Psychology 4220 6.0A (Y):
Theories of Human Nature

Instructor:
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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 12-1pm or by appointment, BSB 210

Time and Location:
Tuesdays 9am-12pm, Vari Hall 1158

Description:
In this seminar centres on a critical analysis of the concept of human nature. Rather than advocate one particular theory, we will explore the history of several competing interpretations, examining their scientific basis and cultural resonance. What constitutes human nature? Is it the same thing as one’s psychology? Who has had the expertise to speak about human nature? What counts as evidence of human nature? Are questions about human nature scientific or do they more properly belong to another realm of knowledge? A major focus of the seminar is the close, critical reading of scholar texts, in identifying, evaluating, and debating the arguments presented.

Required Texts:
Plus select shorter readings are available online.
All books are available for purchase through the York University Bookstore and are also available from online distributors like amazon.ca.

Prerequisites:
AK/AS/HH/SC/PSYC 1010 6.00 or AK/HH/PSYC 2410 6.00, with a minimum grade of C; AK/AS/HH/SC/PSYC 2030 3.00 or AK/HH/PSYC 2530 3.00; one of AK/AS/HH/SC/PSYC 2021 3.00, AK/AS/HH/SC/PSYC 2020 6.00, AK/HH/PSYC 2510 3.00. Open to students after completion of 48 credits with written permission of the instructor. Course credit exclusion: None
Evaluation:
Quizzes 20% best 10 out of 11 throughout the year
Participation 20% throughout the year
Oral Presentation 20% throughout the year
Proposal 5% June 1, 2011
Paper Draft 1 20% July 8, 2011
Paper Draft 2 15% August 5, 2011

Organization of the Course:
Classes meeting will feature a combination of large group discussion, breakout groups, debates, and student presentations. This class is primarily a discussion-based seminar. Students are expected to come to class having completed the assigned readings and ready to discuss them. As you complete the weekly readings, you are encouraged to prepare a list of comments and questions to facilitate the discussion. These include questions of clarification, concerns about the interpretation of evidence, connections across weekly topics, or connections with other areas of your studies. The quality of our meetings largely depends on the time and effort that students put into the seminar. Students are expected to arrive on time and remain until the end of the class.

Cell Phone and Laptop Policy
There are no cell phones, laptops, or other electronic devices permitted in this class. Please keep these devices in your bag. In a seminar setting, these tools are highly distracting for others and inhibit the flow of discussion. If you require special accommodation or have extenuating circumstances that require these devices, please contact the instructor.

Assignment Submission: Proper academic performance depends on students doing their work not only well, but on time. Accordingly, assignments for this course must be received on the due date specified for the assignment. Papers should be emailed to the professor at mpettit@yorku.ca

Lateness Penalty of Papers: Assignments received later than the due date will be penalized at 3% per day including weekends. Exceptions to the lateness penalty for valid reasons such as illness, compassionate grounds, etc., may be entertained by the Course Instructor but will require supporting documentation (e.g., a doctor’s letter).

Quizzes: During the course of the year, there will be 10 pop quizzes at the beginning of class on that week’s assigned readings. Quizzes will commence at 9:10am sharp. If you are late for class or miss that class, there is no make up for the quizzes. The lowest mark on a quiz (including a 0 for a missed quiz) will be dropped from the final grade.
May 2: Introduction & Administration

May 4: How to do a presentation
Paul Edwards, “How to Give an Academic Talk.”
www.si.umich.edu/~pne/PDF/howtotalk.pdf

May 9: Human Nature Today
http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/11/magazine/11Genome-t.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all
http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/10/magazine/10psyche-t.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all

May 11: Inventing Human Nature

May 16: Craniometry

May 18: The Science and Politics of IQ

May 23
*** Victoria Day – University Closed ***

May 25: Suggestion
Harrington, introduction & chapter 1
Presentation Topics:
Narrative psychology
Jean-Martin Charcot

May 30: Positive Thinking
Harrington, chapters 2 & 3
Presentation Topics:
Positive psychology
Authorized deception
Shell shock
June 1: Stressed Out
Harrington, chapters 4 & 5
Presentation Topics:
Neurasthenia
Emile Durkheim, *Suicide* (1897)
Walter Cannon

June 6: The Power of Culture(s)
Harrington, chapter 6 & conclusion
Presentation Topics:
Culture/cultural psychology
Relaxation response
Orientalism

June 8: Looking for the Typical Town
Igo, Introduction & chapter 1
Presentation Topics:
*Hull House Maps and Papers* (1895)

June 13: Measuring Opinion
Igo, chapter 3 & 4
Presentation Topics:
Ideology (political psychology)
Henri Tajfel
WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic)

June 15: The Public Nature of Private Life
Igo, chapter 5 & 6
Presentation Topics:
Katharine Bement Davis
Lewis Terman

June 20: Rethinking Sex
Fausto-Sterling, chapters 1-2
Presentation Topics:
Gender verification in sports
George Weinberg
June 22: Intersexuality
Fausto-Sterling, chapters 3-4
**Presentation Topics:**
Havelock Ellis
John Money
Intersex Society of North America

June 27: Hormones
Fausto-Sterling, chapters 6 & 7
**Presentation Topics:**
“Gender similarities hypothesis”
Harry Benjamin

June 29: Developing Sex
Fausto-Sterling, chapter 8-9
**Presentation Topics:**
Evelyn Hooker

July 4: The Age of Nurture
Kagan, chapter 1
**Presentation Topics:**
Zing-Yang Kuo
Konrad Lorenz

July 6: Child Development in Historical Perspective
Kagan, chapters 2-3
**Presentation Topics:**
John Bowlby
Feral children
Carol Gilligan

July 11: Development meets Culture
Kagan, chapters 4-5

July 13: Mind and Brain
Kagan, chapters 6-7
July 18: Human-Machine Boundary

July 20: Human-Animal Boundary

July 25: Human Nature - History & Development

July 27: Wrap Up
Major Research Assignment:
Over the course of the year, you will complete a major research assignment that will progress through a variety of stages. I will be expected to submit a research proposal, present the material orally in class, submit a draft, and revise it in light of comments from the instructors.

Oral Presentation:
Each week in the syllabus lists 1 to 3 topics identified for further discussion. Students are expected to offer one (1) oral presentation during the course of the academic on one of these topics. Presentations are approximately 15-20 minutes. The topic selection for the oral presentation will form the basis for the research paper. In the presentation, you are expected to explain what the keyword means, give the class a sense of the topic’s significance, and connect it to the week’s theme and readings. Students are encouraged to use audio-visual materials to supplement their presentations.

Your oral presentation will be evaluated by both the instructor (10%) and your peers (5%).

Major Research Paper:
Your major research paper is based on the topic you select for your in-class oral presentation. Instead of the oral presentation’s focus on the facts relating to your topic, your research paper should been organized around an argument or interpretation. The goal is to move from who and what type questions to how and why.

Proposal:
Your proposal should identify your topics, the research questions that are guiding your reading, and an annotated bibliography. The annotated bibliography will include at least 5 peer reviewed titles. Most encyclopaedia entries and websites are not peer reviewed. If you have any questions about your sources, please consult with the instructor before submitting the proposal.

Draft 1:
The paper should be 10-12 pages in length, including references. This draft should have at least 8 different academic sources. The paper should use both primary and secondary sources. In other words, you are expected to consult the original studies as well as how they have been discussed, taken up, and criticized in the subsequent literature. In addition to submitting a hard copy in class, the student will also submit an electronic version to turnitin.com.
The following is the grading rubric used for the first draft:

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Draft 2:

After receiving feedback on the initial draft, students are expected to revise their papers. You will be evaluated primarily on how well you incorporated suggestions from the first draft.