

THEORIES OF HUMAN NATURE

HH/PSYC 4220 6.0 A, 2014 - 2015

Mondays 8:30 - 11:30

Location: FC 103

Course Director: Tifrah Warner, Ph.D.

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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 consists of a review of traditional perspectives of human nature, and a review of currently proposed principles of human nature, mostly from Systems theory perspective, but also from elsewhere.

This half of the course introduces two special topics: a particularly expansive framework for viewing human nature in terms of strata of existence, and the work of Milton H. Erickson as an example of application of many of the principles of human nature that were reviewed.

The second half of this course follows the format of the introduced framework and looks at current psychological theories. It consists 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. These readings 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 life.
- 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, details

Assignments: an overview

- 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)
- Based on each assignment, compile a 'master list' of the principles of human functioning covered class. Keep this list separate and attached it to assignment # 7 (the last one in Fall semester).

Assignments #1 to #6 (Fall semester)

- State the main points of each reading.
- Identify any principles of human functioning mentioned in the reading.
- Make up one discussion question and an 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 an application of a human value of your choice. (The example is to be written in **full sentences, paragraph format.**)



Assignment #7

This assignment is meant to be an applied review of all the principles of human nature we identified in class. Here is where you are expected to use the 'master list' of principles.

- Course kit reading (O'Hanlon)
 - State the main points of the reading.
 - Using your 'master list', identify the principles of human functioning applied by M. H. Erickson.
- An Ericksonian case of your choice that was not mentioned in O'Hanlon's reading (see references in class schedule).
 - **Briefly** describe the case using **full sentences, paragraph format**
 - Using your 'master list', identify the principles of human functioning applied in this case. **Briefly** describe the application of each principle.
- A clarification question/s about the assigned material.

Assignments #8 to #17 (part A), (Winter semester)

- State the **thesis** of each reading or audio material.
- List the main points of each reading or audio material.
- List human nature principles found in the reading using your 'master list'.
- Make up one discussion question and an 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 identified in **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**)

Course Requirements, continued

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)



Team Presentations

Topic

The layer of human existence listed in class schedule.

Format

A panel with a chairperson.

Structure

- Part 1. The team presents the general topic and the specific class readings by
- reviewing a diagram of all the layers of human existence (1 min.)
 - arguing how essential is the specific layer of existence they are presenting (2 min.)
 - Organizing a game and Q & A period about the reading (up to 20 min.)
- Part 2. Individual presentations, 10 min each.
- Part 3. A Q & A period on the individual presentations.

References for Individual presentations are

- chosen by each individual
- academic (written for academic readers)
- about a **theory** (most likely to be found in books)
- preselected in 2 cases (see ♦ on schedule) and for all last class presentations, (see CD)

Two presentation handouts

- in point form
 - length: 1 – 1 ½ pages
 - to be given to all students
1. A handout from the team includes
- the thesis and main points of the assigned reading
 - principles from the 'master list' that are found in the reading; names & brief descriptions.
2. A handout from each student includes:
- the thesis and main points of the chosen reference.
 - principles from the 'master list' that are found in the reference; names & brief descriptions.
 - 2 multiple-choice questions about the **main concepts** of the reference. (These questions may be presented to the class and may be used in the next quiz.)
 - 2 copies of this handout to the Course Director
 - **a photocopy of the reference** is to be given to the Course Director; it may have your notes on it and will be returned to you.



Preparatory meetings with the course director

- at least 2 classes before the presentation date.
- Each team will suggest a tentative outline for the presentation and bring up any questions about the material.
- Optional: review appropriateness of the individually selected references with Course Director



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

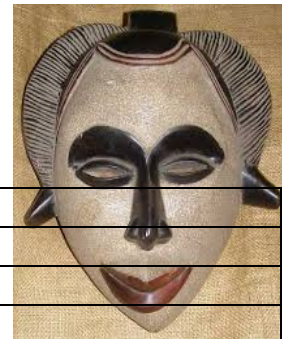
Course Requirements, continued



Paper for option 2

- Content: A look at three theoretical perspectives on human nature, all about the same stratum of human life.
- Length: 8 to 12 pages
- Format: APA style
- Content: Review - each theory
Discuss - (a) to what extent these theories complement or contrast each other, (b) to what extent the stratum involved is fully covered by these theories
Conclude - your thoughts and insights; including other theoretical directions and other strata of human nature.
- Due dates **Complete** paper draft - November 17
 Final submission - February 2

Class Schedule Fall Semester



<u>September 8</u>	
Topic	Traditional perspectives of human nature, part 1
Readings	Your old Introduction to Psychology textbook
<u>September 15</u>	
Topic	Traditional perspectives of human nature. Part 2
Readings	Your old Introduction to Psychology textbook
<u>September 22</u>	
Topic	A framework for studying human nature: strata of existence
Readings	- Michel, G. F & Tyler, A. N. (2007). Developmental Psychobiology
Assignment	# 1 on Michel, G. F & Tyler, A. N. (2007).
<u>September 29</u>	
Topic	Principles from Systems Theory: part 1
Readings	- Michel, G. F & Tyler, A. N. (2007). Developmental Psychobiology
Quiz	# 1 (does not include Michel & Tyler, 2007)
<u>October 6</u>	
Topic	Principles from Systems Theory: part 2
Readings	- Perna, P. A. & Masterpasqua F. Introduction: The history, Meaning... (Focus on first 10 pages only)
	- Lipton, B. H., (2008). <i>The Biology of Belief</i> . Chapter 2
Assignment	# 2
<u>October 13</u> Thanksgiving	
<u>October 20</u>	
Topic	Principles from Systems Theory: part 3
Readings	- Thelen, E. (2005) Dynamic systems theory and the complexity of change. (focus: pages 258 - 266, 270 - 272, 278 - 280)
Assignment	# 3

<u>October 27</u>	
Topic	Principles from Systems Theory: part 4
Readings	- 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)
Assignment	# 4
<u>November 3</u>	
Quiz	# 2 (including Michel & Tyler, 2007)
Other	Discussing presentations and papers
<u>November 10</u>	
Topic	Additional Principles of human nature in current literature
Readings	- Travis, F. & Harung, H., (in press) Brain integration, moral reasoning, ... (focus on theoretical sections.)
Assignment	# 5
Other	Meeting with presentation teams 1 & 2
<u>November 17</u>	
Topic	Additional Principles of human nature in current literature
Readings	- D. Ariely. (2009). Chapter 1 - Circadian rhythms. From any Introduction to psychology textbook
Assignment	# 6
Other	Meeting with presentation teams
Other	Complete paper draft due date, 8:30 am
<u>November 24</u>	
Topic	The work of Milton H. Erickson: applications of systems principles.
Readings	- 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)
Assignment	# 7
<u>December 1</u>	
Quiz	# 3, make-up for quiz 1 & 2
Other	meeting with presentation teams



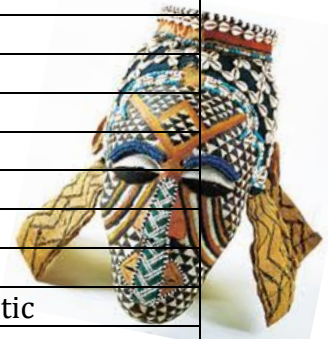


Winter Semester

<u>January 5</u>	
Topic (1)	Our physical nature: flexibility and responsiveness of the brain
Readings	Quartz, S. R., Sejnowski, T. J. (2003) <u>Liars, Lovers, and Heros</u> . What the new brain science reveals about how we become who we are. Chapter 3.
Assignment	# 8
<u>January 13</u>	
Topic (2)	Environment: we are made of tools and trees
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Taylor T. (2010). The Artificial Ape. How technology changed the course of human evolution. Introduction. 1-12. ● Selhub, E. M. & Logan, A. C. (2012). Your Brain on Nature. The Science of Nature's Influence on Your Health, Happiness, and Vitality. Ch. 1: selected sections: Biophilia...(8-10) & Neighborhood...(24-27) (◆ the full reference is one of the presentations)
Assignment	# 9
<u>January 19</u>	
Topic (3)	Environment: we are a social network and culture
Readings	Christakis, N. A. & Flower, J. H. (2009). <u>Connected</u> . Chapter 3.
Assignment	# 10
<u>January 26</u>	
Quiz	# 4
Other	meeting with presentation teams
<u>February 2</u>	
Topic (4)	Our logical nature: intellect, rationality, decision making...
	M. Gladwell, (2005). <u>Blink</u> , .Chapter 1.
Assignment	# 11
Other	Paper due date
Other	Last date to drop the course without a grade: Feb. 6
<u>February 9</u>	
Topic (4)	We are made out of memories
Readings	CBC interview with Endel Tulving: http://www.cbc.ca/ideas/episodes/2010/09/03/minding-memory-listen/
Assignment	# 12
<u>February 16</u>	Reading Week



February 23	
Topic (3)	Our emotional nature: made to be good
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● D. Keltner. <u>Born to be Good</u>. (2009). Chapter 1 ● B. L. Fredrickson. (2001) The role of positive emotions. ● Brown, N. J. L., Sokal, A. The complex dynamics of... (pg. 68 only) ● B. L. Fredrickson. (2013) Updated...positivity ratios. (first page only) (◆ the full reference is one of the presentations)
Assignment	# 13
Quiz	# 5
March 2	
Topic (4)	Our Imagination: fantasy, creativity, planning
Readings	P. Bloom. (2010) <u>How Pleasure Works</u> . The new science of why we like <u>what we like</u> . Chapter 6 and notes.
Assignment	# 14
March 9	
Topic (6)	Ego: our sense of individual identity
Readings	J. M. Twenge. (2006). <u>Generation Me</u> . Introduction.
Assignment	# 15
Quiz	# 6
March 16	
Topic (9)	Wisdom
Readings	Baltes, P. B. & Staudinger U. M. Wisdom: A Metaheuristic (pragmatic) to...
Assignment	# 16
March 23	
Topic (10)	Our nature: beauty and infinity
Readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● "Beauty will save the world" (Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn quoting Fyodor Dostoyevsky), CBC ideas programme. http://www.cbc.ca/ideas/episodes/2010/08/30/beauty-will-save-the-world-listen/ ● "To see a world" by William Blake
Assignment	# 17
March 30	
Quiz	# 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)

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

- 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

- 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!

