

PHL 244: Human Nature

University of Toronto, Fall 2021

Instructor: Dr. Owen Pikkert, owen.pikkert@mail.utoronto.ca

Lecture hours: Mondays 2:00 to 3:00 and Wednesdays 1:00 to 3:00 in IB 110 and online

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 11:00 to 12:00 (online)

Course description

This course is a survey of some influential views of human nature and the human condition in the Western tradition. Some examples include the view that humans are enslaved to the physical (Plato), blinded by pride (Pascal), victims of society (Rousseau), divisible into oppressor and oppressed (Marx and Engels), power-hungry (Nietzsche), radically free (Sartre), nothing but their brains (Smart), the accidental product of evolution and genes (Wilson), and subject to various forms of intersectional discrimination (Crenshaw). Our aim will be to master some of the main ideas and arguments of these and other authors.

Logistics

Evaluation: Two papers at 25% each (due on Oct 8 and Nov 19), a midterm at 20% (on Oct 27), and a final exam at 30% (date determined by Registrar's Office).

Readings: All the readings will be posted to Quercus. There is no textbook for this course.

Papers: Topics and instructions for papers will be posted at least three weeks before the deadline. Papers are to be 4 to 6 pages in length, double-spaced. Late papers will be penalized at 5% for each calendar day, and papers more than one week late will not be accepted.

Midterm and final exam: The midterm and final exam consist of a mixture of multiple choice and short answer questions, based on the lectures. Both the midterm and the final exam will be taken online via Quercus, and the instructor will be available to answer any questions that may arise. You will have 50 minutes to write the midterm, and 2 hours to write the final exam (thus the final exam will obviously have more questions than the midterm). Note that while the final exam is cumulative, the majority of questions will be on material covered since the midterm.

Extensions: To request an extension, please follow [these instructions](#). Note also the late penalties as described above. Busyness is not an adequate excuse.

Email policy: Only use email for short logistical questions that are not already answered on Quercus. Philosophical and textual questions are best saved for office hours. Emails will typically receive a response within a couple of days.

Lecture recordings and copyright: This course, including your participation, will be recorded on video and will be available to students in the course for viewing remotely and after each session. The recordings will be available on the Zoom Cloud. Course videos and materials belong to your instructor, the University, and/or other sources depending on the specific facts of each situation and are protected by copyright. In this course, you are permitted to download session videos and materials for your own academic use, but you should not copy, share, or use them for any other purpose without the explicit permission of the instructor. For questions about the recording and use of videos in which you appear, please contact your instructor.

Plagiarism detection tool: Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the [Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site](#).

Academic integrity

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student's individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto's [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the process for addressing academic offences. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:

1. Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
2. Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
3. Making up sources or facts.
4. Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment.

On tests and exams:

1. Using or possessing unauthorized aids.
2. Looking at someone else's answers during an exam or test.
3. Misrepresenting your identity.

In academic work:

1. Falsifying institutional documents or grades.
2. Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes.

With regard to remote learning and online courses, UTM wishes to remind students that they are expected to adhere to Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters regardless of the course delivery method. By offering students the opportunity to learn remotely, UTM expects that students will maintain the same academic honesty and integrity that they would in a classroom setting. Potential academic offences in a digital context include, but are not limited to:

Remote assessments:

1. Accessing unauthorized resources (search engines, chat rooms, Reddit, etc.) for assessments.
2. Using technological aids (e.g. software) beyond what is listed as permitted in an assessment.
3. Posting test, essay, or exam questions to message boards or social media.
4. Creating, accessing, and sharing assessment questions and answers in virtual "course groups."
5. Working collaboratively, in-person or online, with others on assessments that are expected to be completed individually.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor or from other institutional resources.

Information security

If you are a citizen of another country, and/or accessing your courses at the University of Toronto from a jurisdiction outside of Canada, then please note that you may be subject to the laws of the country in which you are residing, or any country of which you have citizenship. The University of Toronto has a long-established commitment to freedom of expression, with this right enabled by an environment valuing respect, diversity, and inclusion. In your classes, you may be assigned readings or discuss topics that are against the law in other jurisdictions. You are encouraged to become familiar with any local laws that may apply to you and any potential impact on you if course content and information could be considered illegal, controversial, or politically sensitive. If you have any concerns about these issues, please contact your instructor directly to discuss with them.

Lecture schedule

Sep 8	Introduction	
Sep 13	Plato	<i>Phaedrus</i> 244a-257b

Sep 15	Plato, Aristotle	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> I.1-7
Sep 20	Pascal	<i>Pensées</i> (selections)
Sep 22	Pascal	<i>Pensées</i> (selections)
Sep 27	Pascal	<i>Pensées</i> (selections)
Sep 29	Leibniz	<i>On the Ultimate Origination of Things</i>
Oct 4	Rousseau	<i>Discourse on the Origins of Inequality</i>
Oct 6	Rousseau	<i>Discourse on the Origins of Inequality</i>
Oct 8	Paper 1 due	
Oct 11	Thanksgiving	
Oct 13	Reading week	
Oct 18	Marx and Engels	<i>The Communist Manifesto</i> I-II
Oct 20	Marx and Engels, Nietzsche	<i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> (selections)
Oct 25	Nietzsche	<i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> (selections)
Oct 27	Midterm	
Nov 1	Freud	<i>Civilization and its Discontents</i> II-III
Nov 3	Sartre	“Existentialism and Humanism”
Nov 8	Smart	“Sensations and Brain Processes”
Nov 10	Smart, Foucault	<i>Madness and Civilization</i> chp. 9
Nov 15	Foucault	<i>Madness and Civilization</i> chp. 9
Nov 17	Marcuse	“Repressive Tolerance”
Nov 19	Paper 2 due	
Nov 22	Wilson	<i>On Human Nature</i> chp 1 and most of chp 2
Nov 24	Crenshaw	“Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex”
Nov 29	Iyer	<i>The Global Soul</i> , most of chp. 2
Dec 1	TBD	
Dec 6	Envoi	
TBD	Final exam	