraries starting Week 4.

If you have any special needs, please contact me at the beginning of the semester and we will discuss the necessary arrangements (see [Emory's Access, Disability Services and Resources](#)).

**Logging onto Zoom for the synchronous sessions:** For our synchronous sessions, please go to the Zoom link in Canvas (in the Assignments file or Modules file) and log in as a guest. You should just type your name (or preferred name). A password is required. (Please view the video on using Zoom before our first synchronous session.)

**Software and Technical Requirements:** Information on the software we will be using and the technical requirements for the online class are located at the end of the syllabus. Please note that there are video tutorials on Canvas for each of the software packages (Zoom; Canvas).

**One more important piece of information....**

Canvas may be down occasionally for maintenance. Please plan ahead!

## CONTACT

I prefer if you contact me via email at [jldani3@emory.edu](mailto:jldani3@emory.edu) rather than through Canvas.

# COURSE SCHEDULE

Topic	SYNCHRONOUS AND ASYNCHRONOUS ACTIVITY	Time due	Date due
<b>MODULE 0: GETTING STARTED</b>			
<p>*** NOTE: You are expected to complete these activities BEFORE the first synchronous class session. Complete them by 11AM so that we can identify and fix any problems before the first synchronous class session ***</p>			
<b>Getting Started</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch the Getting Started with Zoom video</li> <li>• Read the course Syllabus and Assignment Schedule</li> <li>• Take Quiz #1: Syllabus and Requirements</li> <li>• Canvas Discussion: Introductions and icebreaker (1 pt): Please tell us where you are living this summer, your name, and something about your first name. For instance, is it a family name? Is it a name you never use, preferring a nickname instead? Etc.</li> </ul>	11:00 AM	5/18 (M)
	<b>SYNCHRONOUS SESSION</b> (Click on the Zoom link in the Canvas Announcements folder).	1:00 PM	5/18 (M)
<b>MODULE 1: HISTORY AND NATURE</b>			
<p><b>OBJECTIVES:</b> Explain what is meant by the concepts "Anthropocene" and "Capitalocene" and what each entails. Define what is meant by the concept, "anthropocentrism." Explain some consequences of these concepts for ecological and political efforts. Use creative methods to describe these ways of understanding our historical, ecological moment.</p>			
<b>Natural History</b>	<u>Read:</u> Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," <i>Critical Inquiry</i> 35 (Winter 2009): 197-222.	11:30 AM	5/19 (Tu)
	<u>Post Daily Quote #1:</u> Chakrabarty, "Climate of History"	12:00 PM	5/19 (Tu)
	<b>SYNCHRONOUS SESSION</b>	1:00 PM	5/19 (Tu)

<b>Anthropocene or Capitalocene?</b>	<u>Read:</u> Raj Patel and Jason W. Moore, "Introduction" in <i>A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things</i> (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017), 1-21.	11:30 AM	5/20 (W)
	<u>Post Daily Quote #2:</u> Raj Patel and Jason W. Moore, "Introduction," 1-21	12:00 PM	5/20 (W)
	<b>SYNCHRONOUS SESSION</b>	1:00 PM	5/20 (W)
	<u>Read:</u> Raj Patel and Jason W. Moore, "Introduction" in <i>A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things</i> , 21-43.	1:00 PM	5/21 (Th)
	<u>Visit:</u> <a href="https://pinkchickenproject.com/">https://pinkchickenproject.com/</a>	1:00 PM	5/21 (Th)
	<b>SYNCHRONOUS SESSION</b>	1:00 PM	5/21 (Th)
PROJECT	<b>REVIEW: VISUALIZE THE ANTHROPOCENE ASSIGNMENT</b>		5/21 (Th)
	<b>MEMORIAL DAY *** NO CLASS</b>		5/25 (M)
<b>Nature: What Is It Good For?</b>	<u>Read:</u> Descartes, <i>Meditations I-II</i> (pp. 45-58)	1:00 PM	5/26 (T)
	<u>Read:</u> Raj Patel and Jason W. Moore, "Cheap Nature," in <i>A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things</i> (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017), 44-63	1:00 PM	5/26 (T)
	<b>SYNCHRONOUS SESSION</b>	1:00 PM	5/26 (T)
	<u>Read:</u> Steven Vogel, "Against Nature" in <i>Thinking Like a Mall</i> (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 1-31.	11:30 AM	5/27 (W)
	<u>Post Daily Quote #3:</u> Steven Vogel, "Against Nature"	12:00 PM	5/27 (W)
	<b>SYNCHRONOUS SESSION</b>	1:00 PM	5/27 (W)
	<u>Read:</u> Kyle Whyte, <a href="https://biopoliticalphilosophy.com/2019/01/16/climate-change-an-unprecedentedly-old-catastrophe/">https://biopoliticalphilosophy.com/2019/01/16/climate-change-an-unprecedentedly-old-catastrophe/</a>	11:30 AM	5/28 (Th)

	<a href="https://inhabitingtheanthropocene.com/2017/01/25/the-roles-for-indigenous-peoples-in-anthropocene-dialogues-some-critical-notes-and-a-question/">https://inhabitingtheanthropocene.com/2017/01/25/the-roles-for-indigenous-peoples-in-anthropocene-dialogues-some-critical-notes-and-a-question/</a>		
	<u>Post Daily Quote #4: Whyte</u>	12:00 PM	5/28 (Th)
	<b>SYNCHRONOUS SESSION</b>	1:00 PM	5/28 (Th)
	<u>Post: Canvas Discussion #1</u>	5:00 PM	5/29 (F)
PROJECT	<b><u>VISUALIZE THE ANTHROPOCENE ASSIGNMENT:</u></b> <b>PART I DUE</b>	11:59 PM	5/31 (Su)
<b>MODULE 2: WHAT IS NATURAL IN CULTURE?</b>			
<b>OBJECTIVES:</b> Explain the difference between biological sex and the social category of gender. Explain the criticism of the use “natural” categories to explain social and cultural phenomena, especially social hierarchies.			
<b>Nature: Gendered and Raced</b>	<u>Read:</u> Simone de Beauvoir, “Introduction” in <i>The Second Sex</i> , trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 20), 3-17.	11:30 AM	6/1 (M)
	<u>Post Daily Quote #5:</u> Simone de Beauvoir, “Introduction”	12:00 PM	6/1 (M)
	<b>SYNCHRONOUS SESSION</b>	1:00 PM	6/1 (M)
	<u>Watch:</u> <a href="https://aeon.co/videos/simone-de-beauvoir-on-why-women-must-reject-the-feminine-to-become-free-and-equal">https://aeon.co/videos/simone-de-beauvoir-on-why-women-must-reject-the-feminine-to-become-free-and-equal</a>	1:00 PM	6/2 (T)
	<b>SYNCHRONOUS SESSION</b>	1:00 PM	6/2 (T)
	<u>Read:</u> Kate Soper, “Naturalized Woman and Feminized Nature” in <i>What is Nature?</i> (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 98-112, 116-118.	11:30 AM	6/3 (W)
	<u>Read:</u> Kate Soper, “Nature as Primitivity or ‘Cultural Other’” in <i>What is Nature?</i> (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 74-81.	11:30 AM	6/3 (W)

	<u>Post Daily Quote #6</u> : Kate Soper, "Naturalized Woman and Feminized Nature" OR "Nature as Primitivity or 'Cultural Other'"	12:00 PM	6/3 (W)
	<b>SYNCHRONOUS SESSION</b>	1:00 PM	6/3 (W)
PROJECT	<b><u>VISUALIZE THE ANTHROPOCENE ASSIGNMENT:</u></b> <b>PART II DUE</b>	12:00 PM	6/4 (Th)
PROJECT	<b>SYNCHRONOUS SESSION</b>	1:00 PM	6/4 (Th)
	<u>Post</u> : Canvas Discussion #2	5:00 PM	6/5 (F)
<b>MODULE 3: MORALITY AND NATURE</b>			
<b>OBJECTIVES:</b> Explain the difference between the Veneer Theory of Morality and an alternative picture of the evolution of social emotions. Evaluate the basis for arguing that we are moral <i>by nature</i> versus <i>despite</i> our nature. Connect these issues to political perspectives on how society should be organized.			
<b>Are We Good-Natured?</b>	<u>Read</u> : De Waal, <i>Primates and Philosophers</i> , 1-42	11:30 AM	6/8 (M)
	<u>Post Daily Quote #7</u> : De Waal reading	12:00 PM	6/8 (M)
	<b>SYNCHRONOUS SESSION</b>	1:00 PM	6/8 (M)
	<u>Read</u> : De Waal, <i>Primates and Philosophers</i> , 42-67	11:30 AM	6/9 (T)
	<u>Post Daily Quote #8</u> : De Waal reading	12:00 PM	6/9 (T)
	<b>SYNCHRONOUS SESSION</b>	1:00 PM	6/9 (T)
	<u>Read</u> : De Waal, 67-80	11:30 AM	6/10 (W)
	<u>Post Daily Quote #9</u> : De Waal reading	12:00 PM	6/10 (W)
	<b>SYNCHRONOUS SESSION</b>	1:00 PM	6/10 (W)
	<u>Watch</u> video: <i>Project Nim</i> — <b>NO SYNCHRONOUS SESSION</b>	1:00 PM	6/11 (Th)
	<u>Post</u> Canvas Discussion #3	8:00 PM	6/13 (Sa)
PROJECT	<b>REVIEW: FINAL PAPER ASSIGNMENT</b>		6/15 (M)



	<u>BLM Discussion/Project Nim</u>		6/15 (M)
	<b>SYNCHRONOUS SESSION</b>	1:00 PM	6/15 (M)
	<u>Read:</u> Robert Wright, "The Uses of Anthropomorphism," pp. 83-97	2:30 PM	6/16 (T)
	<u>Post Daily Quote #10:</u> EITHER Wright, "The Uses of Anthropomorphism"	3:00 PM	6/17 (T)
	<b>SYNCHRONOUS SESSION</b>	1:00 PM	6/17 (T)
	<u>Read:</u> Christine Korsgaard, "Morality and the Distinctiveness of Human Action," 98-120	4:45 PM	6/17 (W)
	<u>Post Daily Quote #11:</u> OR Korsgaard, "Morality and the Distinctiveness of Human Action"	5:00 PM	6/17 (W)
	<b>SYNCHRONOUS SESSION</b>	1:00 PM	6/17 (W)
	<u>Read:</u> Philip Kitcher, "Ethics and Evolution: How to Get Here from There"	12:00 PM	6/18 (Th)
	<u>Post Daily Quote #12:</u> OR Kitcher, "Ethics and Evolution: How to Get Here from There"	3:00 PM	6/18 (Th)
	<b>SYNCHRONOUS SESSION</b>	1:00 PM	6/18 (Th)
	<u>Quiz #2: De Waal</u>	<del>2:00PM</del>	<del>6/19 (F)</del>
PROJECT	<b>FINAL PAPER THESIS due on Canvas</b>	8:00 PM	6/22 (M)
<b>MODULE 4: NATURE IN OUR LIVES</b>			
<b>OBJECTIVES:</b> Explain the ways you experience nature in your daily life. Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the course materials through completing the final paper.			
	<u>Post Daily Quote #13:</u> OR Singer, "Morality, Reason, and the Rights of Animals"		
	<b>SYNCHRONOUS SESSION</b>	1:00 PM	6/22 (M)

	Read: Ralph Waldo Emerson, "On Nature"	12:00 PM	6/23 (Tu)
	<b>SYNCHRONOUS SESSION</b>	1:00 PM	6/23 (Tu)
	Watch: <i>Into the Wild</i> (Course Reserves)	12:30 PM	6/24 (W)
	<b>SYNCHRONOUS SESSION</b>	1:00 PM	6/24 (W)

**FINAL PAPER DUE: 11:59PM 6/30**