

Faculty of Health
Department of Psychology
PSYC 4220 6.0 A: THEORIES OF HUMAN NATURE
Mondays/8:30am
FW/2022-2023

Instructor and T.A. Information

Instructor: Michael Pettit
Office Hours: Mondays 11:30-12:30 BSB 211
Email: mpettit@yorku.ca

Course Prerequisite(s): Course prerequisites are strictly enforced

- HH/PSYC 1010 6.00 (Introduction to Psychology), with a minimum grade of C.
- HH/PSYC 2021 3.00 (Statistical Methods I) or HH/PSYC 2020 6.00 (Statistical Methods I and II)
- HH/PSYC 2030 3.00 (Introduction to Research Methods) or substitutes
- Students must be in an Honours program in Psychology and have completed at least 84 credits

Course Credit Exclusions

Please refer to [York Courses Website](#) for a listing of any course credit exclusions.

Course website: [eClass](#)

Course 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.

Program Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate in-depth knowledge of theories of human nature.
2. Critically evaluate, synthesize and resolve conflicting results in theories of human nature.
3. Articulate trends in theories of human nature.
4. Locate research articles on theories of human nature and show critical thinking about research findings.
5. Express knowledge of theories of human nature in written form.

6. Engage in evidence-based dialogue with course director and peers.
7. Demonstrate an ability to work with others.

Required Text

Harrington, A. (2008). *The cure within: A history of mind-body medicine*. New York: Norton.
 {A paperback edition of this book is available for purchase through the York University bookstore and other online retailers }

All other readings are available through the York University library, including the following books:

Robcis, C. (2021). *Disalienation: Politics, philosophy, and radical psychiatry in postwar France*. University of Chicago Press.

Weidman, N. (2021). *Killer Instinct: The Popular Science of Human Nature in Twentieth-Century America*. Harvard University Press.

Igo, S. E. (2007). *The averaged American: Surveys, citizens, and the making of a mass public*. Harvard University Press.

Course Requirements and Assessment:

Assessment	Date of Evaluation (if known)	Weighting
Quizzes	Throughout year	10%
Proposal	October 15	10%
Presentation	Throughout year	20%
Research Paper Draft 1	March 3, 2023	35%
Research Paper Draft 2	April 7, 2023	15%
Participation	Throughout year	10%
Total		100%

Description of Assignments

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 (15%) 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 be 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.

Class Format and Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend every seminar meeting having completed the week's assigned readings.

Grading as per Senate Policy

The grading scheme for the course conforms to the 9-point grading system used in undergraduate programs at York (e.g., A+ = 9, A = 8, B+ = 7, C+ = 5, etc.). Assignments and tests* will bear either a letter grade designation or a corresponding number grade (e.g. A+ = 90 to 100, A = 80 to 89, B+ = 75 to 79, etc.)

For a full description of York grading system see the York University Undergraduate Calendar – [Grading Scheme for 2022-23](#)

Missed Tests/Midterm Exams/Late Assignment

For any late assignment, students MUST complete the following online form which will be received and reviewed in the Psychology undergraduate office. At this time, due to COVID-19 an Attending Physician’s Statement (APS) is not required, however, a reason for missing an evaluated component in the course must be provided.

[HH PSYC: Missed Tests/Exams Form.](#)

Unexcused late assignments will be penalized at 5% per day.

Add/Drop Deadlines

For a list of all important dates please refer to: [Fall/Winter 2022-23 Important Dates](#)

	Fall (Term F)	Year (Term Y)	Winter (Term W)
Last date to add a course without permission of instructor (also see Financial Deadlines)	Sept. 20	Sept. 20	Jan. 22
Last date to add a course with permission of instructor (also see Financial Deadlines)	Oct. 4	Oct. 25	Feb. 6
Drop deadline: Last date to drop a course without receiving a grade (also see Financial Deadlines)	Nov. 11	Feb. 10	Mar. 17
Course Withdrawal Period (withdraw from a course and receive a grade of “W” on transcript – see note below)	Nov. 12 - Dec. 7	Feb. 11 - April 11	March 18 - April 11
Course Withdrawal Period (withdraw from a course and receive a grade of “W” on transcript – see note below)	Nov. 13 - Dec. 7	Feb. 12 - April 10	March 19 - April 10

Add and Drop Deadline Information

There are deadlines for adding and dropping courses, both academic and financial. Since, for the most part, the dates are **different**, be sure to read the information carefully so that you understand the differences between the sessional dates below and the [Refund Tables](#).

You are strongly advised to pay close attention to the "Last date to enrol without permission of course instructor" deadlines. These deadlines represent the last date students have unrestricted access to the registration and enrolment system.

After that date, you must contact the professor/department offering the course to arrange permission.

You can drop courses using the registration and enrolment system up until the last date to drop a course without receiving a grade (drop deadline).

You may [withdraw from a course](#) using the registration and enrolment system after the drop deadline until the last day of class for the term associated with the course. When you withdraw from a course, the course remains on your transcript without a grade and is notated as 'W'. The withdrawal will not affect your grade point average or count towards the credits required for your degree.

Information on Plagiarism Detection

All written assignments will be submitted through Turnitin.com

Electronic Device Policy

As this is a discussion-based class, the use of electronic devices are strongly discouraged.

It is expected that you would complete tests/exams in a manner that does not require consulting an unauthorised source during an examination unless the tests/exams are open-book.

Academic Integrity for Students

York University takes academic integrity very seriously; please familiarize yourself with [Information about the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty](#).

It is recommended that you review Academic Integrity by completing the [Academic Integrity Tutorial](#) and [Academic Honesty Quiz](#)

Test Banks

The offering for sale of, buying of, and attempting to sell or buy test banks (banks of test questions and/or answers), or any course specific test questions/answers is not permitted in the Faculty of Health. Any student found to be doing this may be considered to have breached the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty. In particular, buying and attempting to sell banks of test questions and/or answers may be considered as “Cheating in an attempt to gain an improper advantage in an academic evaluation” (article 2.1.1 from the Senate Policy) and/or “encouraging, enabling or causing others” (article 2.1.10 from the Senate Policy) to cheat.

Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

While all individuals are expected to satisfy the requirements of their program of study and to aspire to do so at a level of excellence, the university recognizes that persons with disabilities may require reasonable accommodation to enable them to do so. The university encourages students with disabilities to register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to discuss their accommodation needs as early as possible in the term to establish the recommended academic accommodations that will be communicated to Course Directors as necessary. Please let me know as early as possible in the term if you anticipate requiring academic accommodation so that we can discuss how to consider your accommodation needs within the context of this course.

<https://accessibility.students.yorku.ca/>

Excerpt from Senate Policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

1. Pursuant to its commitment to sustaining an inclusive, equitable community in which all members are treated with respect and dignity, and consistent with applicable accessibility legislation, York University shall make reasonable and appropriate accommodations in order to promote the ability of students with disabilities to fulfill the academic requirements of their programs. This policy aims to eliminate systemic barriers to participation in academic activities by students with disabilities.

All students are expected to satisfy the essential learning outcomes of courses.

Accommodations shall be consistent with, support and preserve the academic integrity of the curriculum and the academic standards of courses and programs. For further information please refer to: [York University Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities Policy](#).

Course Materials Copyright Information

These course materials are designed for use as part of the Psyc 4220 course at York University and are the property of the instructor unless otherwise stated. Third party copyrighted materials (such as book chapters, journal articles, music, videos, etc.) have either been licensed for use in this course or fall under an exception or limitation in Canadian Copyright law.

Copying this material for distribution (e.g. uploading material to a commercial third-party website) may lead to a violation of Copyright law. [Intellectual Property Rights Statement](#).

Course Schedule

Fall Semester

September 12: Introductions

Watters, E. (2010). The Americanization of mental illness. *The New York Times*, 8.

September 19: Reading and Talking

Joe Dumit, "How I Read" <https://dumit.net/how-i-read/>

Paul Edwards, "How to Give an Academic Talk"

<https://pne.people.si.umich.edu/PDF/howtotalk.pdf>

September 26: Historical Psychology

Muthukrishna, M., Henrich, J., & Slingerland, E. (2021). Psychology as a historical science. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 72(1), 717-749.

October 3: The Self as Problem

Baumeister, R. F. (1987). How the self became a problem: A psychological review of historical research. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52(1), 163–176.

Taylor, C. (1994). Précis of Sources of the Self. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 54(1), 185-186.

October 10: Thanksgiving

October 17: Art, Perception, Psychology

Heft, H. (2022). Visual art history and the psychology of perception: Perspectivism and its 20th century abandonment in the visual arts and in Gibson's ecological psychology. *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, 58(1), 59-84.

October 24: Skepticism and the Self

Moore-Gilbert, B. (2005). “New worlds, new selves” Montaigne, “the Atlantic” and the emergence of modern autobiography. *Atlantic Studies*, 2(1), 1-14.

Shapiro, L. (1999). Princess Elizabeth and Descartes: The Union of Soul and Body and the Practice of Philosophy. *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 7, 503-520.

Presentation topics:

Bartolomé de las Casas
Enrique Dussel

October 31: Possessive Individualism

Glausser, W. (1990). Three approaches to Locke and the slave trade. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 51(2), 199-216.

Valdez, I. (2017). It's Not about Race: Good Wars, Bad Wars, and the Origins of Kant's Anti-Colonialism. *American Political Science Review*, 111(4), 819-834.

Presentation Topics:

Molyneux problem
Victor de Aveyron

November 7: Suggestion

Harrington, introduction & chapter 1

Presentation Topics:

Jean-Martin Charcot

Narrative psychology

November 14: Positive Thinking

Harrington, chapters 2 & 3

Presentation Topics:

Shell shock

Prolonged Grief Disorder

Placebo

November 21: Stressed Out

Harrington, chapters 4 & 5

Presentation Topics:

neurasthenia

Resilience

Continuous Traumatic Stress Disorder (CTSD)

November 28: The Power of Culture(s)

Harrington, chapter 6 and conclusion

Presentation Topics:

Völkerpsychologie

Susto

December 5: Local Biologies

Lock, M., & Kaufert, P. (2001). Menopause, local biologies, and cultures of aging. *American journal of human biology*, 13(4), 494-504.

Winter Semester

January 9: Institutional Psychotherapy

Robcis, chapter 1

January 16: Decolonial Psychiatry

Robcis, chapter 2

Presentation Topics:

Fann clinic

Black Hamlet

LaFarge Clinic

January 23: Anti-Oedipus

Robcis, chapter 3

Presentation topics:

Franco Basaglia

Psychedelic psychiatry

January 30: Total Institutions

Robcis, chapter 4

Presentation Topics:

Total institutions

“The right to treatment”

February 6: Our Animal Natures I: Ethology

Weidman, chapters intro and 1

Presentation Topics:

Comparative cognition

Epigenetics

Critical periods

February 13: Imagining our Deep History

Weidman, chapters 2-3

Presentations topics:

Cognitive archaeology

Oldevai gorge

Acheulean tools

Reading Week

February 27: Love and Hate

Weidman 4-5

Presentation topics:

UNESCO statement on race

Sapir-Whorf hypothesis

Cultural relativism

March 6: Our Animal Natures II: Sobiobiology

Weidman chapters 6-7

Presentation topics

Meme

Baldwin effect

March 13: Looking for the Typical Town

Igo, introduction & chapter 1

Presentation Topics

The authoritarian personality

Enemyship

March 20: Measuring Opinion

Igo, chapters 3 & 4

Presentation topics

Jamuna Prasad

Ignacio Martin Baro

Participatory action research

March 27: The Public Nature of Private Life

Igo, chapters 5 & 6

Presentation topics

Katharine Bement Davis

Evelyn Hooker

April 3: Extended Minds

Clark, A., & Chalmers, D. (1998). The extended mind. *analysis*, 58(1), 7-19.

April 10: After Nature

Fraser, M. (2001). The nature of Prozac. *History of the Human Sciences*, 14(3), 56-84.