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

Instructor: Michael Pettit
Email: mpettit@yorku.ca
Phone: (416) 736-2100 ext. 20759. It is easier to get in touch with me via email.
Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 12-1pm or by appointment, BSB 210
Time and Location: Mondays & Wednesdays 8:30-11:30am, TEL 0009

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.
N.B.: This is a full-year, 6 credits course being offered during a single semester. The workload in terms of meeting schedule, readings, and assignments reflect that this is the equivalent of a full year course.

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:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>best 10 out of 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>throughout the semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>throughout the semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>October 3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction Draft</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>October 29th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>November 23rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take home Final Exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>December 10th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Learning Objectives:**

1. obtain a better understanding of different theories of human nature
2. gain a better understanding of psychology’s history and cultural place
3. improve oral presentation skills
4. improve library research and bibliographical skills

**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).
Plagiarism and Academic Honesty:
Please note the following from York University’s Senate Policy on Academic Honesty:

“Academic honesty requires that persons do not falsely claim credit for the ideas, writing or other intellectual property of others, either by presenting such works as their own or through impersonation. Similarly, academic honesty requires that persons do not cheat (attempt to gain an improper advantage in an academic evaluation), nor attempt to actually alter, suppress, falsify or fabricate any research data or results, official academic record, application or documents.”

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.

Schedule

September 5: Introduction & Administration

September 10: How to do a presentation
Paul Edwards, “How to Give an Academic Talk.”
www.si.umich.edu/~pne/PDF/howtotalk.pdf

September 12: 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

September 17: Putting Psychology on the Map

September 19: Inventing Human Nature

September 24: Craniometry

**Presentation Topics**
Victor de Aveyron
phrenology

---

**September 26: Suggestion**
Harrington, introduction & chapter 1
**Presentation Topics:**
Narrative psychology
Jean-Martin Charcot

---

**October 1: Positive Thinking**
Harrington, chapters 2 & 3
**Presentation Topics:**
Authorized deception
Shell shock

---

**October 3: Stressed Out**
Harrington, chapters 4 & 5
**Presentation Topics:**
Pre-20th-century stress and trauma
Neurasthenia
Emile Durkheim, Suicide (1897)

*** No Class – Thanksgiving ***

**October 10: The Power of Culture(s)**
Harrington, chapter 6 & conclusion
**Presentation Topics:**
Volkerpsychologie (Wundt)
Enemyship (Glenn Adams)
Orientalism (Said)

---

**October 15: Looking for the Typical Town**
Igo, Introduction & chapter 1
**Presentation Topics:**
Hull House Maps and Papers (1895)
Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities (1983)
WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic)

---

**October 17: Measuring Opinion**
Igo, chapter 3 & 4
**Presentation Topics:**
Henri Tajfel
Liberation psychology
Participatory action research

**October 22: The Public Nature of Private Life**
Igo, chapter 5 & 6
**Presentation Topics:**
Katharine Bement Davis
marital happiness research (Terman, Kelly, Poponoe)

**October 24: Rethinking Sex**
Fausto-Sterling, chapters 1-2
**Presentation Topics:**
Gender verification in sports
George Weinberg
Asexuality

**October 29: Intersexuality**
Fausto-Sterling, chapters 3-4
**Presentation Topics:**
Havelock Ellis
John Money
Intersex Society of North America

*** No Class –Reading Week ***

**November 5: Hormones**
Fausto-Sterling, chapters 6 & 7
**Presentation Topics:**
“Gender similarities hypothesis”
Harry Benjamin

**November 7: Developing Sex**
Fausto-Sterling, chapter 8-9
**Presentation Topics:**
Evelyn Hooker
Whiptail lizard controversy
November 12: The Age of Nurture
Kagan, chapter 1
**Presentation Topics:**
None – Introduction workshop

November 14: Child Development in Historical Perspective
Kagan, chapters 2-3
**Presentation Topics:**
Genie
Lawrence Kohlberg
Emergent adulthood

November 19: Development meets Culture
Kagan, chapters 4-5

November 21: Mind and Brain
Kagan, chapters 6-7

November 26: Human-Machine Boundary

November 28: Human-Animal Boundary

December 3: 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 of the introduction, 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 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.

Paper:
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.
The following is the grading rubric used for the paper:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Adequate</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction/Conclusion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Evidence/Sources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style &amp; Grammar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument (Originality/Coherence/Persuasiveness)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>