

Psychology 4220 6.0A (Y): Theories of Human Nature

Instructor:

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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 12-1pm or by appointment, BSB 210

Time and Location:

Tuesdays 9am-12pm, Vari Hall 1158

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.

Required Texts:

Harrington, A. (2008). *The cure within: A history of mind-body medicine*. New York: Norton.

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

Fausto-Sterling, Anne (2000). *Sexing the body: Gender politics and the construction of sexuality*. New York: Basic Books.

Kagan, J. (2006). *An argument for mind*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Plus select shorter readings are available online.

All books are available for purchase through the York University Bookstore and are also available from online distributors like amazon.ca.

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 48 credits with written permission of the instructor. Course credit exclusion: None

Evaluation:

Quizzes	20%	best 10 out of 11 throughout the year
Participation	20%	throughout the year
Oral Presentation	20%	throughout the year
Proposal	5%	June 1, 2011
Paper Draft 1	20%	July 8, 2011
Paper Draft 2	15%	August 5, 2011

Organization of the Course:

Classes meeting will feature a combination of large group discussion, breakout groups, debates, and student presentations. This class is primarily a discussion-based seminar. Students are expected to come to class having completed the assigned readings and ready to discuss them. As you complete the weekly readings, you are encouraged to prepare a list of comments and questions to facilitate the discussion. These include questions of clarification, concerns about the interpretation of evidence, connections across weekly topics, or connections with other areas of your studies. The quality of our meetings largely depends on the time and effort that students put into the seminar. Students are expected to arrive on time and remain until the end of the class.

Cell Phone and Laptop Policy

There are **no** cell phones, laptops, or other electronic devices permitted in this class. Please keep these devices in your bag. In a seminar setting, these tools are highly distracting for others and inhibit the flow of discussion. If you require special accommodation or have extenuating circumstances that require these devices, please contact the instructor.

Assignment Submission: Proper academic performance depends on students doing their work not only well, but on time. Accordingly, assignments for this course must be received on the due date specified for the assignment. Papers should be emailed to the professor at mpettit@yorku.ca

Lateness Penalty of Papers: Assignments received later than the due date will be penalized at 3% per day including weekends. Exceptions to the lateness penalty for valid reasons such as illness, compassionate grounds, etc., may be entertained by the Course Instructor but will require supporting documentation (e.g., a doctor's letter).

Quizzes: During the course of the year, there will be 10 pop quizzes at the beginning of class on that week's assigned readings. Quizzes will commence at 9:10am sharp. If you are late for class or miss that class, there is no make up for the quizzes. The lowest mark on a quiz (including a 0 for a missed quiz) will be dropped from the final grade.

May 2: Introduction & Administration

May 4: How to do a presentation

Paul Edwards, "How to Give an Academic Talk."

www.si.umich.edu/~pne/PDF/howtotalk.pdf

May 9: Human Nature Today

Pinker, S. (2009, January 7). My genome, my self. *New York Times Magazine*.

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/11/magazine/11Genome-t.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all

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

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/10/magazine/10psyche-t.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all

May 11: Inventing Human Nature

Carson, J. (2002). Differentiating a republican citizenry: Talents, human science, and enlightenment theories of governance. *Osiris*, 17, 74-103.

May 16: Craniometry

Gould, S. J. (1981/1996). American polygeny and craniometry before Darwin. In *Mismeasure of Man* (62-104). New York: Norton.

May 18: The Science and Politics of IQ

Fass, P.S. (1980). The IQ: A cultural and historical framework. *The Journal of Education*, 88, 431-458.

May 23

***** Victoria Day – University Closed *****

May 25: Suggestion

Harrington, introduction & chapter 1

Presentation Topics:

Narrative psychology

Jean-Martin Charcot

May 30: Positive Thinking

Harrington, chapters 2 & 3

Presentation Topics:

Positive psychology

Authorized deception

Shell shock

June 1: Stressed Out

Harrington, chapters 4 & 5

Presentation Topics:

Neurasthenia

Emile Durkheim, *Suicide* (1897)

Walter Cannon

June 6: The Power of Culture(s)

Harrington, chapter 6 & conclusion

Presentation Topics:

Culture/cultural psychology

Relaxation response

Orientalism

June 8: Looking for the Typical Town

Igo, Introduction & chapter 1

Presentation Topics:

Hull House Maps and Papers (1895)

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (1983)

June 13: Measuring Opinion

Igo, chapter 3 & 4

Presentation Topics:

Ideology (political psychology)

Henri Tajfel

WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic)

June 15: The Public Nature of Private Life

Igo, chapter 5 & 6

Presentation Topics:

Katharine Bement Davis

Lewis Terman

June 20: Rethinking Sex

Fausto-Sterling, chapters 1-2

Presentation Topics:

Gender verification in sports

George Weinberg

June 22: Intersexuality

Fausto-Sterling, chapters 3-4

Presentation Topics:

Havelock Ellis

John Money

Intersex Society of North America

June 27: Hormones

Fausto-Sterling, chapters 6 & 7

Presentation Topics:

“Gender similarities hypothesis”

Harry Benjamin

June 29: Developing Sex

Fausto-Sterling, chapter 8-9

Presentation Topics:

Evelyn Hooker

Lisa Diamond, *Sexual Fluidity* (2008)

July 4: The Age of Nurture

Kagan, chapter 1

Presentation Topics:

Zing-Yang Kuo

Konrad Lorenz

July 6: Child Development in Historical Perspective

Kagan, chapters 2-3

Presentation Topics:

John Bowlby

Feral children

Carol Gilligan

July 11: Development meets Culture

Kagan, chapters 4-5

July 13: Mind and Brain

Kagan, chapters 6-7

July 18: Human-Machine Boundary

Clark, A. and Chalmers, D. (1998). The extended mind. *Analysis*, 58, 7-19.

July 20: Human-Animal Boundary

Hare, B. & Tomasello, M. (2005). Human-like social skills in dogs? *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 9, 439-444.

Wynne, C. D. L. (2007). What are Animals? Why Anthropomorphism is Still Not a Scientific Approach to Behavior. *Comparative Cognition & Behavior Reviews* 2, 125-135.

July 25: Human Nature - History & Development

Masterpasqua, F. (2009). Psychology and epigenetics. *Review of General Psychology*, 13, 194-201.

Lloyd, G.E.R. (2010). History and human nature: Cross-cultural universals and cultural relativities. *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 35, 201-214.

July 27: Wrap Up

Pinker, S. (January 7, 2009). My genome, my self. *New York Times Magazine*.

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

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, 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 15-20 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 (10%) 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.

Draft 1:

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. In addition to submitting a hard copy in class, the student will also submit an electronic version to turnitin.com.

The following is the grading rubric used for the first draft:

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Adequate	Poor
Introduction/Conclusion					
Use of Evidence/Sources					
Style & Grammar					
Argument (Originality/ Coherence/Persuasiveness)					

Draft 2:

After receiving feedback on the initial draft, students are expected to revise their papers. You will be evaluated primarily on how well you incorporated suggestions from the first draft.