



ST. JEROME'S UNIVERSITY

St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo

Department of Philosophy

PHIL 210J - WINTER 2021

Human Nature

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Professor Nikolaj Zunic
Office: SH 2003 [Sweeney Hall]
Phone: 519-884-8111 ext. 28229
Office Hours: By appointment only. Contact the professor to schedule a personal meeting.
Email: nzunic@uwaterloo.ca

The best and most effective way of contacting the professor is by e-mail.

E-mail messages will normally be answered within 24 hours.

Due to the extraordinary circumstances regarding the COVID-19 preventative measures in place at the university, the professor will not have regular access to his office or to his office phone. Therefore, please do not leave messages by phone at the number given above.

All office hours will be conducted remotely with Microsoft Teams.

COURSE FORMAT

As everyone is undoubtedly aware, the University made the decision to have all courses in the 2020-2021 academic year be delivered remotely, rather than in person or face-to-face, because of the risks associated with the COVID-19 virus. This course will, therefore, in accordance with these official regulations, be delivered entirely remotely, that is, by means of the Internet.

We will be relying on LEARN (D2L or Desire to Learn) as the primary means in the delivery of the course. Everything to do with this course will be conducted through LEARN. Therefore, students must have access to LEARN.

The professor will post all relevant course material – e.g. the course outline, assignments, links, announcements – to the LEARN site. However, e-mail will also be a mode of communication between the professor and students.

The course will be divided into four components:

1. Lectures
 2. Readings
 3. Discussions
 4. Assignments
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1. Lectures

All lectures will be recorded by the professor and posted to LEARN in the **Content** section.

The mode of content delivery in this course will be entirely asynchronous (= there is no set time to listen to and view lectures) instead of synchronous (= when a scheduled time is set for live instruction). All the lectures will be recorded, and students will have the opportunity to listen to the lectures on their own time.

Each recorded lecture will be either an audio recording or a narrated PowerPoint presentation. The video lecture will not be the normal mode of content delivery.

Each lecture will be typically 30 minutes in duration, although the lectures may be longer from time to time (for example, 40 or 50 minutes).

There will be two MP4 files posted regularly each week, one on Mondays and the second on Wednesdays, by noon at the latest. If for some reason the professor will be late in posting a lecture on a Monday or Wednesday, he will announce this in LEARN.

The lectures will focus on the important concepts from the prescribed readings and as such will be concise and targeted.

2. Readings

Students are required to read the prescribed books/texts/readings in accordance with the schedule contained in this course outline.

The readings for which students are responsible for studying are given in a weekly schedule.

The readings play a pivotal part of this course, as all the lectures and assignments will deal with them centrally.

Students are strongly advised to follow the readings schedule and diligently to do the prescribed

readings.

3. *Discussions*

Each week forums for discussion on the week's main topics will be open for student engagement on LEARN.

- In LEARN go to **Connect** → **Discussions**.

The professor will participate in the discussions on Friday mornings from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. What this means is that the professor will answer any questions once per week on Friday mornings. To be clear, this is not a "live" event.

If you wish the professor to address any concerns or questions please make your posts to this site by Friday morning at 10 am. Posts that are made after 12 pm on Friday will be answered the following Friday morning.

These discussions are not intended to be solely a forum between students and the professor. Instead, they are mainly to be a site where students can discuss course material among themselves. The professor's involvement here is marginal.

The purpose of the discussion forums is to allow students to dialogue with each other, to pose and answer questions related to the week's topics, and to facilitate the comprehension of course material. In short, it is an opportunity for students to ask questions and to offer and receive responses.

Participation in the discussions is optional and will not constitute any part of the student's final grade.

4. *Assignments*

There are three assignments in this course. The entirety of each student's final grade will be based on these three assignments.

Each assignment will be an argumentative essay.

A very good resource to consult in order to understand how to write an effective philosophy paper is the following website:

https://philosophy.fas.harvard.edu/files/phildept/files/brief_guide_to_writing_philosophy_paper

[er.pdf](#)

**Please read through this document on how to write a philosophy paper before the first essay is assigned.*

The first two essays should be between 4-6 double-spaced pages (1200-1800 words). The third essay should be between 6-9 double-spaced pages (1800-2700 words). The essays will be based on topics corresponding to relevant sections of the course and thus will be specific to the readings that we are covering.

The instructions and topics for each essay assignment will be posted to LEARN approximately 3 weeks before the due dates.

All essay assignments must be submitted electronically to LEARN in the Dropbox section.

- In LEARN go to **Submit → Dropbox**.

Each essay will also be submitted to Turnitin, a program that scans essays for academic integrity infractions.

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 address directly the main subject-matter of this course and is entitled: "The Concept of Human Nature". We will examine what it means to have a "nature". Furthermore, in our reading of C. S. Lewis's *The Abolition of Man*, we will reflect on how ethics is intimately intertwined with our human nature. This point is encapsulated in the doctrine of the natural law. Thomas Aquinas will provide for us a very comprehensive account of human nature in the Aristotelian tradition which focuses on the doctrine of the soul. We will discuss the nature of the soul, its relationship with the body, and the different kinds of powers that the soul possesses. With the assistance of Robert Sokolowski, we will also treat the distinction between the soul and spirit and attempt to demonstrate the existence of an immaterial reality which we call spirit. This discussion of human nature will also look at the notion of human dignity. Robert Spaemann and G. E. M. Anscombe will give us some philosophical arguments to help us think about the foundation of human dignity.

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

This course aims to fulfill the following pedagogical 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 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.

REQUIRED TEXTS

There are four books which students are required to purchase or acquire for this course. They may be purchased at the University of Waterloo Bookstore or through some other book seller, such as Amazon. The four books are:

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

Jacques Maritain. *The Person and the Common Good*. Translated by 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 00887846319.

Thomas Aquinas. *The Treatise on Human Nature: Summa Theologiae 1a 75-89*. Translated by Robert Pasnau. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002. ISBN 0-87220-613-0

Robert Spaemann. *Essays in Anthropology: Variations on a Theme*. Translated by Guido de Graaff and James Mumford. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade, 2010. ISBN 978-1-60608-895-1

In addition to these texts, shorter essays will be provided to students through Course Reserves. These essays are the following:

Max Scheler. "Ordo Amoris." In *Selected Philosophical Essays*, translated by David R. Lachterman, 98-135. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973. ISBN 0810103796

Karol Wojtyla. "The Person and the Sexual Urge." In *Love and Responsibility*, translated by H. T. Willetts, 21-69. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1981.

Gabriel Marcel. "On the Ontological Mystery." In *The Philosophy of Existentialism*, translated by Manya Harari, 1-31. New York: Citadel Press, 1995. ISBN 0806509015

G. E. M. Anscombe. "Knowledge and Reverence for Human Life" and "The Dignity of the Human Being." In *Human Life, Action and Ethics*, edited by Mary Geach and Luke Gormally, 59-73. Exeter, U.K.: Imprint Academic, 2005. ISBN 1 84540 061 5

Robert Sokolowski. "Soul and the Transcendence of the Human Person." In *Christian Faith and Human Understanding*, 151-164. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006. ISBN 978-0-8132-1444-3

Kenneth L. Schmitz. "The Geography of the Human Person." *Communio* 13 (Spring, 1986): 27-48.

Charles Taylor. "The Concept of a Person." In *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1*, 97-114. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985. ISBN 0521317509

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

There are three written assignments for this course.

The first two essays will be relatively short, ranging in length from 4-6 pages each. The first essay will deal with themes in the first part of the course (i.e. "Human Experience and Love") and the second essay will deal with themes in the second part of the course (i.e. "The Concept of Human Nature").

The third essay will be longer and more substantial, ranging in length from 6-9 pages. It will deal principally with the third part of the course (i.e. "The Human Person and the Common Good"), but it will also involve other parts of the course. In this sense, the third essay will be broader and more comprehensive in its theme and scope than the first two essays.

The nature of each essay will be argumentative. What this means is that the professor will provide a selection of questions or topics to choose from and students will have to argue or defend a position by using logical reasoning and evidence from the texts and lectures. It is crucial that students learn philosophy by learning how to reason and argue their positions. Therefore, the essay assignments will aim to foster such argumentative and logical reasoning skills.

The detailed instructions for each assignment as well as the essay topics will be posted to LEARN approximately 3 weeks before the due date.

This course uses the Turnitin software, so all essays will be checked for plagiarism.

There is no final exam in this course.

The breakdown of the assignments with their corresponding due dates and weightings is given in the table below:

ASSIGNMENT	DUE DATE	VALUE
1. Essay #1	February 10 at 9:00 pm	25%
2. Essay #2	March 17 at 9:00 pm	25%
3. Essay #3	April 19 at 9:00 pm	50%

COURSE SCHEDULE

The following is a weekly schedule for this course. It lists the readings that students are responsible to study each week. The lectures, which will be posted to LEARN, will relate to the readings as they are listed in this schedule.

Please consult this schedule throughout the fall term.

PART 1: HUMAN EXPERIENCE AND LOVE

WEEK 1: January 11-15

Introduction to the course

Topic: Loneliness; the methodological framework

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

WEEK 2: January 18-22

Topic: Belonging, Exclusion and Fear; Inclusion and the Way of the Heart

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

WEEK 3: January 25-29

Topic: Destiny and Fate; Love and Hate; Values

Readings: Max Scheler, "*Ordo Amoris*" (Available in Course Reserves)

WEEK 4: February 1-5

Topic: Loving versus Using; The Sexual Urge

Readings: Karol Wojtyla, "The Person and the Sexual Urge" (Available in Course Reserves)

WEEK 5: February 8-12

Topic: The Mystery of Being; Availability, Hope and Despair

Readings: Gabriel Marcel, "On the Ontological Mystery" (Available in Course Reserves)

ESSAY #1 is due on Wednesday, February 10 at 9:00 pm.

WEEK 6: February 15-19

READING WEEK

**There is no course activity from February 13 to 21.*

PART 2: THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN NATURE

WEEK 7: February 22-26

Topic: The Meaning of "Nature"; The Natural Law

Readings: C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*

WEEK 8: March 1-5

Topics: The Soul; The Soul's Union with the Body

Readings: Thomas Aquinas, *The Treatise on Human Nature*, Questions 75 and 76: pp. 2-47;

Robert Sokolowski, "Soul and Transcendence of the Human Person" (Available in Course Reserves)

WEEK 9: March 8-12

Topic: The Soul's Capacities; The Soul's Pre-Intellective and Intellective Capacities

Readings: Thomas Aquinas, *The Treatise on Human Nature*, Questions 77, 78 and 79: pp. 47-105

WEEK 10: March 15-19

**No class or course activity on March 15 and 16*

**There is only one lecture this week on March 17*

Topic: Appetite; Sensuality; Will; Free Decision

Readings: Thomas Aquinas, *The Treatise on Human Nature*, Questions 80-83: pp. 105-133

ESSAY #2 is due on Wednesday, March 17 at 9:00 pm

WEEK 11: March 22-26

Topic: Human Nature and Human Dignity

Readings: Robert Spaemann, *Essays in Anthropology*;

G. E. M. Anscombe, "Knowledge and Reverence for Human Life" (Available in Course Reserves)

PART 3: THE HUMAN PERSON AND THE COMMON GOOD

WEEK 12: March 29-April 2

Topic: The Concept of the Person I

Readings: Kenneth L. Schmitz, "The Geography of the Human Person" (Available in Course Reserves)

WEEK 13: April 5-9

Topic: The Concept of the Person II

Readings: Charles Taylor, "The Concept of a Person" (Available in Course Reserves)

WEEK 14: April 12-16

Topic: Individuality and Personality; The Common Good

Readings: Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good*

The last day of lectures for the winter term is April 14.

Essay #3 is due on Monday, April 19 at 9:00 pm EST

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

January 11: Beginning of classes

February 13-21: Reading Week: No lectures or course activity

March 15 and 16: No class or course activity on these two days

April 14: End of classes

April 17-26: Final exam period [Please note that this course does not have a final exam]

COURSE POLICIES

Lateness Penalty: The penalty for late assignments is 3% deducted from the grade of the paper for each day that the paper is late.

Absolute Deadline: The maximum allowable amount of time for submitting essays beyond the due date is one week.

Illness: If a student is unable to participate in the course because of an illness, the student must complete a Verification of Illness form and report the illness to the instructor so that appropriate measures or accommodations made be made. For more information, please visit the following webpage: <https://uwaterloo.ca/registrar/current-students/accommodation-due-to-illness>

CORRESPONDENCE

As indicated at the beginning of this document, the best way to contact the professor is by e-mail at nzunic@uwaterloo.ca.

If you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of this course feel free to contact the professor.

When you write to the professor please be sure to indicate your name and the course that you are enrolled in.

Use formal language and proper grammar in your correspondence.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. [Check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information.]

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, www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/upload_file/PLCY_AOM_Student-Petitions-and-Grievances_20151211-SJUSApproved.pdf. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the St. Jerome's Advising Specialist, Student Affairs Office, who will provide further assistance.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for their actions. [Check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information.] 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 instructor, 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, www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY_AOM_Student-Discipline_20131122-SJUSApproved.pdf. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to University of Waterloo Policy 71, Student Discipline, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm. For typical penalties, check the Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm.

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes they have a ground for an appeal should refer to the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Appeals, www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY_AOM_Student-Appeals_20131122-SJUSApproved.pdf.

Note for students with disabilities: AccessAbility Services, located in Needles Hall (Room 1401) at the University of Waterloo, 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 AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term, www.uwaterloo.ca/accessability-services/.

Turnitin.com: Text matching software (Turnitin®) may be used to screen assignments in this course. Turnitin® is used to verify that all materials and sources in assignments are documented. Students' submissions are stored on a U.S. server, therefore students must be given an alternative (e.g., scaffolded assignment or annotated bibliography), if they are concerned about

their privacy and/or security. Students will be given due notice, in the first week of the term and/or at the time assignment details are provided, about arrangements and alternatives for the use of Turnitin® in this course. It is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor if they, in the first week of term or at the time assignment details are provided, wish to submit the alternate assignment.