

THEORIES OF HUMAN NATURE

HH/PSYC 4220 6.0 A, 2014 - 2015

Mondays 8:30 - 11:30

Location: MC 112

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	40%
2. 12 class reading assignments (pass/fail)	10%
3. Self-nurture research journal (2 parts)	20%
4. Paper-Presentation, including	
a. team game (pass/fail)	30%
b. class presentation (pass/fail)	
c. 1 page handout	
d. A short essay	

Grading Scheme, option 2

Recommended for those who plan to continue with graduate studies

1. 7 multiple-choice quizzes	20%
2. 12 class reading assignments (pass or fail)	10%
3. Self-nurture research journal (2 parts)	20%
4. Paper-Presentation, including	
a. team game (pass/fail)	30%
b. class presentation (pass/fail)	
c. 1 page handout	
d. A short essay	30%
5. 1 paper	20%



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

Quizzes

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



Assignments: an overview

All assignments are

- to be typed (or written up in a very, very clear way)
- to be written up **in point form**.
- 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 (Fall semester)

For each reading:

- List the main points.

Answer the following:

- What is **main the argument/point** that this reading advances?
- What are the principles that describe the **structure** of the human area that this reading covers?
- What are the principles that describe how a person (or a specific area of a person) **functions**?
- What are the principles that describe the **conditions for change**?
- Compose a question (or more) about something in the material that was not clear to you **or** that you would like to hear being reviewed in class. No answer is needed.

Assignment #7

This assignment is meant to be an applied review of all the principles of human nature we identified in class.

- Course kit reading (O'Hanlon)
 - State the main points of the reading.
 - Identify the principles of human nature (structure, function, change) 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**
 - 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 or audio material.
- Compose a question (or more) about something in the material that was not clear to you **or** that you would like to hear being reviewed in class. No answer is needed.

Assignment #17 (part B)

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



Human Nature: Self-observation journal

Part I: Fall Semester. Due date: November 23

Some principles underlying human experience

The journal consists of the following:

1. Introduction

- 1 paragraph
- Explain what is meant by: ‘principles of human nature’. Include in your explanation one or two examples of principles of human nature from traditional theories.

2. 6 weekly entries

- Each week describe 3 or more examples of principles of human nature from your own life, at least one example that actually happened in the present week.
- Use principles that are in the course material, starting with the article by Michel, G. F & Tyler, A. N. (2007).
- Cover as many principles as you can, at least 9 different ones.
- You may start with the principles listed in the table below.

3. Create a table of all human nature principles covered in class, starting with the article by Michel, G. F & Tyler, A. N. (2007). Follow the format of the table below.

4. Conclusion

- 1 to 2 paragraphs.
- Describe your experience of self-observation.
- Note any interesting and new discoveries you have made about your life.

Principles of Human Nature

Formal description (citations)	Your description
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Chaos has a meaning” (Prena & Masterpasqua, 1990, pg. ..)• “Chaos....” (Thelen, 2005, pg...)• “	Disturbing and upsetting events precede qualitative change and growth.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Change is not programmed or preformed” (Oyama et al., 2000,...)• Development follows “no program” (Thelen, ...)• “	A person’s development and experiences, including behaviours, talents, traits are not predetermined.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Developmental variability” (Michel & Tyler, 2007,..)• “Multiple causes” (Oyama et al., 2000,...)• “	A person’s traits are formed as a result of diverse causes.
“Relativity” (Ariely, 2009)	When individuals make a choice, they are most likely to decide by comparing their choice to something similar in their environment, not by using logic.

Human Nature: Self-observation journal
Part II: Winter Semester. Due date: March 14
Different dimensions of human life



The journal consists of the following:

Section 1: Introduction

- 1 paragraph
- Briefly describe the different dimensions of human nature and how they relate to each other according to the Vedic science of yoga as presented in class.

Sections 2 to 6: observations of 6 different dimensions

- Each section covers 6 (or more) days of observation, all within a period of up to 10 days.
- Each section includes 4 subsections:
 - A succinct description of your observation schedule
 - A numerical summary of your observations
 - A diagram/s that summarizes your observations (e.g., a pie graph).
 - A short verbal summary of your observations (1 paragraph)

Section 2: Observation of the environmental dimension

- At a fixed time every day, list all the different types of environments (consider physical, social, cultural features) you were in during the last 24 hours.
- Note the length of time you have spent in each type.
- Rate each type for:
 - How uplifting it was (1=least, 10=most)
 - Anything else that you want.



Section 3: Observation of the physical dimension

- Choose an observation period/s for each day
- Choose frequency of recording
- At each recording point mentally scan your body and note the following:
 - What is the most dominant physical sensation?
 - How comfortable are you in your present posture? (1=least, 10=most)
 - How straight are you sitting/standing (1=least, 10=most)?
 - What is each one of your senses experiencing?
 - Check to what extent (1=least, 10=most) the body wants to:
 - Stretch?
 - Engage in energetic activity?
 - Rest?
 - Something else?
 - Add anything else that you would like to record.

Section 4: Observation of mental dimension.

- Choose an observation period/s for each day
- Choose frequency of recording
- At each recording point identify the mental state you have just been experiencing:
 - Memory: remembering,
 - Imagination: day dreaming or planning,
 - Logic: organizing, classifying, judging, comparing, or arguing
 - Emotion: feeling
 - Sleep...



Section 5: Observation of ego dimension.

- Organize an observation schedule to include 5 or more different types of situations you are typically in.
- Choose one or more points of recording within each observational period.
- At each point of recording rate your experience on a 10-point scale,
 - 1 = feeling very self-conscious, 10 = feeling completely natural

Section 6: Wisdom dimension.

- At the beginning of each day, at a fixed point: select a quotation or a proverb that reflects a broad perspective of life, or has a meaning that extends beyond the individual's life.
- During the day: watch for instances that reflect the quotation.
- At the end of each day, at a fixed point: record your observations.

Section 7: Conclusions

- 1 to 2 paragraphs.
- Describe your experience observing the different dimensions of your life.
- Note any interesting and new discoveries you have made about yourself.

Raw data (your daily numerical and verbal recordings) – is not part of the journal, but the data have to be available for review until you received the final course grade.



Paper - Presentations

Due dates:

Handouts to students – day of presentation
Paper & all handouts to Course Director – Feb. 8



Topic

The dimension of human existence listed in class schedule.

Team presentation

Format: A panel with a chairperson.

Content:

- 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 dimension of existence they are presenting (2 min.)
 - Organizing a game and Q & A period about the class reading (up to 20 min.)
- Part 2. Individual presentations, 10 min each.
Part 3. A Q & A period on the individual presentations.

Individuals' presentations

References are:

- 1 to 2
- chosen by you
- academic (written for academic readers)
- about a **theory** (most likely to be found in books)
- preselected in 2 cases (see on schedule)



Individuals' Write-ups

1. A handout for all students

- An outline of the presented reference/s **in a point form**. (Include the complete reference in APA style.)
- State the **thesis** of your reference at the beginning of your outline.
- 2 multiple-choice questions about the **main points** of the reference.
- Each handout is 1 to 2 pages in length.
- For the Course Director:
 - 2 copies of the write-up and
 - a **photocopy of the reference/s**; it may have your notes on it and will be returned to you.

2. A 4 to 5 pages, APA style, discussion paper

Organize your paper according to the following:

- The **main point** that this theory advances (introductory paragraph).
- The **proposed structure** of the human dimension this theory covers.
- The way this human dimension **functions** according to this theory.
- The **conditions for change** and development according to this theory.
- Identify **theoretical principles** that are similar to those covered in class (skip those covered in the first 3 classes).
- Your reflections and conclusions.



Course Requirements, continued



Paper for option 2

Content: A look at three theoretical perspectives on human nature, all about the same dimension of human life.

Length: 8 to 12 pages

Format: APA style

Content: Review - each theory following the same points of the short paper.
Discuss - (a) to what extent these theories complement or contrast each other, (b) to what extent this dimension is fully covered by these theories.
Conclude - your thoughts and insights; including other theoretical directions and other dimensions of human nature.

Due dates **Complete** paper draft – November 16
 Final submission – January 18



Class Schedule Fall Semester

September 14	
Topic	Traditional perspectives of human nature, part 1
Readings	Your old Introduction to Psychology textbook
September 21	
Topic	Traditional perspectives of human nature. Part 2
Readings	Your old Introduction to Psychology textbook
September 28	
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).
October 5	
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)
October 12 Thanksgiving	
October 19	
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
October 26	
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
November 2	
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
November 9	
Quiz	# 2 (including Michel & Tyler, 2007)
Other	Discussing presentations and papers
November 16	
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
Other	Due date: Complete paper draft (option 2), 8:30 am
November 23	
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
November 30	
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. Taproots. Underlying principles of ...) - 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
Other	Due date for Journal 1, 8:30 am
December 7	
Quiz	# 3, make-up for quiz 1 & 2
Other	meeting with presentation teams

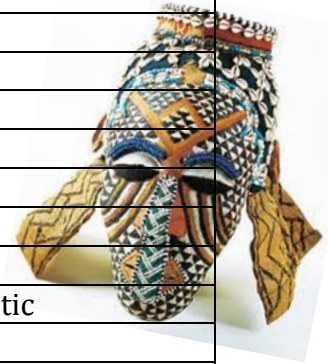




Winter Semester

January 4	
Topic (1)	Our physical nature: flexibility and responsiveness of the brain
Readings	Quartz, S. R., Sejnowski, T. J. (2003) <i>Liars, Lovers, and Heros. What the new brain science reveals about how we become who we are.</i> Chapter 3.
Presentations	<i>The story of the human body.</i> D.E. Lieberman (2013) any chapter of your choice.
Assignment	# 8
January 11	
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)
Assignment	# 9
January 18	
Topic (3)	Environment: we are a social network and culture
Readings	Christakis, N. A. & Flower, J. H. (2009). <i>Connected.</i> Chapter 3.
Assignment	# 10
Other	Due date of paper for option 2
January 25	
Quiz	# 4
Other	meeting with presentation teams
February 1	
Topic (4)	Our logical nature: intellect, rationality, decision making...
	M. Gladwell, (2005). <i>Blink</i> , .Chapter 1.
Assignment	# 11
Other	Paper due date
Other	Last date to drop the course without a grade: Feb. 5
February 8	
Topic (4)	We are made out of memories
Reading	Erdeli, M. H. (2010). The ups and downs of memory <i>American Psychologist</i> , 65, 623-633
Assignment	# 12
Other	Due date: paper & hand-outs (game questions, out-line duplicated)
February 15	Reading Week

February 22	
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)
Assignment	# 13
Quiz	# 5
February 29	
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 7	
Topic (6)	Ego: our sense of individual identity
Readings	J. M. Twenge. (2006). <u>Generation Me</u> . Introduction.
Assignment	# 15
Quiz	# 6
March 14	
Topic (9)	Wisdom
Readings	Baltes, P. B. & Staudinger U. M. Wisdom: A Metaheuristic (pragmatic) to...
Assignment	# 16
Other	Due date: Self-Nurture Research Journal, part II
March 21	
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/player/Radio/Ideas/Full+Episodes/2010/ID/1525117349/ ● "To see a world" by William Blake
Presentations	Beyond Justice Reasoning: Moral Development and Consideration of a Seventh Stage . Lawrence Kohlberg & Robert A. Ryncarz ch. 8 in <i>Higher Stages of Human Development</i> , Alexander & Langer (Eds)
Assignment	# 17
March 28	
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!

