

Philosophy and Human Nature II Course Outline

Instructor: Doug Al-Maini

Class Time:

Office & Office Hours:

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A continuation of Philosophy and Human Nature I. This class is intended to introduce students to the philosophical analysis of human nature. We shall begin by familiarizing ourselves with the Stoic response to the earlier theories of human nature expounded by Plato and Aristotle, and studied in the first semester. We then move on to Mencius. With Mencius' outline of human nature as fundamentally good in place, we shall return to the West, and investigate Hume's analysis of emotions, before finally moving on to Sartre. As in the first semester, by the end of the class students should be able to give a somewhat insightful response to the question, "What does it mean to be human?" from various philosophical perspectives.

Schedule (subject to change):

Week	Topic	Readings
1 Jan 4	Impulse and Appropriateness	Stoicism (handout)
2 Jan 11	Value and Emotions	Stoicism
3 Jan 18	Happiness	Stoicism
4 Jan 25	The Good Human	<i>Mencius</i> bk. II
5 Feb 1	The 4 Sprouts	<i>Mencius</i> bk. V
6 Feb 8	Good Rule	<i>Mencius</i> bk. VI
7 Feb 15	Discriminating Love	<i>Mencius</i> bk. VII
8 Feb 22	Pride & Humility	Hume, <i>Treatise on Human Nature</i> II pt. 1, ch.1-3,7,8,10
9 Mar 8	Love and Hatred	Hume, <i>Treatise on Human Nature</i> II pt. 2, ch.1, 6-8
10 Mar 15	The Will	Hume, <i>Treatise on Human Nature</i> II pt. 3, ch.3, 9, 10
11 Mar 22	Existentialism	Sartre, <i>Existentialism & Human Emotions</i>
12 Mar 29	Anguish, Forlornness, Despair	Sartre, <i>Existentialism & Human Emotions</i>

The final two classes will be spent catching up & reviewing for the final exam

Assignments: Students will be required to complete three short written responses to the ideas presented in the text, a "User's Manual" on being human, and a final exam. Each response will be worth 10% of the final grade, the manual 30%, and the final will be worth 40%. Responses consist of short essays replying to the response questions listed below. Students must provide a response to the question from each section or set of readings. The response should be roughly 3 pages in length (~900 words) **and must include an argument outline**. The manual should be 8-10 pages in length (~2400-3000 words).

Response Questions:

1st Section: Due Jan 25th

Would a Stoic accept that an animal can have emotions? Why or why not? Do you agree?

2nd Section: Due Feb 22nd

How can Mencius assert both that it is our principle duty to obey our parents and that regicide is completely acceptable and even ought to be carried out by the King's own family?

3rd Section: Due Mar 22nd

Should we embrace and try to foster anger, or repress it? In answering this question, students must make comparative use of both David Hume and the Stoics.

The User's Manual: Due last day of class.

Students are responsible for writing a user's manual for being human. Supposing that each of us has been given a human being to do with as we will (which, of course, is true), the governing question for this assignment is "How can I get the best performance out of this thing?" Assignments will be evaluated according to the usual evaluation form, but the preceding question will govern my assessment of your manual. It is necessary in this assignment first to make explicit what the function of the human is (think of this as your thesis statement). This claim must be supported by an analysis of what the human can do; it is up to you to describe how one best gets the human to fulfill its function. **NOTE: I expect a liberal use and citation of the texts we cover in the second semester in your manual.**

As a further note, look at some of the different manuals out there for inspiration on how to set up your work: what sections to include, how to organize it, etc. There are lots of options, especially concerning the variety of forms that manuals take, and I will know who has taken a look at how different manuals are done just by looking at your submission. I do expect you to use full sentences in this assignment.

The manual assignment is meant to provide a forum in which students may create their own synthesis of the various ideas canvassed in this course; once again, think of the question and how your manual will provide the best answer possible to that question. In terms of how the manual is set up, I leave this to the discretion of the student.

Technical Considerations for Written Assignments:

1) All written assignments must be typed (black ink, please) and double-spaced on pages with at most 1 inch margins. No extra line spaces between paragraphs. Indent the first line of a paragraph. Printing on both sides of a sheet of paper is quite acceptable.

2) Please no title pages. Also no "Works Cited" or "Bibliography" pages referring to one work; do bibliographic references in a footnote if you must. Please no enormously large-fonted things like titles, names, dates, course numbers, student numbers, phone numbers, or due dates that take up half a page of space. Your title, name, and student number at the top of the first page is quite sufficient. Please visibly number any multiple-page assignments. If for some reason you must hand in the assignment to the office, please include my name at the top of the assignment as well.

3) No duo-tangs, folders, binders, or paperclips. Loose sheets are acceptable, but do remember to number them.

4) Under no circumstances will emailed assignments be accepted. Please hand in your assignments at the start of class on the day they are due.

5) For help on writing humanities papers, please consult the website
<http://www.princeton.edu/~jimpryor/general/writing.html>

This site gives an excellent overview on what a philosophy paper is all about and how to write it.

6) The final page of this outline is the evaluation form that will be used in the assessment of your writing. This evaluation form provides the clearest explanation of my requirements for an essay. Please, study it carefully before you write your work.

7) The late policy is a deduction of 3% per day that the assignment is handed in late. This course outline lets you know when assignments are due, and you have been given plenty of time to complete them.

Consequently last minute excuses for not completing assignments on time will be met with skepticism.

7) Many of the above requirements are arbitrary demands on my part, but they really do facilitate the assessment of your work. If you do not follow these guidelines, **YOUR MARK FOR ORGANIZATION ON THE EVALUATION FORM WILL SUFFER DRASTICALLY.**

8) Plagiarism is completely unacceptable. If you make use of an idea that is not of your own devising, you must cite the source of that idea. Failure to properly cite sources may result from removal from the course and expulsion from the school.

EVALUATION FORM
(Late assignments will not receive comments)

Style:

Grammar: Are the sentences understandable? Are there any spelling mistakes? Is the diction clear and concise? Can the thought behind each sentence easily be grasped?

/10

Organization: Do the ideas logically follow each other, or were they haphazardly strewn together? Is there evidence of the student having constructed an argumentative outline? Is the structure of the argumentation explicitly stated and easily perceived?

/10

Content:

Argument Outline:

/10

Thesis: Do the assignment give an answer to a question or problem put forward? Is the answer more than a simple “yes” or “no”? Is the answer insightful, being an interpretive idea itself? Is the thesis explicitly stated?

/10

Arguments: Are there arguments presented in the paper? Are the arguments interesting or banal? Are the arguments incisive or superficial? Do the arguments explicitly outline broad premises that act as guides to understanding and reveal the unquestioned perspectives adopted in the paper?

/20

Originality: Does the student provide input into the conceptual debates the text engages in? Is there evidence of insight on the student’s part into the topic? Are there any new ideas being explored in the assignment? Is the student able to go beyond ideas raised in class discussion?

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Evaluation: Does the student give a fair summation of the ideas contained in the texts used? Are passages from the text cited? Does the use of these ideas meaningfully contribute to the thesis of the essay, or is the use of material a mere addenda to the main arguments of the paper?

/20

/100