

**Philosophy 197: Human Nature**  
**Spring 2022 Syllabus**  
**Section M001 MW 12:45 – 2:05**  
**Eggers Hall 113**

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**Textbook**

There is no required textbook for this class. All supplemental readings and videos will be available on Blackboard

**What is this class about?**

This class is about doing philosophy. You will learn to do what philosophers do and apply these skills to various areas both in philosophy and in ordinary life. You'll learn the following 3 skills:

1. Conceptual Analysis
2. Philosophical Explanation
3. Thought Experiments

Once you learn these skills, you will apply these skills to questions about human nature. Some central questions about human nature include the following:

- What does it mean to be a human being?
- Are human beings fundamentally different from everything else in the universe?
- Why do human beings the way that they are? Why do they do what they do?

**What to do for your grade**

Your grade is broken down into the following components:

- |                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Attendance                | 10% |
| 2. Conceptual Analysis       | 20% |
| 3. Philosophical Explanation | 20% |
| 4. Thought Experiments       | 20% |
| 5. Human Nature              | 30% |

For 2-5, you'll be doing what I call "email dialogues"

**Email Dialogue**

An email dialogue assignment is a conversation that I have with you over email. You start by answering the prompt listed below, and I give you follow up questions for you to answer until the assignment is complete.

Here's how you do a dialogue assignment.

1. Look below and you'll see a list of prompts. Each prompt has a due date.
2. Email me your answer to a question before the end of the due date. If you miss the due date, you will lose 1 point. You will continue to lose 1 point for each day after until you send me an answer.
  - a. **This is not a paper!** Don't open a Word or Pages document. If I see an attachment in your email, I'm just going to reject it and tell you to redo it. Just write me an email with your answer to the question. **Your answer should not be longer than one paragraph.**
3. For each question, start a new email thread. The subject for each thread should be "Dialogue #1", "Dialogue #2" etc.
4. Once you've answered the question, I will reply with at least one follow up question within 48 hours. You have 48 hours after I've replied to answer my follow up question. If you don't reply within 48 hours, then you'll lose points in the same way as mentioned above (i.e. 1 point for each day you're late).
5. After you've responded to my reply, I'll probably have more questions for you. We're going to go back and forth until we are finished with this conversation.
  - a. **Remember that each time that I reply, you have 48 hours to respond.**

#### Dialogue Assignment Schedule

##### 1. Conceptual Analysis

Choose a concept. Perform a conceptual analysis of that concept.

Must begin by Sunday, February 6th, 11:59 pm.

##### 2. Worldview

Start your human nature dialogue by first giving me what you believe are the necessary conditions for something to be a human being.

Must begin by Sunday, February 20th, 11:59 pm.

##### 3. Philosophical Explanation

Give me a "why" question. Answer that "why" question with what you think is the best explanation.

Must begin by Sunday, March 6th, 11:59 pm.

##### 4. Thought Experiments

Go to [philosophyexperiments.com](http://philosophyexperiments.com). Choose an experiment and finish it. Tell me what the experiment is about, what the purpose of the experiment is, and what your answers tell you about your own philosophical views.

Must begin by Sunday, April 3rd, 11:59 pm.

## Course Schedule

So this schedule is kind of tentative and there may be changes. If there are any changes, then I'll make announcements both in class and on Blackboard.

### Phase I

- Learn how to perform a conceptual analysis.
- Analyze the concepts of human being and person.
- Identify the conceptual relation between human being and person
- Identify and analyze other related concepts like the following
  - Rationality
  - Autonomy
  - Empathy
  - Moral Responsibility

### Phase II

- Learn how to understand and interpret thought experiments.
- Use thought experiments to evaluate analyses and to examine theories about the mind and theories about personal identity.
- Take the results of these thought experiments and provide a theory of what makes a human person essentially what they are.

### Phase III

- Learn about what explanations are and what the difference is between a good and a bad explanation.
- Provide and evaluate explanations that answer the following questions:
  - Why are human beings the way that they are?
  - Why do human beings behave in the way that they do?

## **POLICY STATEMENT ON ACCOMMODATION FOR DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL NEEDS:**

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>.

## **POLICY STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

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>.