

PHL 303: Human Nature
Fall 2015
MWF 12:00-1:00
PAR 206

Instructor: Jerry Green
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Office: WAG 229
Hours: Friday 1:00-3:00

Course Description

Human nature lies at the foundation of several important questions. Before we know how it is we can know or learn things, or how we should behave, or what happens to us when we die, we have to first figure out what kind of thing we are. This will be the central question of this class: What does it mean to be human?

We will examine five attempts to answer this question, all of which come from the Classical Greek world. Why focus on the Greeks? For one, this is an intro-level philosophy course, and ancient Greece is where one version of philosophy began. More importantly, the Greeks took human nature very seriously, and most of the possible theories of human nature we might care about have a Greek antecedent. Focusing on different theories in a single culture allows us to (i) see how theories can vary even when the cultural context stays the same, and (ii) use a culture that is not our own to help illuminate our own assumptions, preferences, and biases.

But we won't spend all our time in classical Athens: we will also read recent work by leading anthropologists, economists, journalists, and psychologists that advocate contemporary versions of these same theories.

The main focus of this course, however, is not to learn what famous philosophers said, but to learn how to do what philosophers do. In particular, we will focus on practicing the following philosophical skills:

- Reading and understanding conceptually difficult texts
- Critically evaluating arguments and assumptions
- Communicating complex ideas clearly and efficiently

In other words, this course will be like a boot camp for learning to think and communicate clearly.

Course Materials

The majority of our readings will be pdfs posted to Canvas. But in addition to these you'll need the following two required texts:

Plato. *A Plato Reader: Eight Essential Dialogues*. C.D.C. Reeve (ed). Indianapolis, IN: Hackett. 2012.

Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. W.D. Ross & Leslie Brown (eds). Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2009.

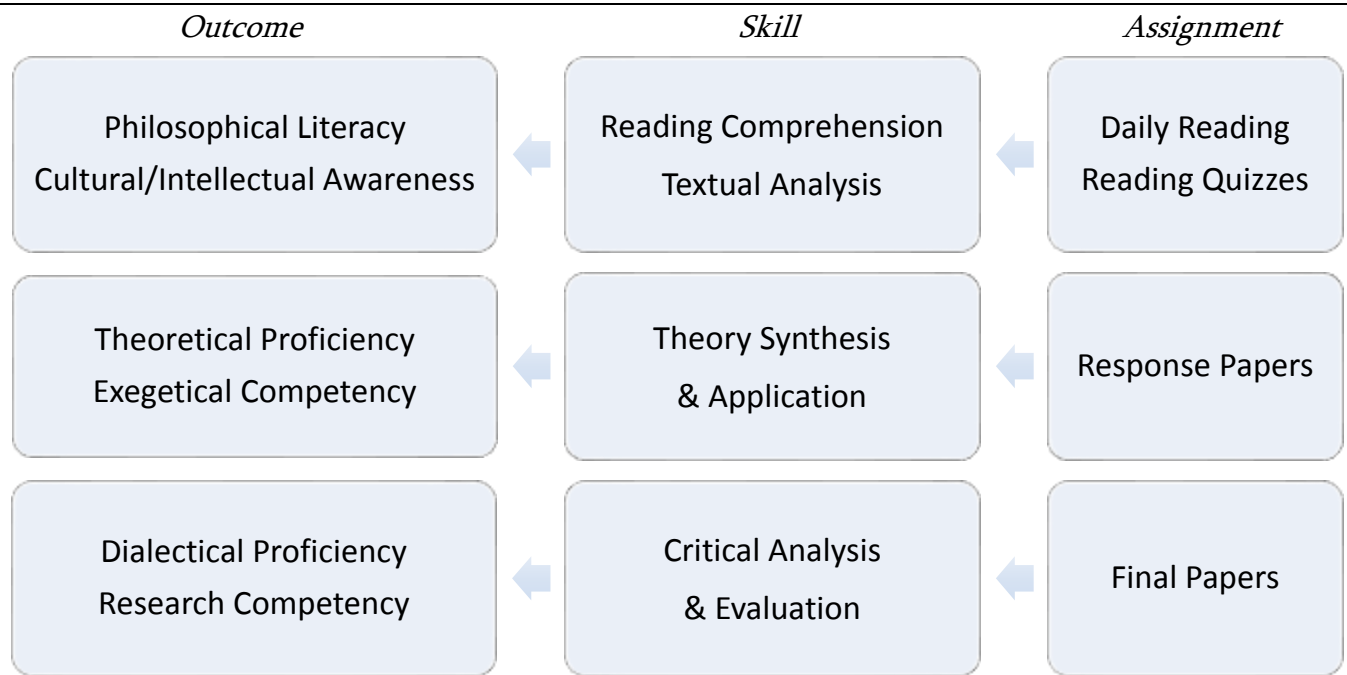
We'll also use a number of excerpts from this book, so it's recommended but not required:

A.A. Long & D.N. Sedley (eds.) *The Hellenistic Philosophers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1987

Other Resources

[Guide for Reading Philosophy](#) (Jim Pryor, NYU) [Guide for the Perplexed](#) (Dan Bonevac, UT Austin)
[Guide for Writing Philosophy](#) (Jim Pryor, NYU) [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) (various)

Learning Outcomes



Assignments

Reading

You'll have 30-50 pages of reading per week in this course, usually around 10 pages per day. This material is usually pretty difficult, and will require multiple read-throughs to fully grasp. On the plus side, I've excerpted only the relevant sections, so you won't have to waste your time reading passages that don't matter.

Daily Reading Quizzes

We will have in-class quizzes almost every day. These quizzes will use a variety of short-answer questions (multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, matching, etc). They will mainly test whether you're keeping up with the reading and paying attention in class. These should be easy points that you earn simply by keeping up in class (conversely, if you're doing poorly on these quizzes, it suggests that you're not putting in the requisite work).

Response Papers¹

We will cover five theories of human nature in this course. You will choose two of these theories to use as the basis for short (2-4 pp.) response papers. These papers will ask you to explain and evaluate a core concept or question involved in a theory of human nature. I will give you a series of prompts, or you may choose your own topic if I approve it first. These will be due one week after we've covered the theory you discuss in your paper.

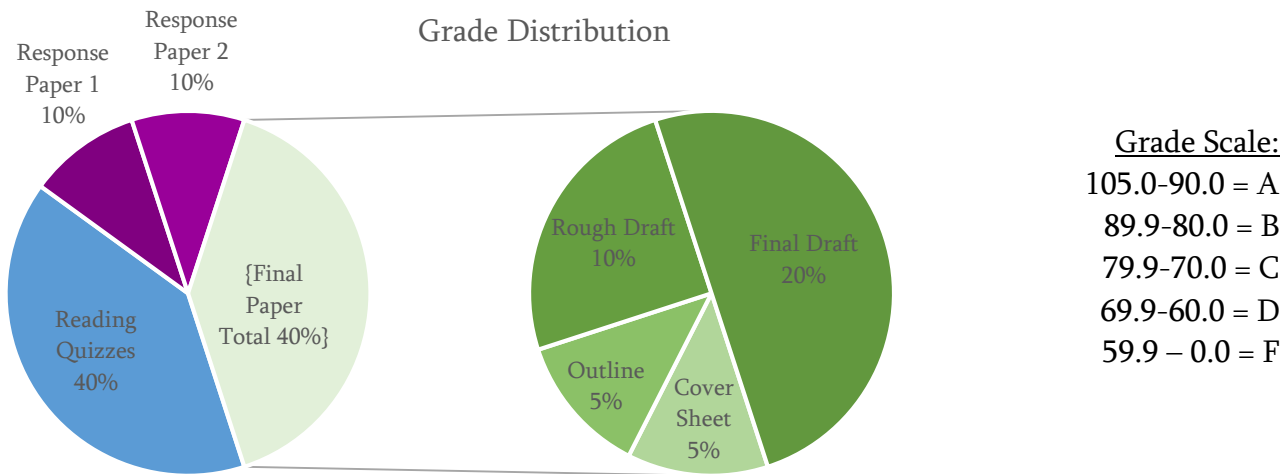
Final Paper²

In your final paper you'll write a short essay (6-10 pp.) focusing on one or more theories we've covered in class. This paper will make a sustained argument in favor of the theory you find most plausible, based both on logical reasoning and on applied research. You will be asked to (i) give a concise, accurate summary of your theory, and (ii) make a sustained case that your theory is a plausible one to endorse.

¹ I'll give you more details on these papers in a separate handout.

² Ditto

Grades



Quizzes: 160 questions, 0.25 points per question. You will have the chance to answer around 180 quiz questions over the course of the entire term, but only the top 160 will count. So, you can miss roughly four days' worth of quiz questions without hurting your grade.

Extra Credit: If you get less than an 80% on a response paper that was turned in on time, you can revise and resubmit it to earn up to an 8/10. You can also write a third response paper, worth up to 5 points.

Rounding: The letter grade cut off for, e.g. an A- is 90.0, not 89.5. But I may choose to round up in exceptional cases, if (i) I feel you've done better than your score suggests, and (ii) you have turned in all assignments on time. This is a courtesy, not an entitlement.

Late Work & Make-ups

Most of your assignments will be in-class. Because there's a built-in curve for quiz grades, you may not make-up a missed quiz. Response papers will be written out of class and submitted online; there will be a 1 pt. penalty for each day after the deadline. You may not revise and resubmit your response paper for extra credit if you did not turn it in on time.

For the components of your final paper, they must be turned in at the beginning of class on the assigned date. If you miss this deadline, you have 12 hours to turn it in for ½ credit. If you know you'll miss class on the day a writing assignment is due, email it to me instead. Your final paper will be submitted on Canvas during Finals Week: there will be a 2 pt. penalty for each date after the deadline.

Tech Policy

Computers, tablets, e-readers, etc., will not be allowed during class time. I know it sounds lame, but computers in class do [much more harm than good](#).

Three main reasons for this:

- 1) You might think you can multi-task well. [You are incorrect](#). Even if you are miraculously among the 2% of people who can multi-task well, the people sitting around you are not, and you will distract them.
- 2) Electronic texts are much [less effective](#) than paper for the kind of reading we'll be doing.
- 3) [It is well-documented that taking](#) notes by hand is much more effective than typing. If you want a digital version of your notes, scan them or, better, type them out after class.

So, unless you have an accommodation from SSD, you may not use electronic devices in class.

Honor Code & Academic Integrity

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are *learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility*. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

It is expected that any work you do in this course is the result of your academic efforts. University policies on academic dishonesty can be found [here](#). You are expected to be familiar with these policies; ignorance is not an excuse. In particular, you are required to:

- acknowledge the contributions of other sources to your scholastic efforts;
- complete your assignments independently unless expressly authorized to seek or obtain assistance in preparing them;
- follow instructions for assignments and exams, and observe the standards of your academic discipline; and
- avoid engaging in any form of academic dishonesty on behalf of yourself or another student.

Serious failures to maintain academic integrity in this course will result in the maximum possible penalty. At the very least, you will receive no credit for the assignment and be referred to Student Judicial Services for further review. Depending on the severity on the infraction, you could receive an F for the course, or be suspended or expelled from UT. Don't risk it. You can find tips for avoiding academic dishonesty [here](#).

Tl;dr: *Don't Cheat!* Ask for help instead.

Undergraduate Writing Center

The [Undergraduate Writing Center](#), located in the FAC 211, phone 512.471-6222, offers individualized assistance to students who want to improve their writing skills. There is no charge, and students may come in on a drop-in or appointment basis.

The UWC is a great service you should all take advantage of. It is not a “remedial” service: their services are available to all, and useful to all. I encourage all of you to make an appointment to get feedback on your paper.

Services for Students with Disabilities

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, see [here](#), or contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259, 471-4641 TTY.

If you need to make special accommodations in this course, let me know **immediately**. And do not let shyness or embarrassment stop you from getting the services you deserve: I've seen too many students allow their grades to suffer because they didn't speak up when they should have.

Religious Holidays

Religious holidays sometimes conflict with class and examination schedules. If you miss a work assignment or other project due to the observance of a religious holy day you will be given an opportunity to complete the work missed within a reasonable time after the absence. If you have a religious holiday during the Fall semester, let me know **immediately** so we can schedule around it.

*** If you take this course, you thereby agree to follow all course policies outlined here. ***

PHL 303: Human Nature - Schedule¹

| | <u>Topic</u> | <u>Assignment²</u> |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Unit 1: Protagoras | 8.26: Syllabus | *Human Nature Personality Quiz |
| | 8.28: The Sophists | *Barney (2009), 77-87 |
| | 8.31: Origin Myth | * <i>Protagoras</i> 320d-323a & DK B4; *Beresford (2013), 139-148 |
| | 9.02: Moral Education | * <i>Protagoras</i> 320d-328a; *Beresford (2013), 148-161 |
| | 9.04: <i>Euboulia</i> | * <i>Protagoras</i> 316b-320b; *Woodruff (2013), 179-82, 1881-93 |
| | 9.07: ----- LABOR DAY ----- | |
| | 9.09: Epistemology | *DK B1, <i>Theatetus</i> 166a-168c; *Woodruff (1985) 483-90, 496-7 |
| | 9.11: Ethical Animals | *du Waal (2006) 3-7, 42-49, 52-58 |
| Unit 2: Plato | 9:14: Origin Story | * <i>Timaeus</i> 28a-31b, 41a-45b |
| | 9.16: Immortality | <i>Phaedo</i> 70a-72e, 78c-84c |
| | 9.18: Afterlife | <i>Phaedrus</i> 245c-250c; <i>Symposium</i> 208e-202c |
| | 9.21: Forms | <i>Meno</i> 81a-81e; <i>Phaedo</i> 73a-77a, * <i>Cratylus</i> 439a-440e |
| | 9.23: Epistemology | <i>Republic</i> 507a-518d |
| | 9.25: Moral Psychology | <i>Phaedrus</i> 250c-257a |
| | 9.28: Virtues | <i>Republic</i> 434d-445c |
| | 9.30: The Good Life | <i>Phaedo</i> 63e-69e |
| | 10.02: Two Systems | *Kahnemann (2011) 21-31 |
| Unit 3: Aristotle | 10:04: Soul & Mortality | * <i>De Anima</i> II.1-4 |
| | 10:07: The Human Soul | <i>NE</i> 1.13, VI.1-2; * <i>Eudemian Ethic</i> II.1; * <i>Politics</i> 7.14 |
| | 10.09: Epistemology | <i>NE</i> VI.3-8; * <i>Posterior Analytics</i> II.19 |
| | 10.12: Ethics | <i>NE</i> I.1-5, 7-8 |
| | 10.14: Virtue | <i>NE</i> II.2-9 |
| | 10.16: Virtues | <i>NE</i> III.10-12, IV.1, 3-5, 7-9 |
| | 10.19: Social Virtues | * <i>Politics</i> I.1; <i>NE</i> V.1-4, 10 |
| | 10.21: Friendship | <i>NE</i> VIII.1-4, VIII.9-12 |
| | 10.23: The Self | <i>NE</i> IX.4, 8-12, V.9, 11 |
| | 10.26: Pleasure | <i>NE</i> VII.11-14, X. 1-5 |
| | 10.28: Happiness | <i>NE</i> X.6-8; * <i>Metaphysics</i> A.1-2 |
| | 10.30: Worthwhile Activity | *Pink (2009), 11-26, 45-50 |
| Unit 4: Stoics | 11.02: God & Kosmos | * <i>Hellenistic Philosophers</i> §46, §54.A-G |
| | 11.04: Providence | * <i>Hellenistic Philosophers</i> §54.H-U, §52 |
| | 11.06: Epistemology | * <i>Hellenistic Philosophers</i> §41; *Cicero III.17-29, 72-76 |
| | 11.09: Value | * <i>Hellenistic Philosophers</i> §58; *Seneca §76 |
| | 11.11: Virtue | *Epictetus §§1-33 |
| | 11.13: Happiness | *Burkeman (2012), Ch. 2 |
| Unit 5: Epicureans | 11.16: Atomism | *Epicurus <i>LtH</i> §33-45; *Lucretius I.950-1118 |
| | 11.18: Soul & Death | *Epicurus <i>LtH</i> §63-68, * <i>LtM</i> §124-135; *Lucretius III.93-255 |
| | 11.20: Hedonism | *Epicurus, <i>Maxims</i> |
| | 11.23: Delayed Gratification | *Mischel (2014), 10-23, 123-31 |
| | 11.25-7 ----- THANKSGIVING ----- | |
| | 11.30-12.04 | Writing Workshop |

¹ Important Dates: 8.31: Last registration day; 9.11: Last refundable add/drop day; 10.21: Credit/No Credit deadline

² * = PDF on Canvas