

St. Francis Xavier University
Department of Philosophy
Course Outline
Philosophy and Human Nature II

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Office Hours: Please check on-line schedule: <http://people.stfx.ca/dalmaini/Al-Maini/scheduleDA.htm>

PLEASE NOTE: LAPTOP COMPUTERS AND TEXTING ARE NOT ALLOWED IN CLASS.

A continuation of Philosophy and Human Nature I. This class is intended to introduce students to the philosophical analysis of human nature. The semester will focus more on the emotional aspect to human nature, and we shall begin by familiarizing ourselves with the Stoic analysis of feelings. 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 6	Impulse and Appropriateness	Stoicism (handout)
2 Jan 13	Value and Emotions	Stoicism
3 Jan 20	Happiness	Stoicism
4 Jan 27	The Good Human	<i>Mencius</i> bk. II
5 Feb 3	The 4 Sprouts	<i>Mencius</i> bk. V
6 Feb 10	Good Rule	<i>Mencius</i> bk. VI
7 Feb 17	Pride & Humility	Hume, <i>Treatise on Human Nature</i> II pt. 1, ch.1-3,7,8,10
8 Mar 3	Love and Hatred	Hume, <i>Treatise on Human Nature</i> II pt. 2, ch.1, 6-8
9 Mar 10	The Will	Hume, <i>Treatise on Human Nature</i> II pt. 3, ch.3, 9, 10
10 Mar 17	Existentialism	Sartre, <i>Existentialism & Human Emotions</i>
11 Mar 24	Anguish, Forlornness, Despair	Sartre, <i>Nausea</i>
12 Mar 31	Freedom	Sartre, <i>Nausea</i>

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

Assignments: Students will be required to complete two short written responses to the ideas presented in the text and a final exam. Each response will be worth 30% of the final grade, 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 a minimum of 1750 words in length and you must complete an argument outline, to be handed in one week in advance. **Please note that the argument outlines will be marked this semester based on their conceptual content, not their validity.**

Response Questions:

1st Section: (outline due Feb 10; paper due Feb 17)

The Stoics seem to go out of their way to dissuade non-Sages from feeling emotions. Can you think of any emotions that the non-Sage is capable of feeling and that the Stoics might find acceptable? In answering this question, be sure to explain why the Stoics think that ordinarily it is a bad thing to feel emotions, and why the emotion you have chosen avoids that reasoning.

Alternate First Assignment: (Stoic paper due Jan 27th; Responses due Feb 10th; Final Stoic paper plus all evaluations due Feb 17th)

You may do your first essay as a group assignment. Those interested must arrange themselves in groups of at most five (please self-select these groups, and you may make up a smaller group if you wish), assigning each member of the group a role; members have a choice of inhabiting either the Stoic, Platonic, Aristotelian, Academic, or Epicurean perspectives. The Stoic member of the group will be responsible for providing a brief (1000 words) explanation of why the Stoics believe that feeling emotions is a bad thing, and will circulate this paper among the other members of the group. Other members will then have to argue against that paper from the perspective of their chosen philosophy; these response papers should include their own brief summary of the Stoic position, but the bulk of the response should be an explanation of the attack their respective school would make against the Stoics. These papers should be at least 1750 words and will be circulated to the other members of the group for evaluation. The member who takes on the role of the Stoic must write up a brief response (~750 words) to one of the critiques. All papers are then handed in with their attendant evaluations.

2nd Section: Outline due Mar 10th, response due March 17th.

Mencius is clearly of the view that one should obey one's parents, and it is striking just how far he is willing to take this principle. He also seems to accept that parents can be bad people, and that leaves him with the task of explaining what offspring are to do if their parents require them to do something evil. How does Mencius solve this moral dilemma? In answering this question students must outline why Mencius believes filial piety is such an important moral principle.

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) 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.
- 6) 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. Please follow the guidelines.
- 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?

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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: Are proper arguments (as laid out in the handout) used? Are the arguments valid? Are the arguments engaging the text? Do they convey a sense of the overall plan of the essay?

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Thesis: Does 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?

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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?

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Originality: Does the student provide input into the conceptual debates brought up in the text? 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 addendum to the main arguments of the paper?

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