



I. Catalog Description

PHIL 390 Philosophy of Human Nature

3c-01-3cr

Examines philosophical theories of human nature, including how traditional philosophical debates about the mind, morality, persons, and freedom are informed by recent empirical work in the cognitive sciences. Topics covered may include philosophical and scientific debates about the innate content and structure of the human mind, moral judgment, the possibility of free will, the extent to which human beings are rational, and the nature of the self and self-knowledge.

c. Hard Determinism

Relevant authors: A.J. Ayer, Robert Kane, Galen Strawson, Derk Pereboom

2. Experimental Philosophy and Neuroscience

a. "Folk" concepts of free will and the self

b. Neuroscience of free will

Relevant authors: Shaun Nichols, Joshua Knobe, Benjamin Libet, Eddy Nahmias, Alfred Mele, Daniel Wegner

D. The Philosophy and Science of Morality

8 hours [32]

1. The Nature of Moral Judgment

a. Reason and Emotion in Moral Judgment

b. Trolley Problems and Cognitive Neuroscience

c. The Linguistic Analogy

Relevant authors: Jonathan Haidt, David Pizarro and Paul Bloom, Susan Dwyer, John Mikhail, Jesse Prinz, Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, Kwame Appiah, Joshua Greene

2. Meta-Ethical Implications of the Science of Morality

a. Grounding Ethics in Biology?

b. Evolutionary De-Bunking Arguments

Relevant authors: Francisco Ayala, Michael Ruse, Sharon Street, Paul Griffiths, Elliot Sober

E. Human Nature, Gender, and Race

6 hours [38]

1. Feminist Theory and Human Nature

2. Race, Eliminativism, Constructionism, and Naturalism

Relevant authors: Louise Antony, Nancy Holmstrom, Sally Haslanger, Philip Kitcher

II. Enhancement and Human Nature

4 hours [12]

Summary Papers: Students will turn in a one-page paper each week that summarizes an argument from the assigned reading. These papers will focus on a question that is provided in

VIII. Special Resource Requirements: None.

IX. Bibliography

- Antony, L. (1998). "'Human Nature' and Its Role in Feminist Theory," In J. Kourany (ed.) *Philosophy in a Feminist Voice*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 63-91.
- Appiah, K.A. (2008). *Experiments in Ethics*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ayala, F. (2010). "What the Biological Sciences Can and Cannot Contribute to Ethics," in F. Ayala and R. Arp (eds.) *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Biology*, 316-336.
- Ayer, A. J. (1954). "Freedom and Necessity," in his *Philosophical Essays*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 3-20.
- Barrett, H. C. and R. Kurzban (2006). "Modularity in Cognition: Framing the Debate," *Psychological Review*, 113: 628-647.
- Bostrom, N. (2005). "In Defence of Posthuman Dignity," *Bioethics*, 19: 202-214.
- Buller, D. (2005). *Adapting Minds: Evolutionary Psychology and the Persistent Quest for Human Nature*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press

York: Oxford University Press.

Carruthers, P. (2006). *The Architecture of the Mind*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Gould, S.J. (2000). "More Things in Heaven and Earth," in H. Rose and S. Rose (eds.) *Alas, Poor Darwin: Arguments Against Evolutionary Psychology*. London: Jonathan Cape, 85–105.
- Gould, S. J. and R. Lewontin (1979). "The Spandrels of San Marco and the Panglossia Paradigm: A critique of the Adaptationist Programme," *Proceedings of the Royal Society London B*, 205: 581–598.
- Greene, J. (2003). "From Neural 'Is' to Moral 'Ought': What are the Moral Implications of Neuroscientific Moral Psychology?" *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 4: 847–850.
- Greene, J. (2013). *Moral Tribes*. New York: Penguin Press.

Scarborough, S., Sternberg, and D. Osherson (eds.) *An Invitation to Cognitive Science:*

Libet, B. (2010) "Do We Have Free Will?" in W. Sinnott-Armstrong and J. Nadel (eds.)

Sinnott-Armstrong, W. (ed.) (2008). *Moral Psychology, Vol. 2: The Cognitive Science of Morality: Intuition and Diversity*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Sinnott-Armstrong, W. (ed.) (2009). *Moral Psychology, Vol. 3: The Neuroscience of Morality*

Emotion, Brain Disorders, and Development. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Sinnott-Armstrong, W. (ed.) (2014). *Moral Psychology, Vol. 4: Free Will and Responsibility*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Smilansky, S. (2000). *Free Will and Illusion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Sober, E. (2000). *Philosophy of Biology*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press

Strawson, P. (2006). *Construal: Debates in Cognitive Science*. New York: Blackwell

University of Texas: PHIL 303 Human Nature

<http://www.utexas.edu/cola/dents/philosophy/undergraduate>

Yale University: PHIL 181 The Philosophy and Science of Human Nature

<http://oyc.yale.edu/philosophy/phil-181>

A7. This specific course is not required by the American Philosophical Association.

B. Interdisciplinary Implications.

B1. This course will be taught by one instructor at a time, and always by the Philosophy Department.

B2. Most of the topics covered in this course are inherently interdisciplinary. Although some of

the topics overlap with those covered in psychology courses, the course does not duplicate any

