

**Theories of Human Nature**  
**HH/PSYC 4220 6.0 A, 2013 - 2014**  
**Mondays & Wednesdays 8:30 - 11:30**  
**Location: RS 174**

**Course Director: Tifrah Warner, Ph.D.**

**Office contact: Agnes Levstik**  
BSB #281; (416) 736-2100 ext. 55125

**Email contact: [tifrahw@yorku.ca](mailto:tifrahw@yorku.ca)**

Please contact me **only** when it is an issue that cannot be addressed during the class or office hours. **(always put course number in the subject line)**

**Office hours:** after each class

**Course Description**

This course surveys an array of psychological views on human nature. The first half will consist of 4 sections: (a) a review of traditional perspectives of human nature, as exemplified in the works of major figures in the fields of behaviourism, psychoanalysis, humanism, and cognition (b) an introduction to a framework that encompasses the diverse and contradictory nature of human experience; and (c) a review of currently proposed principles of human nature, mostly from system theory perspective, but also from elsewhere; (d) a look at the work of Milton H. Erickson as an example of application of the proposed principles of human nature. The second half of this course will follow the introduced framework format to examine current psychological theories. It will consist of assigned readings and students' presentations.

The readings for this course comprise of a mixture of material; including original academic articles and chapters from popular books by scientists. They are meant to give you both the experience of studying primary scientific material and to rouse your interest.

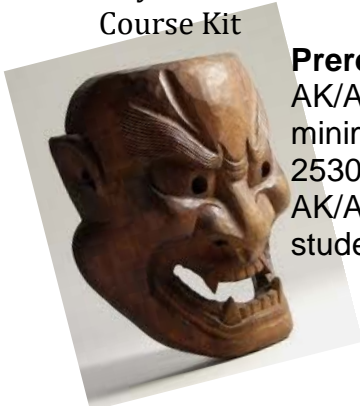
The grading scheme aims to create an opportunity for deeper study, thus there is no one all-encompassing exam and class work is distributed throughout the course. There is an assignment for every class, quizzes twice a month, presentations and a paper.

**Textbooks**

Any Introduction to Psychology textbook  
Course Kit

**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 84 credits.





## Course Objectives

Students are expected to gain:

- an appreciation of the varied, paradoxical, dynamic, and at times beyond definition, nature of human experience.
- understanding of the perspectives offered by traditional theories of human nature.
- knowledge of Systems theory approach.
- acquaintance with a selection of current theoretical works on human nature. These works range in their focus on the physiological, mental, environmental, and spiritual strata of human existence.
- acquaintance with a framework that allows a comprehensive overview and a systematic organization of theories of human nature.
- ability to apply theoretical principles of human nature to daily life.



### Grading Scheme, option 1

1. 7 multiple-choice quizzes	50%
2. 15 Assignments	20%
3. 2 presentations	30%

### Grading Scheme, option 2

Recommended for those who plan to continue with graduate studies

1. 7 multiple-choice quizzes	25%
2. 16 Assignments	20%
3. 1 presentation	15%
4. 1 paper	40%

### Conversion Table

Percentage	90-100	80-89	75-79	70-74	65-69	60-64	55-59	50-54	49	48
Letter Grade	A+	A	B+	B	C+	C	D	D+	E	F



## Course Requirements

### Quizzes

- Each one will cover all the topics scheduled since the last quiz.
- Multiple-choice format
- 15 or 30 minutes (depending on number of questions)

### Paper

- Content: Theories of human nature that fall into 1 stratum of human experience
- Length: 8 to 12 pages
- Format: APA style
- Review: 3 or 4 current theories within your chosen stratum.
- Discuss: (a) to what extent these theories complement or contrast each other, (b) to what extent this stratum is fully covered by these theories, (c) other theoretical directions, (d) to what extent full human nature is represented by this stratum.
- Due dates: **Complete** paper draft – November 18  
Final submission – February 3



### Assignments

All assignments are **to be typed** and written up **in point form**, unless specified otherwise.

All assignments are on the material that is to be covered in class on the date the assignment is due. An Exception: assignment # 1 is due 1 class earlier (see schedule)

### Assignments #1 to #6

- State the main points of each reading.
- Highlight the principles of human functioning found in the reading.
- Make up one discussion question and answer.
- Compose a question (or more) about something in the material that was not clear to you or that you would like to hear it being reviewed in class. No answer is needed.
- Give a personal example from daily life of one of the principles of human nature covered in the **previous class**. Alternatively, give a personal example from daily life of a human value of your choice. (The example is to be written in full sentences, paragraph format.)
- Create a master list of principles of human functioning. Add to it principles covered in each class.



### Assignment #7

- Course kit reading (O'Hanlon)
  - o State the main points of the reading.
  - o Highlight the principles of human functioning found in the reading.
- Any Ericksonian case of your choice that was not mentioned in O'Hanlon's reading
  - o Briefly describe the case using **full sentences, paragraph format**
  - o List any of the principles of human nature covered in the course that were applied by M. H. Erickson. Briefly describe the application of each principle.
- A clarification question/s about the assigned material.

### Assignments #8 to #17 (part A)

- State the **thesis** of each reading or audio material.
- List the main points of each reading or audio material.
- If there are any, list human nature principles found in the reading.
- Make up one discussion question and answer.
- Compose a question (or more) about something in the material that was not clear to you or that you would like to hear it being reviewed in class. No answer is needed.
- Give a personal example from daily life of a human nature principle **from this reading** or of a human value of your choice– one paragraph. (Written in full sentences, paragraph format.)

### Assignment #17 (part B)

- What does the poem extract mean to you? (**Paragraph format**)



## Team Presentations

### Topic

- Listed in class schedule.

### Preparatory meetings with the course director

- Each team will suggest a tentative outline for the presentation and bring up any questions about the material.
- Each team member has to bring a proposed presentation reference (or abstract of that reference) for approval. The reference has to be a current **theoretical** work.

### Presentation outline

Format: A panel with a chairperson.

- Part 1: An Introduction of the stratum of human existence that the presentation addresses, especially in contrast with previously presented strata. (brief).
- Part 2: A Q & A period on the assigned readings.
- Part 3: Individual presentations.
- Part 4: A Q & A period on the presentations.

### Handouts (to be given to all students)

- One from the team: consisting of the main points of the assigned reading, and including principles of human nature that may be found in it. A diagram may be added.
- One from each student: consisting of the thesis and main points of their chosen reading, including principles of human nature that may be found. (2 copies for Course Director)
- Each handout is 1 to 1 ½ pages in length.
- All handouts are **in point form**.

### Additional handout for the course director

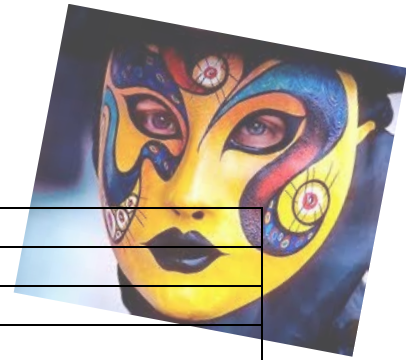
- From each presenter: proposed 2 multiple-choice questions about the **main concepts** of their readings. (These questions may be presented to the class and may be used in the next quiz.)



☞ When you are presenting, you do not need to do that homework assignment. ☞



# Schedule



<b><u>September 9</u></b>	
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Traditional perspectives of human nature, part 1</b>
<b>Readings</b>	Your old Introduction to Psychology textbook
<b><u>September 16</u></b>	
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Traditional perspectives of human nature. Part 2</b>
<b>Readings</b>	Your old Introduction to Psychology textbook
<b><u>September 23</u></b>	
<b>Topic</b>	<b>A framework for studying human nature: strata of existence</b>
<b>Readings</b>	- Michel, G. F & Tyler, A. N. (2007). Developmental Psychobiology
<b>Assignment</b>	# 1 on the above reading
<b><u>September 30</u></b>	
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Principles from Systems Theory: part 1</b>
<b>Readings</b>	- Michel, G. F & Tyler, A. N. (2007). Developmental Psychobiology
<b>Quiz</b>	# 1 (does <b>not include</b> Michel & Tyler, 2007)
<b><u>October 7</u></b>	
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Principles from Systems Theory: part 2</b>
<b>Readings</b>	- Perna, P. A. & Masterpasqua F. Introduction: The history, Meaning... (Focus on <b>first 10 pages</b> only) - Lipton, B. H., (2008). <i>The Biology of Belief</i> . Chapter 2
<b>Assignment</b>	# 2
<b><u>October 14</u></b> <b>Thanksgiving</b>	
<b><u>October 21</u></b>	
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Principles from Systems Theory: part 3</b>
<b>Readings</b>	- Thelen, E. (2005) Dynamic systems theory and the complexity of change. (focus: pages 258 – 266, 270 – 272, 278 – 280)
<b>Assignment</b>	# 3
<b><u>October 28</u></b>	
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Principles from Systems Theory: part 4</b>
<b>Readings</b>	- Oyama, S & Griffiths, P. E., & Gray, R. D (2000) Introduction: what is developmental systems theory? - Fredrickson B. L. & Losada M. F. (2005) Positive affect and the complex dynamics of human flourishing (Focus on pages: 679 – 680, section title: A nonlinear dynamic systems perspective)
<b>Assignment</b>	# 4
<b><u>November 4</u></b>	
<b>Quiz</b>	# 2
<b>Other</b>	Discussing presentations and papers Meeting with presentation teams 1, 2
<b><u>November 11</u></b>	
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Additional Principles of human nature in current literature</b>
<b>Readings</b>	- Travis, F. & Harung, H., (in press) Brain integration, moral reasoning, ... (focus on theoretical sections.)
<b>Assignment</b>	# 5
<b>Other</b>	Meeting with presentation teams





<b><u>November 18</u></b>	
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Additional Principles of human nature in current literature</b>
<b>Readings</b>	- D. Ariely. (2009). Chapter 1 - Circadian rhythms. From any Introduction to psychology textbook
<b>Assignment</b>	# 6
<b>Other</b>	Meeting with presentation teams
<b>Other</b>	<b>Complete paper draft due date, 8:30 am</b>
<b><u>November 25</u></b>	
<b>Topic</b>	<b>The work of Milton H. Erickson: applications of systems principles.</b>
<b>Readings</b>	- W. H. O'Hanlon. 1987. Groundwork: Introduction to Erickson's work (from course kit. <u>Taproots. Underlying principles of ...</u> ) - Haley, Jay. <u>Uncommon therapy; the psychiatric techniques of Milton H. Erickson, M.D</u> or Rosen, S. <u>My voice will go with you. The teaching tales of Milton H. Erickson</u> (from the library)
<b>Assignment</b>	# 7
<b><u>December 2</u></b>	
<b>Quiz</b>	# 3, make-up for quiz 1 & 2
<b>Other</b>	meeting with presentation teams

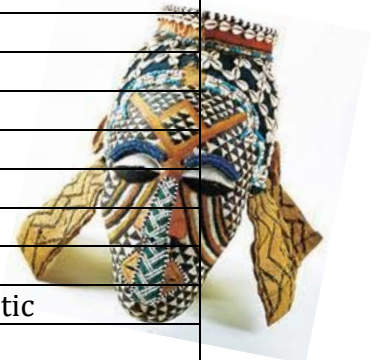
## Winter Semester



<b><u>January 6</u></b>	
<b>Topic (1)</b>	<b>Our physical nature: flexibility and responsiveness of the brain</b>
<b>Readings</b>	Quartz, S. R., Sejnowski, T. J. (2003) Liars, Lovers, and Heros. What the new brain science reveals about how we become who we are. Chapter 3.
<b>Assignment</b>	# 8
<b><u>January 13</u></b>	
<b>Topic (2)</b>	<b>Environment: we are made of tools and trees</b>
<b>Readings</b>	Taylor T. (2010). The Artificial Ape. How technology changed the course of human evolution. Introduction. 1-12. Kuo, F. E. (2003). The role of arboriculture in a healthy social ecology: Invited review article for a Special Section. Journal of Arboriculture 29(3), 148-155.
<b>Assignment</b>	# 9
<b><u>January 20</u></b>	
<b>Topic (3)</b>	<b>Environment: we are a social network and culture</b>
<b>Readings</b>	Christakis, N. A. & Flower, J. H. (2009). <u>Connected</u> . Chapter 3.
<b>Assignment</b>	# 10
<b><u>January 27</u></b>	
<b>Quiz</b>	# 4



<b><u>February 3</u></b>	
<b>Topic (4)</b>	<b>Our logical nature: intellect, rationality, decision making...</b>
	M. Gladwell, (2005). <u>Blink</u> , .Chapter 1.
<b>Assignment</b>	# 11
<b>Other</b>	<b>Paper due date</b>
<b><u>February 10</u></b>	
<b>Topic (4)</b>	<b>We are made out of memories</b>
<b>Readings</b>	CBC interview with Endel Tulving: <a href="http://www.cbc.ca/ideas/episodes/2010/09/03/minding-memory-listen/">http://www.cbc.ca/ideas/episodes/2010/09/03/minding-memory-listen/</a>
<b>Assignment</b>	# 12
<b><u>February 17</u></b>	<b>Reading Week</b>
<b><u>February 24</u></b>	
<b>Topic (3)</b>	<b>Our emotional nature: made to be good</b>
<b>Readings</b>	D. Keltner. <u>Born to be Good</u> . (2009). Chapter 1 B. L. Fredrickson. (2001) The role of positive emotions. Fredrickson B. L. & Losada M. F. (2005) Positive affect and the complex dynamics of human flourishing.
<b>Assignment</b>	# 13
<b>Quiz</b>	# 5
<b>Other</b>	<b>Last date to drop the course without a grade: Feb. 14</b>
<b><u>March 3</u></b>	
<b>Topic (4)</b>	<b>Our Imagination: fantasy and creativity</b>
<b>Readings</b>	P. Bloom. (2010) <u>How Pleasure Works</u> . The new science of why we like <u>what we like</u> . Chapter 6 and notes.
<b>Assignment</b>	# 14
<b><u>March 10</u></b>	
<b>Topic (6)</b>	<b>Ego: our sense of individual identity</b>
<b>Readings</b>	J. M. Twenge. (2006). <u>Generation Me</u> . Introduction.
<b>Assignment</b>	# 15
<b>Quiz</b>	# 6
<b><u>March 17</u></b>	
<b>Topic (9)</b>	<b>Wisdom</b>
<b>Readings</b>	Baltes, P. B. & Staudinger U. M. <u>Wisdom: A Metaheuristic (pragmatic) to...</u>
<b>Assignment</b>	# 16
<b><u>March 24</u></b>	
<b>Topic (10)</b>	<b>Our nature: beauty and infinity</b>
<b>Readings</b>	- "Beauty will save the world" (Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn quoting Fyodor Dostoyevsky), CBC ideas programme. <a href="http://www.cbc.ca/ideas/episodes/2010/08/30/beauty-will-save-the-world-listen/">http://www.cbc.ca/ideas/episodes/2010/08/30/beauty-will-save-the-world-listen/</a> - "To see a world" by William Blake
<b>Assignment</b>	# 17
<b><u>March 31</u></b>	
<b>Quiz</b>	# 7, make-up quizzes





## **Course, Departmental, and University Policies**

**Grading:** (For a full description of York grading system see the York University Undergraduate Calendar - [http://calendars.registrar.yorku.ca/pdfs/ug2004cal/calug04\\_5\\_acadinfo.pdf](http://calendars.registrar.yorku.ca/pdfs/ug2004cal/calug04_5_acadinfo.pdf))

**Assignment Submission:** Due dates and times are specified on the class schedule. Earlier submissions may be made to the course secretary (BSB 281) and have to be date stamped.

**Late Assignments:** Late assignments are not accepted without an officially satisfactory reason. Technical problems involving computer and printer are not acceptable reasons for missing these due dates.

### **Eligibility for a make-up quiz**

Official departmental policy on missed exams and make-ups. Please become familiar with this policy.

[http://www.yorku.ca/health/psyc/advising\\_missedtests.html](http://www.yorku.ca/health/psyc/advising_missedtests.html)

- The student has to contact the CD or secretary within 48 hours of the missed quiz (unless circumstances do not allow). Circumstances preventing contact within 48 hours must be accompanied by documentation.

- If the student expects to miss a quiz in advance, he or she has to apply for a make-up exam before making arrangements to be elsewhere.

### **Use of laptop and other electronics in the classroom**

is acceptable for special needs situations only.

Some references about the impediment this may cause for successful learning are:

- Carrie B. Fried, (2008). Computers & Education.

- Josh Fischman, March 16, 2009. The Chronicle of Higher Education  
Students Stop Surfing After Being Shown How In-Class Laptop Use Lowers Test Scores.

- Linda Stone, September, 2009. Continuous Partial Attention and email Apnea.

- York University newspaper, yFile 13.03.2013 Study finds multitasking on a laptop impedes classroom learning

### **University policies**

All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the following information, available on the Senate Committee on Curriculum & Academic Standards webpage (see Reports, Initiatives, Documents) -

[http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate\\_cte\\_main\\_pages/ccas.htm](http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate_cte_main_pages/ccas.htm)

- York's Academic Honesty Policy and Procedures/Academic Integrity Website
- Ethics Review Process for research involving human participants
- Course requirement accommodation for students with disabilities, including physical, medical, systemic, learning and psychiatric disabilities
- Student Conduct Standards
- Religious Observance Accommodation

Life is too Mysterious  
For Us to be Serious!

