PHI 197: Human Nature

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Office Hours: by appointment, in Bird Library café

Course Description

This course is an introduction to some philosophical questions about human. We will explore the western philosophical tradition and investigate the following questions:

- How does our mind work?
- What gives us consciousness?
- What is the place of us in the universe?
- How should we treat our nature?
- Do we have free will?
- What is a meaningful life?

Course Goals

The goal of philosophy in general is to clarify ideas in a free yet rigorous manner. Specifically, the goals of this course are (1) to grasp the "big picture" and the demarcation of inquiries, (2) to understand the basic concepts and arguments, and (3) to acquire the expressive ability of writing clearly. As a writing-intensive course, the expected amount of official writing is 4,000 words.

Texts

Reading materials are available on Blackboard.

Assessment

1. *Attendance*: 10% course grade.
2. *2 short essays of 500 words*: each 5% course grade.
3. *3 long essays of 1000 words*: each 10% course grade.
4. *2 exams*: each 25% course grade.
5. *Bonus credit*: discussion posts on reading material.

Electronics Policy

No electronics allowed. If it is granted by the ODS, one must **sit at the front**.

Grade Calculation

The total score of this course is 1,000 points. The eventual letter grade will be converted from the percentage out of 1000, according to the grade scale below.

A	4.0	100-94
A-	3.6666	93.99-90
B+	3.3333	89.99-87
B	3.0	86.99-84
B-	2.6666	83.99-80
C+	2.3333	79.99-77

C	2.0	76.99-74
C-	1.6666	73.99-70
D+	1.3333	69.99-67
D	1.0	66.99-60
F	0	59.99-0

Academic Integrity Policy:

The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete policy, see the Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures on the University's website at http://academicintegrity.syr.edu.

You are encouraged to seek help in every way, but you must do you own writing. You could have someone proofread your drafts, but DO NOT USE AI.

Resources:

Please do not hesitate to seek help from me. I am very happy to talk about any questions you have about the course, or about philosophy in general. You can also trust online encyclopedias such as the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, and Encyclopedia Britannica. If you have difficulty in writing, you can get help from the Writing Center.

Disability-Related Accommodations:

Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, (315) 443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to the instructor and review these accommodations with the instructor. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodation as early as possible is necessary. For more information, see the Office of Disability Services, http://disabilityservices.syr.edu.

Religious Observances:

If you need to miss a class due to a religious observance, you will be entitled to makeup opportunities if you provide notice by the end of the second week of class. You must do so through MySlice. For more information, see http://supolicies.syr.edu/studs/religious_observance.htm.

Schedule

8-29	*Introduction*	
8-31	*Machines*	Movie *Ex Machina*
SHORT ESSAY		
Moral Psychology		
9-5	*State of Nature*	Hobbes *Leviathan*
9-7	*Moral Cognition*	Haidt *The Righteous Mind*
9-12	Writing Day	
9-14	*The Abduction of Value*	Nguyen "How Twitter Gamifies Communication"
SHORT ESSAY		
Mind		
9-19	*Substance Dualism*	Descartes "Meditation Six", *Passions of the Soul*
9-21	*Functionalism*	Anderson "Functionalism: An Introduction"
9-26	*Property Dualism*	Jackson "Epiphenomenal Qualia"
9-28	*AI*	Searle "Minds, Brains, and Programs"
LONG ESSAY		
Our Place in the World		
10-3	*Replication Crisis*	Kestenbaum & Goldstein Planet Money ep. 677
10-5	*Selection Biases*	
10-12	MIDTERM	
10-17	*The Anthropic Principle*	Sober "The Design Argument"
10-19	*A Meta-anthropic Principle*	
Human Enhancement		
10-24	*Genetic Engineering*	Sandel "The Case against Perfection"
10-26	*Perfectionism*	Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics*
10-31	*Hedonism*	Mill *Utilitarianism*
11-2	*Disabilities*	Brashear et al. *Fixed: The Science/Fiction of Human Enhancement*
LONG ESSAY		
Free Will		
11-7	*Hard Determinism*	Holbach "Of Man's Free Agency"
11-9	*Libertarianism*	Chisolm "Human Freedom and the Self"
11-14	*Compatibilism*	Hume "Of Liberty and Necessity"
11-16	*Alternate Possibilities*	Frankfurt "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility"
LONG ESSAY		
Thanksgiving Break		
Meaningful Life		
11-28	*Moral Responsibility*	Pereboom "Why We Have No Free Will and Can Live…"
11-30	*Existentialism*	Sartre "Existentialism Is a Humanism"
12-5	*Alienation*	Marx *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*
12-7	*Death*	Epicurus *Letter to Menoeceus*
12-12	Review	
12-14	FINAL EXAM	