

Department of Philosophy
St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo

SYLLABUS

WINTER TERM 2019

Course: PHIL 210J - HUMAN NATURE : Section 001

Instructor: Professor Nikolaj Zunic

Class Times: 10:00 am – 11:20 am on Mondays and Wednesdays

Class Location: SJ1 3016

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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays: 9:00 – 10:00 am and 2:30 – 3:30 pm;
and by appointment.

Course Description

This course on the philosophy of human nature will examine what it means to be a human being in its myriad dimensions. Our primary aim is to acquire a lucid and accurate understanding of our fundamental human essence. We will accomplish this by focusing on three distinct aspects of human existence, each of which will shed valuable light on the guiding problematic of this course.

The first section will explore “Human Experience and Love”. Instead of objectifying human nature by regarding it as a specimen of scientific research, something which can be measured and quantified, which tends to be the normative methodology in the natural and social sciences, our starting-point will be the exploration of various universal human experiences. It is our belief that the ideal manner of coming to terms with our human nature is to concentrate on our own personal experiences and to attempt to incorporate these insights into a coherent theory of human nature. Such experiences include loneliness, vulnerability, woundedness, fear, rejection, failure, belonging, hope, hate, wonder and desire. These experiences show us that we are participants in life, as opposed to outside observers, and that what we think, feel, and suffer as individuals matters centrally to philosophical anthropology.

A fundamental theme will be the importance of human relationships for a proper understanding of human nature. We live in a culture in which individualism is emphasized as defining who we are. However, it has long been affirmed that human beings are social animals, that we belong within community, and that we flourish only in the company of other human beings. The argument will be made that human nature is determined intrinsically by intersubjectivity, that is, the union of persons.

Although there will be several different experiences at issue, we will focus especially on the phenomenon of love. Love is arguably the most important emotion and spiritual reality in the human being. It is at the core of all human aspirations and activities. Furthermore, it has a crucial role in human sexuality and the propagation of the human species. Some of the topics we will discuss here include the structure of value-systems and the order of love (*ordo amoris*), the constitution and end of the sexual urge, the essential relation between the person and love, and how love lies at the basis of all of our strivings and desires in life. The thinkers we will study in this section are Jean Vanier, Max Scheler, Karol Wojtyla, and Gabriel Marcel.

The second section of this course will tackle straight-on the main subject-matter of this course and sports the heading: “The Concept of Human Nature” We will approach this question by raising some significant and pressing problems in biotechnology and genetic engineering. In recent years scientists have been making great strides in their research on the human genome. They are at a point now where some are claiming to be able to clone human beings. In addition to cloning, there are various reproductive technologies that are being widely practiced, such as *in vitro fertilization* and pre-implantation genetic diagnosis. Such scientific advances are challenging our common sense understanding of human nature. Some of the questions that need to be raised and answered in this domain include the following: If we can create human beings in a laboratory, are these “products” still human beings? What kinds of values are being promoted and at the same time undermined by these revolutionary scientific practices? Does human life have intrinsic value? If so, on what basis does such value lie? What is the meaning of human “nature”? Is it important for a human being to be conceived by means of normal sexual intercourse between a man and woman as opposed to being conceived in a test tube by scientists? What is the significance of natality for our conception of human nature? Do zygotes and embryos have value and dignity? What is the foundation of human morality? These are some of the many questions that will be addressed when we deal with these problems ensuing from the terrain of science and ethics.

The three thinkers who will lead us in this inquiry will be C. S. Lewis, Jürgen Habermas, and G. E. M. Anscombe. Lewis’s book *The Abolition of Man* discusses the nature of values and argues for the objectivity of moral values. He is highly critical of the modern subjectivist view which holds that moral values have no unshakable foundation and that they are completely dependent on individual human desires and attitudes. Once we have explored the problem of subjectivism in ethics, we will read Jürgen Habermas’ intriguing book *The Future of Human Nature* in which he expresses his concern about the impact that genetic engineering is having on our understanding of moral norms and human nature. His chief thesis is that modern, liberal, secular societies cannot avoid addressing the question about values and the good in their quest to establish a value-neutral society, for such a stance would inevitably bring about their own demise. In continuation of this study we will finally turn to G. E. M. Anscombe, a very influential and impressive English philosopher, who has written extensively on the problem of the earliest stages of human life for a coherent theory of human nature. We will read some short articles by her on the dignity of human life.

The third and final section of this course deals with “The Human Person and the Common Good”. This topic rejoins the idea of relationships and analyzes it more deeply. The key idea in this section is that the concept of personhood is determined by social relationships and the human being’s participation in society. Kenneth L. Schmitz’s article on “The Geography of the Human Person” reveals the original meanings and historical changes that belong to the term “person”. Charles Taylor’s essay, “The Concept of a Person”, looks at personhood from the point of view of the modern naturalistic and scientific paradigm and argues that a person is a being who possesses a background scheme of significant concerns and values. The concept of the person, furthermore, is

contrasted with other terms, such as self, ego, and individual, to denote the essence of the human being.

A rigorous account of the human person's relation to society will be discovered in Jacques Maritain's penetrating work *The Person and the Common Good*. In this book Maritain makes a very important distinction between personality and individuality. He also shows how the person is ordained towards the common good of society, a good which has both temporal and transcendent properties. This last section of the course will highlight the need to reflect on a proper hermeneutical context within which an accurate and complete theory of human nature can be developed. To be sure, only within the arena of the human being's active participation in society, while striving after the common good, does the true essence of human personality appear.

Despite the tripartite structure of the course certain themes and ideas will extend from the beginning to the end and will contribute to a comprehensive understanding of what it means to be human. To reflect seriously and openly on human nature is a very demanding undertaking, yet it will undoubtedly reap valuable rewards and influence other dimensions of one's life. In a world that is rapidly changing and where old certainties are being steadily subverted in favour of new innovations, human beings find themselves confused and groping for answers. Against this background this course seeks to establish a true, illuminating, and inspirational vision of human nature and attempts to engage the ancient Socratic injunction to discover self-knowledge by posing the most mysterious of philosophical questions: Who am I?

Course Objectives

- To reflect philosophically on human nature.
- To recognize the importance of a proper interpretive framework and methodology for philosophical anthropology.
- To question and evaluate critically the prevailing norms, attitudes, paradigms, and challenges in modernity for a philosophy of human nature.
- To learn about the impact that biotechnology and genetic engineering are having on our understanding of human nature.
- To recognize the intrinsic relation between human nature and human morality/ethics.
- To develop a coherent, robust, and true understanding of the dignity and value of human life.
- To identify the various manifestations of love in human beings.
- To learn about human sexuality in a personalist context.
- To learn about the concept of personhood in its historical and contemporary manifestations.
- To recognize the interpersonal dimension of human nature.
- To reflect philosophically on the structure and purpose of human society.

Format of the Course

This course is first and foremost a lecture course, which means that the normal, default delivery of course material will be via the university lecture. The professor will typically highlight the key ideas in the readings which are assigned for a particular class, but will also expand upon the material by introducing new concepts and perspectives. Students are, therefore, responsible for both the readings and lecture material.

Student engagement with the course material is a very high priority in this course, which is why student participation will be actively fostered. Class discussions will be encouraged on a regular basis and questions and comments from students are very welcome and greatly appreciated.

Please come to class prepared to participate actively and to contribute to the discussion!

Required Texts/Readings

Students are expected to purchase the following books which are available at the University of Waterloo Bookstore:

Jürgen Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature* (Cambridge, U. K.: Polity Press, 2003). ISBN: 0-7456-2987-3.

C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*. (New York: HarperCollins, 2001). ISBN: 0-06-065294-2.

Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good*, trans. John J. Fitzgerald (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 1966). ISBN 0-268-00204-5.

Jean Vanier, *Becoming Human* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1998). ISBN: 0-88784-631-9.

There are also a number of readings which can be accessed in Course Reserves. These readings are by Max Scheler, Karol Wojtyła/Pope John Paul II, Gabriel Marcel, G. E. M. Anscombe, Robert Sokolowski, Kenneth L. Schmitz, and Charles Taylor.

Course Reserves can be accessed in one of two ways: (a) through the LEARN site; or (b) directly through the University of Waterloo Library site (<http://www.lib.uwaterloo.ca/>).

Additional Recommended Reading

The following is a list of books which deal with topics relevant to this course and can be of value in coming to a deeper understanding of the ideas discussed here. This list is provided for the benefit of those students who wish to do additional reading in this course and by no means constitutes required reading.

W. Norris Clarke, *Person and Being* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1993).

John F. Crosby, *The Selfhood of the Human Person* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996) and *Personalist Papers* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003).

P. M. S. Hacker, *Human Nature: the Categorical Framework* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

Leon R. Kass, *Life, Liberty and the Defense of Dignity* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2002).

Gabriel Marcel, *The Existential Background of Human Dignity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963).

Emmanuel Mounier, *Personalism*, trans. Philip Mairet (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001).

Daniel N. Robinson, Gladys M. Sweeney, and Richard Gill, eds., *Human Nature in its Wholeness* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006).

Kenneth L. Schmitz, *At the Center of the Human Drama. The Philosophical Anthropology of Karol Wojtyła/Pope John Paul II* (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1993).

Kenneth L. Schmitz, "Selves and Persons: A Difference in Loves?", *Communio* 18 (Summer 1991), pp. 183 – 206.

Robert Sokolowski, *Phenomenology of the Human Person* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Richard Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul*, Revised Edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).

Jean Vanier, *Our Journey Home: Rediscovering a Common Humanity Beyond Our Differences*, trans. Maggie Parham (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997).

Schedule

The following is a weekly schedule for this course.
 The topics to be discussed each week are listed as well as the readings.
 Students are required to read the prescribed texts and articles.

Note: This is a tentative schedule and is subject to change.

PART 1: Human Experience and Love

WEEK 1:

Jan. 7 and 9

Topics: Introduction; The Historical and Conceptual Background; Loneliness; The Methodological Framework.

Readings: Jean Vanier, *Becoming Human*: Chapter 1.

WEEK 2:

Jan. 14 and 16

Topics: Belonging; Exclusion and Fear; Inclusion and the Way of the Heart.

Readings: Jean Vanier, *Becoming Human*: Chapters 2 and 3.

WEEK 3:

Jan. 21 and 23

Topics: The Structure of the Self: Freedom and Forgiveness; Movie: *Belonging*

Readings: Jean Vanier, *Becoming Human*: Chapters 4 and 5.

WEEK 4:

Jan. 28 and 30

Topics: Destiny and Fate: Love and Hate; Loving versus Using.

Readings: Max Scheler, "*Ordo Amoris*"; Karol Wojtyla, "The Person and the Sexual Urge", pp. 21 – 44.

***Essay #1 is due on January 28.**

WEEK 5:

Feb. 4 and 6

Topics: The Sexual Urge

Readings: Karol Wojtyla, "The Person and the Sexual Urge", pp. 45 - 69.

WEEK 6:

Feb. 11 and 13

Topics: The Mystery of Being; Availability, Hope and Despair.

Readings: Gabriel Marcel, "On the Ontological Mystery".

WEEK 7:
Feb. 18 - 22 READING WEEK – No Classes

PART 2: The Concept of Human Nature

WEEK 8:
Feb. 25 and 27
Topics: The Nature of Values; The Natural Law.
Readings: C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*: Chapters 1 and 2.

***In-Class Test #1 will take place on February 25.**

WEEK 9:
March 4 and 6
Topics: The Meaning of “Nature”; The Impact of Science and Technology on
Human Nature; Dignity, Rights and Goods.
Readings: C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*: Chapter 3;
Jürgen Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature*, pp. 16 – 44.

WEEK 10:
March 11 and 13
Topics: The Grown vs. The Made; Natality and Being Oneself; The Ethics of the
Human Species.
Readings: Jürgen Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature*, pp. 44 – 115.

***Essay #2 is due on March 11.**

WEEK 11:
March 18 and 20
Topics: Soul and Spirit; The Dignity of the Human Being.
Readings: Robert Sokolowski, “Soul and Transcendence of the Human Person”, pp.
151-164;
G. E. M. Anscombe, “Knowledge and Reverence for Human Life”, pp. 59 –
66; “The Dignity of the Human Being”, pp. 67 – 73.

***In-Class Test #2 will take place on March 20**

Part 3: The Human Person and the Common Good

WEEK 12:
March 25 and 27
Topics: The Concept of the Person
Readings: Kenneth L. Schmitz, “The Geography of the Human Person”;

WEEK 13:

April 1 and 3

Topics: Individuality and Personality; The Common Good.

Readings: Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good*, Chapters 1 – 4.

***The last class is on April 3 when the final exam will be explained.**

***Essay #3 is due on April 3.**

Assessment Tools

1. **ESSAYS:** There will be three essays assigned in this course. Each essay will be based on the authors and readings which we will be studying. The first two essays will be *explications de texte*, which is a unique kind of essay. Detailed instructions for composing the *explication de texte* will be distributed in class. The third essay will be a reflection on a theme taken from the course. Students will be given a selection of possible topics to choose from for Essay #3.
2. **TESTS:** There will be two in-class tests. The first test will cover the first section of the course and the second test will cover the second section of the course.
3. **FINAL EXAMINATION:** There will be a comprehensive final examination which will be scheduled during the university exam period in December. The exam will cover the entire course and will constitute 30% of the final grade.

Grading Scheme

ASSIGNMENT	DUE DATE – DATE SCHEDULED	VALUE
1. Essay #1	January 28	15%
2. Essay #2	March 11	15%
3. Essay #3	April 3	20%
4. Test #1	February 25	10%
5. Test #2	March 20	10%
6. Final Examination	Scheduled during university exam period: April 10-27	30%

Course Policies

1. **ATTENDANCE:** Students are expected to attend class regularly.
2. **TAKING NOTES IN CLASS:** It is crucial to take complete notes in class. It is the student's responsibility to record relevant and important information which is discussed in class. Students will be assessed on the lecture material which may not necessarily be contained in the readings. Furthermore, the professor's lecture notes will not be made available for copying. If you are absent from class please contact a classmate for the lecture notes.
3. **DUE DATES:** The essays are due at the beginning of class on the dates given above.
4. **LATENESS PENALTY:** The penalty for late assignments is 2% deducted from the grade of the paper for each weekday that the paper is late. The maximum allowable amount of time for submitting essays beyond the due date is one week.
5. **MAKE-UP TEST:** The tests must be written when they are originally administered in class. However, if a student misses them because of some serious reason, such as a medical condition or illness, then an accommodation will be offered. The student must communicate with the instructor *before* the writing of the test to inform the instructor of the inability to write. Furthermore, official documentation may be requested for such an absence (e.g. a physician's note).
6. **OFFICE HOURS:** I invite all students to take advantage of my office hours and to visit me when they have a problem or issue dealing with the course or simply if they wish to discuss further something that was raised in class or in the readings. If you need to see me at some other time, outside of my office hours, just contact me and we can set a different appointment time.
7. **THE PROFESSOR IS WILLING TO DISCUSS YOUR PERFORMANCE:** If you are having difficulties in this course and are concerned about your performance, it is your responsibility to communicate these concerns to the professor in a timely fashion.
8. **E-MAILS:** When you communicate with the instructor by means of e-mail be sure to use proper etiquette and a formal style of writing. For example, no e-mails with the salutation "Hey!" (a very popular opening for university students). Moreover, you should write in a grammatically correct manner. Any correspondence which is vulgar, informal, or replete with spelling and grammatical mistakes will not be answered.
9. **POLITE BEHAVIOUR:** Students are expected to be courteous and civil in their behavior both in and outside of class. Unruly and rude behavior will not be tolerated.
10. **USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN CLASS:** It is desirable that a proper pedagogical and learning atmosphere be created in the classroom. Therefore, it is requested of all students that various technologies not be used during the class. These include laptop computers, cellphones, tablets and MP3 players. Any exceptions to this rule will be made on a case by case basis. For example, if you are registered with the Access Ability Services Office and you require the use of a laptop to take notes an accommodation can certainly be made for you. But please do see the professor about any such request.

Important Information

Academic Integrity: To maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo and its Affiliated and Federated Institutions of Waterloo (AFIW) are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility.

Academic Integrity Office (UW): A resource for students and instructors.

<https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/>

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under the **St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Discipline**:

https://www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY_AOM_Student-Discipline_20131122-SJUSCapproved.pdf

For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to

University of Waterloo Policy 71 - Student Discipline:

<https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71>

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read the **St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances**:

https://www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY_AOM_Student-Petitions-and-Grievances_20151211-SJUSCapproved.pdf

Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under the St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or the St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. Read the **St. Jerome’s University Policy on Student Appeals**:

https://www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY_AOM_Student-Appeals_20131122-SJUSCapproved.pdf

Note for Students with Disabilities: The AccessAbility Services office (<https://uwaterloo.ca/accessability-services/>), located on the first floor of the Needles Hall extension (1401), collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term.