

Faculty of Health
Department of Psychology
PSYC 4220 6.0 Section A: THEORIES OF HUMAN NATURE
Mondays 8:30-11:30 in SC 216
F23-W24

Instructor: Dr. Lisa Flksenbaum
Office Hours: by appointment (via zoom)
Email: lisafix@yorku.ca

How to reach your instructor: The preferred method contacting the me is via email.

- Any correspondence directed to me must indicate the course number and section letter in the subject heading. Our course number and section letter are: PSYC 4220
- Be sure to include your full name and student number in the body of the email.
- Check the course materials (e.g., the syllabus, course website), to see if the answer is already provided.
- Send your email well in advance of when a response is required. If you email me the night before assignment is due, I will not be able to respond in a timely manner.
- It is possible that some emails that are not from a university address (e.g., @hotmail.com) may be treated as spam. The university expects you to check your York email account regularly and us to use it to communicate with you.
- As a general rule, I will do my best to answer emails within 2 business days. I do not check or answer emails on Saturdays or Sundays.
- Follow-up within 3-7 days if a response has not been received, but not any sooner.

Course Prerequisite(s): Course prerequisites are strictly enforced. Please ensure that you have the required prerequisites.

Course Credit Exclusions

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

Course website: eClass

All course materials will be available on the course eClass site. This site will be your central access point for course materials.

Course Delivery and Technical Requirements

There will be weekly in-person lectures on Wednesdays (Starting Sep 6) from 8:30- 11:30 in RS 128. It is important that you attend classes as in-class discussions on required readings as well as student participation and presentations and written reflection papers are central to the course.

Similar to other fourth year seminar courses, students are strongly encouraged to attend classes and actively engage in class discussions.

Course Description

This course is an advanced seminar course in theories of human nature. In addressing the question, what makes us human, this course will examine the origins, evolutionary foundations and psychological underpinnings of human behavior by synthesizing theories and research from across the social, psychological and biological sciences. During this course students will study and critique ancient, early modern and post-modern views of human nature.

Some of the topics in this course are controversial and sensitive, and it will sometimes be easy for the discussion to get emotionally charged. Thus it is extremely important that everyone in the class feels comfortable in expressing their thoughts. This can only be accomplished if we recognize and respect the experiences of others, no matter how personally disagreeable we find them. It is possible to criticize another person's position without demeaning them or offending them, and I will not tolerate behavior that offends or demeans (whether the behavior is overt or more subtle). An atmosphere of mutual respect and consideration is crucial if we are to learn from one another, even if we can disagree.

Classes involve formal lectures by the instructor as well as class discussions on assigned readings. To help you prepare for class, a reflection paper will be due the evening before each class i.e. on Tuesday evenings by 6:00 PM on assigned readings.

Program Learning Outcomes

1. Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:
2. Demonstrate in-depth knowledge of theories of human nature.
3. Critically evaluate, synthesize and resolve conflicting results in theories of human nature.
4. Articulate trends in theories of human nature.
5. Locate research articles on theories of human nature and show critical thinking about research findings .
6. Express knowledge of theories of human nature in written form.
7. Engage in evidence-based dialogue with course director and peers.
8. Demonstrate an ability to work with others.

Required Text

- Readings for the class come from primary journal and/or chapter sources. The readings for each class are listed on eClass. You can find the articles through York library's e-resources. Scholar.google.com is another way of finding some of the articles, although a subscription may be required for some of the journals.
- You are expected to read the required readings before coming to class each week. In order to participate in the class discussion, you will find it much easier to formulate your opinions about the subject matter before class.

Requirements and Assessment:

Assessment	Date of Evaluation (if known)	Weighting
Presentation	Start on Nov. 8 Individual dates will be decided in the first week of class	25%
Final Paper	March 4 @ 11:59pm	25%
Reflection papers	Ongoing	25%
Class Participation	Ongoing	15%
Evaluation of Classmates' Presentations		10%
Total		100%

Description of Assignments

Class participation. Everyone in the class will be expected to have done all the readings and participate in weekly discussions. Please note that good discussions involve both speaking and listening. It is important to listen carefully to what your classmates have to say and to also communicate your own ideas clearly and respectfully. Good discussions also involve asking questions so that the group as a whole can come to a deeper understanding of the issues involved in each topic.

For each class meeting, you should have already prepared your thoughts and questions about the readings for discussion. Insightful contributions show that you have completed the readings with a critical mindset and have thought about the strengths and weaknesses of the article. You have been able to connect the arguments in the article to other relevant topics and real life situations and are able to make insightful suggestions about future directions. You should be able to build on the contributions of your classmates and stay relevant to the topic. Your grade will be based not only on the quantity of your participation but also the quality - your contributions in class should demonstrate that you have gone through the assigned readings carefully and given them some thought, both individually and in relation to each other.

During the weeks of student oral presentations, you are expected to attend class and participate even for weeks when you are not signed up to present. Your participation grade for presentation weeks will be based on the questions you ask about your classmates' presentations.

Reflection papers: To help you prepare for class, a reflection paper will be due the evening before each class (i.e., by Tuesday at 6pm). Reflection papers are designed to develop your critical thinking skills as well as technical writing skills. It will also help you to improve your communication skills by preparing you to participate effectively in class discussions. You should summarize the main arguments of the required readings and formulate your own opinion about the issue (i.e., your reflection papers should go beyond summarizing each reading; it should demonstrate that you have thought about them and have made connections between them).

Here are some guidelines to help you with your paper.

1. Please do not give me a simple "I liked it" or "I didn't like it." I am mainly looking for an engagement with the readings. Your response needs a critical justification. Give a well reasoned justification of what you thought of the reading and the argument behind it. Ask yourself: What did you think of the text? Is it a good argument? Is it a bad

argument? If it's a bad argument, where's the flaw? With the counter arguments that you present, make sure that it's justified and consistent.

2. Make sure that you aren't misreading them so that we can have an accurate account of these ideas. Next, pretend you're writing to someone who is not familiar with the topic. That way, you have to go into more details and examples so that your argument is clear, concise, and explanatory. Finally, reread the paper to yourself. You'll be surprised that by doing so, you'll catch yourself re-looking at the paper to make the arguments tighter or to restate what you meant. If something may sound ambiguous, try to clarify it by giving an example or going into more details.

These papers should be 1-2 double-spaced pages and should not exceed 500 words. Reflection papers should be uploaded to the course eClass website by the deadline and there will be **no late submissions**. You have one opportunity during the semester to not submit reading responses for a given week, no questions asked. Detailed rubric for grading of reflection papers is posted on eClass course website.

Paper and class presentation

You will write a paper (approximately 10 pages, not including references, with at least 10 references) on one of the topics discussed throughout the term. Your final term paper may be an elaboration of the same topic as your seminar presentation, or students can choose a different topic. The paper should be no longer than 12 pages excluding title page and references (APA format, double-spaced, 12pt. Times New Roman font) and is due on the last class. Title page and references are **NOT** included in the 12-page limit. Anything beyond 12 pages will not be read. An abstract is not required. Please remember that all works that are referred to – directly (should include be quoted) or indirectly – must be cited in the text, and in a reference page at the end of your work (also see section on Academic Integrity, below). Further details about the paper will be provided in class and grading rubric will be posted on eClass course website.

PowerPoint presentation

Learning to create and present effective PowerPoint presentations is an essential skill that you will likely use throughout your academic career and beyond. Starting on Nov. 8, 2 students will be required to present a position and to lead discussion concerning one of the topics listed in lecture 1. For each topic, one student will take the pro-side of an issue and another student will take the con-side. Depending on the class size, some debates **may** consist of 3 people. There is no "correct" answer for any of these issues, although they are all important and hopefully interesting. Your presentation should start off with a brief summary of the major themes/findings from previous literature. Please arrange to meet with the instructor if you have any questions. You should then present detailed arguments in favour of one position or another. You should use visual aids (i.e., PowerPoint presentation) and may decide to include video demonstrations and/or handouts. Following your presentation, you should generate discussion questions to the class; you will moderate this discussion.

Your mark will be based on 1) demonstrating an in-depth understanding of the topic and issues (e.g., this may require you to go beyond the assigned readings); 2) putting together an effective, clear and comprehensible presentation; and 3) generating and moderating class discussion.

Evaluation of Classmates' Presentations

Students will provide a one page feedback to the presenter and will upload their evaluation to a dropbox on eClass **within 24 hours of the presentation. You cannot submit an evaluation of classmates' presentations if you do not attend the presentation.** If you miss a presentation, you will get

zero on the evaluation for that week. Detailed instructions for presentation and feedback and rubric for presentation will be posted on eClass course website.

Class Format and Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend weekly seminars. You cannot earn participation marks and submit an evaluation of classmates' presentations unless you attend classes.

Discussion Boards: are provided to create a space for you where you can interact with your classmates and share information. Please read the instructions posted on course website about Netiquette carefully before adding a post on discussion boards.

- **FAQ Forum:** There will be a question and answer forum on eClass where you can post questions related to the course. Students are welcome to contribute and share their answers. I will answer the questions posted on this forum on Mondays. If you have any questions, please refer to this forum. You are welcome to email me if your question is not addressed by this forum.
- **Chat Room:** A discussion forum will be made available to allow students to meet and chat online. This is a space for students to socialize and chat about the course.

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 2020-21](#)

Missed Tests/Midterm Exams/Late Assignment:

For any missed quiz or 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](#). Failure to complete the form within 48 hours of the original deadline will result in a grade of zero for the missed quiz or late assignment.

The student must contact the instructor by e-mail within 48 hours.

Penalties for Lateness. A late outline or final paper will result in a penalty of 10% for every day (including weekends) that the paper is late. Difficulties with the eClass portal will not be accepted as a legitimate reason for a late assignment.

Submission of papers/assignments:

All assignments will be submitted online through the course website; no assignments will be accepted through email. Students will be required to submit their final paper to Turnitin.com (via the course website) for review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where

they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. It is your responsibility to ensure that the assignments are uploaded in uncorrupted files.

Add/Drop Deadlines

For a list of all important dates please refer to:

	Year (Y)
Last date to add a course without permission of instructor (also see Financial Deadlines)	Sept 20
Last date to add a course with permission of instructor (also see Financial Deadlines)	Sept 28
Drop deadline: Last date to drop a course without receiving a grade (also see Financial Deadlines)	Feb. 8
Course Withdrawal Period (withdraw from a course and receive a grade of "W" on transcript – see note below)	Feb. 9 – April 8

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 enroll 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.

Turnitin

The university has subscribed to the Turnitin service which helps professors identify plagiarism and helps students maintain academic integrity. The work submitted by you in this course will be submitted through Turnitin via eClass.

Electronic Device Policy

This course will be delivered in an online format and therefore electronic devices (e.g., tablets, laptops) are permitted during class time for course-related purposes. 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

Sep 11	Welcome to PSYC4220 & Administration
Sep 18	Introduction To Human Nature
Sep 25	Ancient View of Human Nature: Confucian *recorded class – Jewish Holiday*
Oct. 2	Library Session Ancient View of Human Nature: Buddhism
Oct 9	Reading Week, no class
Oct 16	Ancient View of Human Nature: Plato/Artistotle
Oct 23	Presentation Consultation
Oct 30	Early Modern View of Human Nature: Kant, Marx, and Darwin
Nov 6	Early Modern and Post Modern Views of Human Nature: Freud and Feminist Theory
Nov 13	Student Presentations
Nov 20	Student Presentations
Nov 27	Student Presentations
Dec 4	Student Presentations
Winter 2024	
Jan 8	Student Presentations
Jan 15	Student Presentations
Jan 22	Student Presentations
Jan 29	Student Presentations
Feb 5	Student Presentations

Feb 12	Student Presentations
Feb 19	Reading Week, no class
Feb 26	Student Presentations
Mar 4	Student Presentations; Final Papers Due
Mar 11	Student Presentations
Mar 18	Student Presentations
Mar 25	Student Presentations
April 1	Wrap up

This is a tentative schedule and subject to change. Be sure to check the course website regularly to be aware of any changes.