

Philosophy of Human Nature

Lecture, MWF 12-1 pm, 1068 East Hall

Instructor: Robin Zheng

Contact Information

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Please do not hesitate at any time to contact me. I am here for you, and more than happy to help in any way I can.

Course Description

What is human nature? In what ways are we limited or liberated by being human? This course will examine a number of philosophical theories about morality and rationality. In particular, we will focus on the question of what sorts of beings we would have to be in order for those theories to be true. What kind of psychologies, individual and social, are required for us to act morally or rationally? To achieve justice or knowledge? In exploring answers to these questions, we will draw on works by philosophers, economists, and social psychologists.

Course Requirements

First Exam	20%	February 22
Second Exam	20%	April 12
First Paper	20%	March 11
Second Paper	25%	April 22
Blogs	10%	
Participation	5%	

Both exams will take place in the classroom 1068 East Hall.

There is no final exam for this course.

The second paper is weighted slightly more heavily than the first. This is designed to help you, in case you struggle with what is required of a philosophy paper the first time you try writing one. I expect to see improvement from the first to the second papers. However, if the second paper receives a lower grade (though I hope this doesn't happen!), I will still weight the higher grade more heavily.

Readings

All readings will be available on CTools. **Each text should be read *in advance* of the lecture.**

Papers

Papers should be around 1000-1500 words (5-6 pages double-spaced). However, these should be understood merely as useful guidelines for writing a good paper. Papers any shorter than this are unlikely to have explored the material in enough depth, while papers longer than this are likely to include redundant or irrelevant material.

Papers are **due before class** on the dates listed in your course syllabus. Please submit them by uploading to Assignment on CTools. Late papers will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade for each day that they are late. I will not grant extensions except in extraordinary cases of emergency.

Do not put your name anywhere in the paper! Save the document using a title that includes your student ID and the number of the question you're answering. Here's an example of an exemplary document title: "63489001_Question5.docx". You do not need a cover page. Do not use any nonstandard fonts or formatting. Please number all your pages.

Writing a good philosophy paper is in some ways like writing any other good paper, but there are certain standards and demands that are particular to philosophy. We will touch on some of these issues in class and I am also available to discuss it with you during office hours. I will not read drafts of your papers, but I am happy to look over outlines or even just talk about your ideas.

You may want to consult the following resources on writing philosophy papers:

<http://web.williams.edu/wp-etc/philosophy/jcruz/moraltutor/index.html>

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~dportmor/tips.pdf>

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

<http://spot.colorado.edu/~tooley/WritingEssays.html>

or use any of the resources available at the Sweetland Writing Center:

<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/sweetland/>.

Blogs

Blogging is a chance for you to express your ideas in writing outside the constraints of a formal academic paper, engage in further dialogue with your classmates and instructor, and explore the issues beyond the classroom. You should think of yourself as writing a mini-editorial, one that you would be willing to publish and defend publicly. Though blogging may not be “academic” writing, it is still analytical and argumentative writing. In addition to being good preparation for class discussion and writing papers, the skills you develop in so learning to write clearly—to *think* clearly!—will remain important for the rest of your professional and personal life.

You must submit **one blog post every two weeks** on the material covered in that time. For each post, you have two different options: you can either 1) Respond one of the lecture or texts, or 2) Respond to a post by one of your classmates. **You must submit your post by the end of the day on Friday. I will not award credit for blogs submitted after these deadlines.**

Your blog posts can draw on anything in the lecture, the texts, or relevant outside materials (news, books, films, videos, etc). You can ask questions, criticize views you don't agree with, or give supporting arguments for those you do agree with. Do not simply summarize the material; what I

want is your critical *response* to the material. At the very minimum, you can quote a particular passage or claim that struck you and explain why you think it is significant.

5% of the blogging grade will be for completion. The other 5% will be for the quality of your submissions. I will not grade each post individually, but I encourage you to put thought and effort into each of them so that you can demonstrate the skills and knowledge you are gaining throughout the course. You will be asked to turn one of your blog posts into a short essay, which will be given a grade, but only as feedback to guide you in writing your first paper.

Participation

The participation grade will consist of your attendance to lecture, your contributions to class discussion, and your time spent in office hours. A steady record of high or low participation can make a difference when it comes to borderline grades.

Special Accommodations

If you have any physical, psychiatric or learning conditions that may impact your performance in this course, please let me know as soon as possible, so that we may arrange for the appropriate accommodations. Please bring documentation from the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities.

If you observe any religious or cultural that you believe may interfere with this course, please also let me know.

Academic Integrity

I will hold you to the highest standards of academic integrity. The LSA provides examples of academic misconduct, procedures for resolving such cases, and frequently asked questions at <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/academicintegrity/>. If I suspect any kind of academic dishonesty, I will not hesitate to take all the measures necessary for ensuring proper punishment. You will fail the course, and you will also be reported to the Dean or the LSA Academic Judiciary for further discipline.

If you are in any way unclear as to what constitutes plagiarism, ***come talk to me before you write your papers.*** Ignorance or confusion will not be accepted as excuses for plagiarism or other academic misconduct.

W Jan 9 Introduction to the course

F Jan 11 *Philosophical arguments*
Lewis Vaughn, Philosophy Here and Now (Ch. 1)
John Perry, Michael Bratman, John Martin Fischer, “Logical Toolkit”

I. ACTING MORALLY

M Jan 14 *Consequentialism*
John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism (Ch. 2)

W Jan 16 *Integrity and Friendship*
Michael Stocker, “The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories” (2nd section)

F Jan 18 *Sophisticated consequentialism*
Peter Railton, “Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality”
[Section IV]

M Jan 21 **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day University Symposia: NO CLASS**

W Jan 23 *Deontology*
Onora O’Neill, “A Simplified Account of Kant’s Ethics”

F Jan 25 *Trolley problems*
Judith Jarvis Thomson, “Turning the Trolley”

M Jan 28 *The psychology of trolley problems*
Joshua Greene, “The Secret Joke of Kant’s Soul” (40-46, 67-72)

W Jan 30 *Virtue ethics*
Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics [Book II, Sections 1, 6]
Rosalind Hursthouse, Virtue Ethics (8-16)

F Feb 1 *Situationism*
John Doris, “Persons, Situations, and Virtue Ethics” (1st section)

M Feb 4 *Virtuous psychology*
Peter Railton, “Two Cheers for Virtue: or, Might Virtue Be Habit Forming?” (301-305, 312-325)

II. ACTING RATIONALLY

W Feb 6 *Decision theory*

Brian Weatherson, “Notes on Decision Theory” [Section 9]
Michael Strevens, “Notes on Bayesian Confirmation Theory” [Section 2, 3.1]

- F Feb 8** *Irrational decisions*
Daniel Kahneman, Thinking Fast and Slow [Ch. 26]
- M Feb 11** *Parts of the soul*
David Hume, A Treatise on Human Nature [Book II, Part III, Section III]
Plato, “Phaedrus” (253d-256e)
- W Feb 13** *Dual process theories of the mind*
Thinking Fast and Slow [Ch. 1]
- F Feb 15** *Smart heuristics*
Gerd Gigerenzer, Gut Feelings: The Intelligence of the Unconscious [Ch. 1]
- M Feb 18** *Moral reasoning*
Jonathan Haidt, “The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment” [4th and 5th sections]
Optional: (video) Jesse Prinz, “Neurophilosophy of Morality: The Role of Emotions”
- W Feb 20** How to Write Philosophy Papers
Exam Review
- F Feb 22** **FIRST EXAM**
- M Feb 25** *Prudence vs morality?*
Plato, The Republic [Book II 357b-368c]
Optional: C. Daniel Baston, “Moral Masquerades: Experimental Exploration of the Nature of Moral Motivation”
- W Feb 27** *Morality and rationality*
Plato, The Republic [Book II 368c-369b, Book IV 427d-428a, 441c-445b]
Optional: Rosalind Hursthouse, On Virtue Ethics (170-174)
- F Mar 1** *Well-being*
Richard Kraut, “Desire and the Human Good” [Sections I-V, VIII]
Optional: Martin Seligman, Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being (14-29)

M-F SPRING BREAK

III. ACHIEVING JUSTICE

M Mar 11 FIRST PAPER DUE

Plato

Plato, The Republic (Book II 369b-385c, Book III 414b-417, Book VII 514-521c)

Optional: (video) Joshua Knobe and John Jost, bloggingheads.tv, Clip 1

Optional: Claire Andre and Manuel Velasquez, “The Just World Theory”

W Mar 13

Hobbes

Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan (Ch. 13, 14, 15)

(video) Michael Moyer, “What Is the Prisoner's Dilemma?”

F Mar 15

On sympathy

Adam Smith, The Theory of Moral Sentiments (Part I, Section I, Ch. I)

Robert Frank, “Cooperation Through Emotional Commitment”

M Mar 18

Locke

John Locke, “On Property”

Optional: Shanto Iyengar, “Framing Responsibility for Political Issues: The Case of Poverty”

W Mar 20

Rawls

John Rawls, A Theory of Justice [Ch. 3-4]

F Mar 22

Rawls' moral psychology

A Theory of Justice [Ch. 75-76]

M Mar 25

Aristotle

Aristotle, Politics [Book III, Sections VII, IX, XI]

Larry Bartels, “The Irrational Electorate”

W Mar 27

Divided politics

(video) Jonathan Haidt, “The Moral Roots of Liberals and Conservatives”

Lee Ross and Andrew Ward, “Naïve Realism in Real Life: Implications for Social Conflict and Misunderstanding” (110-123)

F Mar 29

Civil politics

Civilpolitics.org, Understanding the Other Side

IV. ACHIEVING KNOWLEDGE

- M Apr 1** *Scientific method*
Carl Hempel, “Scientific Inquiry: Invention and Test” (2.1-2.2)
- W Apr 3** *Situated knowers*
Elizabeth Anderson, “Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science”
(Sections 1, 7)
- F Apr 5** *Science in a social context*
Miriam Solomon, Social Empiricism [Ch. 4]
- M Apr 8** *Science as competition*
Peter Railton, “Truth, Reason, and the Regulation of Belief” (Section 3)
Brian Nosek, et al, “Scientific Utopia: II - Restructuring Incentives and Practices to
Promote Truth Over Publishability” (1-17)
- W Apr 10** *Science as a social institution*
Helen Longino, Science as Social Knowledge (76-81)
Brian Nosek, et al, “Scientific Utopia: II - Restructuring Incentives and Practices to
Promote Truth Over Publishability” (17-32)
- F Apr 12** **SECOND EXAM**
- M Apr 15** *Science and gender*
Cordelia Fine, Delusions of Gender (TBA)
Optional: Kathleen Okruhlik, “Gender and the Biological Sciences”
- W Apr 17** *Science and race*
Anthony Appiah, (1.1, 1.3-1.5, 1.13, 1.17-1.18)
American Anthropological Association Statement on "Race"
Optional: Charles Mills, “White Ignorance”
Bonus: Understandingrace.org
- F Apr 19** *Science and human nature?*
Edouard Machery, “A Plea for Human Nature”
Optional: David Hull, “On Human Nature”
- M Apr 22** **SECOND PAPER DUE**
Concluding Remarks
Reflections