

# Philosophy 303

## Human Nature

### MWF 3–4

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#### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an introduction to philosophical questions which arise from the ways in which we, as people, take ourselves to be unique or special in the world. Common sense conceptions of human nature give rise to issues in the study of value, knowledge and reality. Many people say that life has a purpose, but is that really the case, and if so, what is it? We take ourselves to be agents capable of freely choosing between good and evil, but is there a free will, a good and an evil? It seems as if our knowledge increases every day, but is there knowledge in the first place and if so, by what mechanism is it achieved? Readings from the history of philosophy will provide us with a better understanding of these questions and—if we are lucky—with some possible answers.

A close reading of key texts and an analysis of the arguments contained in them will be the two pedagogic foci of the course.

**University E-Mail Policy:** All students should become familiar with the University's official e-mail student notification policy at:

<http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>

#### SYLLABUS AND ASSIGNMENTS

We will follow the syllabus as closely as possible. Please do the assigned reading before the lecture discussion of it. There is a substantial amount of reading for this course. I strongly encourage you not to fall behind the syllabus. Please bring with you to class the texts with that day's reading assignment.

#### BOOKS

1. Steven M. Cahn (ed.), *Classics of Western Philosophy*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition, Hackett Publishing
2. Any further materials will be available on Blackboard (online)

## GRADES

Grades will be determined as follows:

1. 4 in-class exams increasing in weight: 15%, 20%, 25%, 30% respectively
2. 2 response papers: 5% each

Those who participate in class will be looked upon favorably when it comes to deciding borderline grades, though there is no punishment for not participating.

Exams will consist of both short answer and essay questions.

Response papers will consist of short discussions (2-3 pages) of an assigned reading, to be submitted on the day that reading is discussed. The choice of reading is up to you, but at least one of them must be done by **Friday October 16**, the second by **Wednesday November 25**. These discussions should express your personal reflections upon the reading for that session. They are meant to express your thoughtful reactions to the readings before they are discussed in class.

## MAKEUPS

If you have a valid medical, religious, or some other reason for missing a deadline or exam, please notify me as far in advance as possible. Please note, however, that it is the policy of the University of Texas at Austin that you must notify your instructor at least fourteen days prior to the classes scheduled on dates you will be absent to observe a religious holiday. In order to reschedule any missed exam, you are expected to provide me with the appropriate paperwork within 48 hours of your absence. I will not give incompletes.

## SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY

Scholastic Dishonesty on any assignment will result in a failing grade (F) for that assignment which may not be dropped. Any further scholastic dishonesty will result in a referral to the office of the dean. Scholastic Dishonesty includes any kind of cheating. Students are expected to abide by the standards of academic conduct of the University of Texas at Austin, as detailed at:

<http://www.utexas.edu/student/registrar/catalogs/gi06-07/app/appc11.html#Subchapter.11-800>

## DISABILITIES

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone). More information can also be found at:

<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd/>

## ROADMAP

- Week 1** Introduction to philosophical inquiry  
08/26 Arguments  
08/28 Analysis
- Week 2** Early Platonic dialogues on piety, virtue and knowledge  
08/31 Plato's *Euthyphro*  
09/02 Plato's *Meno*, 70a–79e  
09/04 Plato's *Meno*, 80a–99e
- Week 3** Why should anyone play fair? Introducing the problem of justice  
09/07 Labor Day  
09/09 Plato's *Crito*  
09/11 Plato's *Republic*, Book I 327a–331d, Book II 357a–367e
- Week 4** Justice in the state and in the soul  
09/14 Plato's *Republic*, Book II 368a–376c, Book III 412b–417b,  
Book IV 427d–434e  
09/16 Plato's *Republic*, Book IV 435a–445e  
09/18 Plato's *Republic*, Book VI 503a–511d, Book VII 514a–521b
- Week 5** The Human Good  
09/21 Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books I, X  
09/23 Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books II–III  
09/25 Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books VIII–IX
- Week 6** Wrongdoing and the problem of freedom  
09/28 **Exam I**  
09/30 Augustine's *On Free Choice of the Will*, Books I–II  
10/02 Augustine's *On Free Choice of the Will*, Book III
- Week 7** Egoism  
10/05 Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Introduction, Chapters I–VI  
10/07 Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Chapters XIII–XV  
10/09 Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Chapters XIII–XV continued
- Week 8** The foundations of knowledge and mind-body dualism  
10/12 Descartes's *Meditations*, Mediation I  
10/14 Descartes's *Meditations*, Mediations II–III  
10/16 Descartes's *Meditations*, Mediation IV  
**Last day to hand in 1<sup>st</sup> response paper**

- Week 9** Humean Nature  
 10/19 **Exam II**  
 10/21 Hume's *Treatise*, section I  
 10/23 Hume's *Treatise*, section II
- Week 10** The proper limitations of liberty  
 10/26 Hume's *Treatise*, section III  
 10/28 Mill's *On Liberty*, section I  
 10/30 Mill's *On Liberty*, section II
- Week 11** What should I do? A utilitarianist answer  
 11/02 Mill's *Utilitarianism*, sections I, II  
 11/04 Mill's *Utilitarianism*, section III  
 11/06 Mill's *Utilitarianism*, section IV
- Week 12** Civilization as a perverting force  
 11/09 Rousseau's *Second Discourse*, part I  
 11/11 Rousseau's *Second Discourse*, part II  
 11/13 **Exam III**
- Week 13** Resentment and the slave revolt in morality  
 11/16 Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Introduction  
 11/18 Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*, First Treatise  
 11/20 Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Second Treatise
- Week 14** Internal drives, external threats  
 11/23 Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents*, chapters 1–4  
 11/25 Freud's *Civilization and its Discontent*, chapters 5–8  
**Last day to hand in 2<sup>nd</sup> response paper**  
 11/27 Thanksgiving
- Week 15** Existence versus essence  
 11/30 Sartre's *The Humanism of Existentialism*  
 12/02 Sartre's *The Humanism of Existentialism* continued  
 12/04 Wrapping up

**Final exam: December 15, 2:00–5:00 pm**