

HOLY NAMES UNIVERSITY

Spring Semester 2012

PHILA 140-W: The Human Person

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Class day and Time: Wed., 6 to 9 p.m.
Class Room: Heafey 653
Class Dates: Jan. 11 – May 2, 2012
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Course Description

In this course, we will investigate one of the most basic philosophical questions of our existence -- What is it to be a human being? -- on three levels: content, methodology and self-examination. We'll ask *what* some of the most profound philosophers in western tradition thought about the question, *how* they thought and what *we* think.

First, we'll read and discuss the ideas of philosophers from Plato to Sartre and de Beauvoir as they asked the questions that arise from this inquiry. Is there such a thing as "human nature?" How do we describe and understand the human interior life? Do we have a soul or a subconscious? Does "nurture" determine our "nature?" In other words, are human actions determined by exterior conditions, such as how we were raised, where we were born, our gender, nationality, genetic inheritance? What is the human person's relationship to the non-human physical universe and to our community of other humans? And most of all, do our answers to these questions shape the lives we lead?

Secondly, we'll analyze their methods of thinking. How do philosophers think? What constitutes a philosophical "argument," and what is "proof?" What is logic and sound reasoning compared to unsound reasoning and the major fallacies?

Finally, after studying what others think, we'll examine what we think, and we'll examine in through the discipline of writing. Students will begin with a self-reflection paper that we'll update as we proceed through the course. You'll be encouraged, but not required, to keep a personal journal as part of your notes on the class. You'll have a few short written assignments inside and outside class. And your final project will be to write an 8- to 10-page seminar paper in which you assert a philosophic argument and defend it using sound logic and reasoning.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course, the student will be able to:

1. Recognize and knowledgeably engage in the question of the human person from various philosophical perspectives.
2. Recognize and knowledgeably discuss the way these questions are framed and answered by philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Karl Marx, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler.
3. Develop an ability to recognize and discuss philosophic methods of reasoning, including identifying the difference between sound arguments and logical fallacies.
4. Critically analyze and evaluate the strengths and inconsistencies of the particular

philosophic perspectives.

5. Develop and clarify the student's understanding of what is it to be a human person in order to refine student's personal philosophical anthropology.
6. Improve the ability to articulate a philosophical thesis and present it through disciplined reasoning using proper logical arguments, as well as recognize fallacies.
7. Improve the ability to write a sustained thesis paper in proper academic style and rigor.

Class Process:

Philosophy is also notoriously difficult to read and understand. Do not be surprised if you spend an hour per page. Your brain will hurt. You will wonder why you enrolled. Don't worry. That's normal. These are mental growing pains. They will pass and you'll be the better for it.

That's why the readings of the primary texts are deliberately short. You will have time to read them more than once and analyze their structure critically before class. Only then are we ready to talk.

We will read and examine the primary philosophical texts in stages. First, we try to understand what the author is saying. We will identify and clarify terms and concepts that are confusing in order to refine our understanding of the text. Then we will compare the author's approach to that of others, asking what's different or similar. Next we will question the text critically for its strengths and weaknesses. Once we have understood the text on its own terms, we will evaluate it ourselves and see how it stimulates, develops and challenges our own understanding of the issues.

How will the typical class proceed? Before class, you'll do the readings with the discussion questions below in mind and come with thoughts and questions. Then, in class, we'll have a short introduction to the philosopher, sometimes by a student, discuss our first reactions and maybe read sections of the primary text aloud in class. We'll look at the ideas, methods and structure of the text. Midway through the class, I will broaden the discussion and present some lecture material on the wider philosophical and historical context of the ideas and methods in the text. During the last third of the class, having concluded our examination of the text, we will reflect on our response and evaluate the ideas. This would be the natural course of the discussion, but let's reserve the right to practice the principle of orderly improvisation, i.e. what is most effective in practice is superior to what is supposed to be most effective in theory.

Class Requirements:

More specifically, this class requires four things:

- 1) Your active preparation and participation in the ideas and questions,
- 2) Some written assignments, starting with a short self-reflection paper that you update during the semester for yourself, and a few 2-page written response papers either in class or assigned to be turned in at the next class,
- 3) An 8-to-10-page seminar paper to present to the class and turned in by the due date,
- 4) Attendance at the summary class discussion at the last class in place of a final exam.

The following steps are intended to facilitate this process, not create formal and sterile burdens. They are spelled out here to avoid confusion during the semester. If you have any questions, please ask sooner than later.

Students are expected to:

1) *Read and Prepare:* It is essential that you do all the reading before class. You'll be lost if you expect the class discussion to substitute for your own advance preparation. We'll discuss how to do this reading and at times outline the structure of the argument as a class. During the semester, students may be asked to prepare a short, one-page outline of the basic structure of the argument in the primary text as a springboard for the next discussion. Students may also be asked to prepare a short (5 min.) introduction to the philosopher we are studying to prime the pump for the discussion. These outlines and introductions are part of class participation.

2) *Attend class:* Absences may reduce your grade. Please arrive on time and attend the entire class. Also, please eat any food or meal before you come so that our mouths are available for conversation. (Beverages ok). For those arriving from off campus, the cafeteria (Public Market) is next to the Chapel, and Rosie's Café is located next to Brennan. HNU's Cushing Library allows food and beverages, so you can take a cup of coffee and sandwich there before class while you review your notes for class. *PLEASE NOTE: If you cannot attend for some unforeseen event, please call me email the day before or my cell phone 510-435-917 before the class begins. Please be aware of the university policy that more than 20 percent of absences result in an F.*

3) *Participate:* Engage with the questions and with self-reflection and short orientations. Participation means actively talking in class – asking or answering questions, wrestling with issues, and contributing your insight and experience. You will also write a self-reflection paper after the first class, and you are encouraged, but not required to revise and update during the course. You are also encouraged, but not required, to keep a personal journal of your responses and ideas as part of your class notes. This is only for your own private benefit, will not be turned in. Also, as we noted above, students may be asked to prepare short outlines and/or introductions to specific texts following the manner that we will have discussed in class.

4) *Write your papers:* You will have the opportunity to improve your writing and learn philosophical writing through a series of short assignments and class discussions about writing. Your major work for the semester will be the 8-to-10-page seminar paper in which you advance a philosophic argument. You will propose the topic, discuss it in class, research and write it, and then present it at the end of the semester. (See schedule for dates.) It will be evaluated based on its argument, logical defense, clarity of writing and general interest. *PLEASE NOTE: Paper deadlines are fixed. Extensions will be granted only in emergency.*

5) *Attend the Summary Discussion at Final Class:* Students must attend the last class in which we will review the course to clarify our own understanding and examine what implications our study has for application more generally in life. This summation takes the place of a final exam.

Grading System:

- ▶ Attendance and Participation: 50 percent.
- ▶ Papers written and submitted by the deadline: 40 percent.
- ▶ Final class summary discussion: 10 percent
- ▶ Your grade can be reduced every time you have unexplained absences, missed deadlines or an absence at last summary class. *Please see the university requirements at the end of this syllabus.*

NOTE PAPER DEADLINES:

- Class 2. 1/18: Self-reflection paper, 3-pgs.
- Class 8. 2/29: Response paper, 2 pgs.
- Class 9. 3/14: Final paper proposal, 1 pg.
- Class 12. 4/4: First Draft of paper, 6 -8 pgs.
- Class 13. 4/11: Second Draft of paper, 8-10 pgs.
- Class 15. 4/25: Final Paper, 8-10 pages.
- Final Class 5/2: Revised Final Paper, 8-10 pgs. for grade.

Required Texts:

Stevenson, Leslie and Haberman, David L. *Ten Theories of Human Nature*, 5th edition. (Oxford University Press.) 2009.

Reference Texts:

Stevenson, Leslie. ed. *The Study of Human Nature: A Reader*, Second Edition (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2000.

Course documents, assignments and this syllabus are posted on **Blackboard:**
<http://blackboard.hnu.edu>. Look there for updates.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Class 1. JANUARY 11: Introduction to Philosophy, the Question of the Human Person

Discussion questions:

What is philosophy? What is the “philosophical moment?” What questions does life itself pose to us? How do we respond? Does philosophy matter to our lives? Do the ways we approach philosophy, i.e., the methods, matter? What are the traditional subjects of philosophy? What is the question about the “human person?” Can asking such questions change our lives?

Self-reflection: What have been key questions that life has posed to you personally? What life choices have you made, and do these reveal philosophic assumptions? Do you have a “philosophy” about the human person, either consciously or unconsciously? If so, where did you get it from? Conditioning? Reasoning?

Assignments for Class 2:

- ▶ Self-reflection paper: Based on our class discussion, write a 3-page double-spaced reflection summarizing your current understanding of your own philosophy of the human person and what it influence it has, or doesn't have, in your life. Due at beginning of class. 6:00 p.m., Jan. 18.
- ▶ Read Plato's cave analogy, pgs. 34-41. Stop at * * *. (Class Handout, on Blackboard).
- ▶ Read *Ten Theories of Human Nature*, “Introduction: Rival Theories and Critical Assessments,” pg. 1-9 and Ch. 4, “Plato: The Rule of Reason,” pg. 71-88.

► Recommended: At some point over the next three weeks, watch the movie, *The Matrix* (part 1) (Netflix or Amazon.com)

Class 2. JANUARY 18: The Greek Worldview: Plato and the Cave Analogy

DUE at start of class at 6:00 p.m.: 3-page reflection on question of the human person, printed copy in proper style with Times New Roman, 12-pt type and margins.

Discussion questions:

1. Reflection on self-reflection papers: What questions have you faced? What ideas have you developed? What's the next step in your reflection?
2. In Plato's cave analogy, what is his vision of the human condition? What – and how – do we “wake up” and what is our reaction to the “sunlight?” What is Plato's main argument about education?

Assignments for Class 3:

- Read Plato's *Apology*. (Class handout, on Blackboard)

Class 3. JANUARY 25: The Greek Worldview: Plato and Socrates on Trial

Discussion Questions:

Why is Socrates on trial? Do his arguments convince you that he is innocent? What is Socrates' vision of philosophy and the role of the philosopher in society? What is the Socratic method? What is his understanding of the “human person” and living a human life? What is his attitude and argument about death?

Assignments for Class 4:

- Read Aristotle “On the Soul” Book II, excerpt posted on Blackboard.
► Read *Ten Theories*, Ch. 5, “Aristotle: The Ideal of Human Fulfillment”, pgs. 89-106.

Optional, Class Discussion:

- Revise your self-reflection paper based on class discussion and feedback.

Class 4. FEBRUARY 1: The Greek Worldview: Aristotle on the Soul

Discussion questions:

What is Aristotle's idea of the “human person?” What is his understanding of the tripartite soul? What is Aristotle's method compared to Socrates' and Plato's?

Assignments for Class 5:

- Read Aristotle, excerpts from “Ethics,” and “Metaphysics” (Class handout, posted on Blackboard.)

Class 5. FEBRUARY 8: The Greek Worldview: Aristotle on Metaphysical Reality, Ethics

What is Aristotle's view of the life well lived? Does human life have a goal? What is the role of happiness, virtue? What is his view of the world of sense perceptions? How does this differ from Socrates' and Plato's? Why do we call Aristotle's method "empirical?" What does "telos" and "teleological" mean?

Assignment for Class 6:

► Read sample student paper on the Matrix: "Red or Blue? Which pill would you take?" (Class handout, on Blackboard.)

Optional, Class Discussion:

► Read *Writing Philosophy*, Ch 3,4, pgs. 55-95. (Class handout, on Blackboard)

► Read *Working with Ideas*, Ch. 1-3, pgs. 3-36 (Class handout, on Blackboard.)

Class 6. FEBRUARY 15: Philosophic Argumentation and LogicDiscussion Questions:

How do we develop and frame philosophical questions? What is a philosophical "argument", aka, a thesis conclusion supported by premises? How do we use logic properly to defend our thesis conclusion, and what are the major fallacies? What is sophistry compared to true reasoning?

How do we write a philosophical paper – especially for this course?! How do we develop an idea, research it and present it in a paper? What's the difference between a strong and weak paper?

Assignments for Class 7:

► Bible readings:

- Genesis, chapters 1 and 2
- Deuteronomy chapter 6: verses 4-9
- Leviticus chapter 19, verses 9-18
- Isaiah 58
- Matthew chapter 25, verses 31-46
- Luke chapter 6, verses 17-36
- Luke chapter 10, verses 25-37
- Acts chapter 2
- Romans 12
- I Corinthians, 12 and 13

(If you have a Bible of your own, use it, or, the following link is really user-friendly:
<http://www.biblegateway.com>)

► Read *Ten Theories*, Ch. 6, "The Bible: Humanity in Relation to God," pgs. 101-128.

Class 7. FEBRUARY 22: Biblical Worldview of the Human PersonDiscussion questions:

What is the Israelite conception of the human being? How does this compare to Aristotle's and Plato's? What is it to be a creature in relationship to a creator? Does it accord more or less freedom to the human? What is the life/death struggle in Deuteronomy? What does St. Paul say on the spiritual struggle and the role of Christ?

In terms of method, is the Greek philosophic method a kind of religious search and vice versa? What is a philosophic approach to a religious worldview like the Bible's?

Assignments for Class 8:

► Write a 2-page response paper in which you summarize a key topic, present an argument and cite your reasons for it using logic and sound reasoning as we have discussed in class.

► Read the excerpt of Thich Nhat Hahn, *Living Buddha, Living Christ*. New York: Riverhead Books, 1995. (Class handout, posted on Blackboard.)

► Read *Ten Theories*, Ch. 3, "Buddhism: In the Footsteps of the Buddha," from *Ten Theories*, 47-70.

Optional:

► Read Confucianism in *Study of Human Nature*, pg. 22-34. and *Ten Theories*, Ch. 1, "Confucianism: The Way of the Sages," 25-45.

Class 8. FEBRUARY 29: Paper Discussion; Eastern Worldviews: Buddhist and Confucian

DUE at start of class at 6:00 p.m.: 2-pg paper with argument on topic of your choice.

Discussion questions:

1. Writing the Philosophical Paper: In your 2-pg paper, what is your thesis? Is it clearly stated? How do you demonstrate it logically with reasons? Are there objections to your thesis that you should state and then rebut? Does your conclusion clearly summarize your demonstration of the truth of your thesis?

2. Buddhism: How would you characterize a Buddhist concept of human nature? What is the source of human suffering, according to Buddhist thought? What does it propose as a response to suffering? How do we compare this with Greek and Biblical worldview?

Assignments for Class 9:

► Write a one-page proposal for your final paper, explaining your argument and possible steps to argue it. Due at beginning of Class 9.

► Read Descartes, "*Discourse IV*" and "*Meditation I*" (Class handout, posted on Blackboard.)

MARCH 7. SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS

Class 9. MARCH 14: Writing Discussion/Modernity & Descartes' "Turn to the Subject"

DUE at start of class at 6 PM: 1-page proposal for your seminar paper summarizing the argument and main questions, to turn in and discuss in class.

Discussion Questions:

1. Be prepared to present your proposal for your seminar paper in terms of the basic questions: What is your "hunch", or "airplane," thesis statement? How do you plan to argue this thesis through reasons, evidence, counter-reasons and rebuttals?
2. What was Descartes' inner crisis, and what decision did he make to resolve it? What does he mean by "I think; therefore I am."? What are the implications of this for his view of the human person? Is his "turn to the subject" truly a revolution? If so, in what way? What is its legacy for what is known as modernity?

Assignments for Class 10:

- Review Descartes, "*Discourse IV*," "*Meditation I*" (Class handout, posted on Blackboard.)

Class 10. MARCH 21: Writing Workshop on Freewriting/ Descartes' "Cogito ergo sum"Discussion Questions:

1. Does quick freewriting allow your inner understanding and voice to show up? How can you incorporate the technique of free writing into your process of writing seminar papers?
2. Through a close reading of Descartes' Discourse IV and the First Meditation, what is his thesis and argument? What is his method of thinking, i.e. writing, and how does he arrive at his statement, "I think; therefore, I am."

Assignments for Class 11:

- Read *Ten Theories*, "Historical Interlude," and Ch. 7, Kant: Reasons and Causes, Morality and Religion," 129-162..
- Read Kant, in *Study of Human Nature*, pp. 117-138. Focus on 125-27 and 130-38. (Class handout, posted on Blackboard.)

Class 11. MARCH 28: Historical Interlude & Modernity's "Kantian" RevolutionDiscussion questions:

1. Keeping in mind the major historical periods, how would we correlate them to the philosophies of the Human Person that we have studied so far? How does each philosophy respond to the four questions posed on the first page of Ten Theories: a) What is the philosophy's metaphysical view of reality? b) How does this philosophy describe the role of the human person, or the human condition, in this reality? c) What is the diagnosis of what goes wrong? d) What is the prescription of how to heal, repair or correct the problem?
2. What does Kant mean by the human being's "animality," "humanity" and "personality?" How do these relate to ways that other philosophies divide the interior of the human person? How does Kant account for evil among humans?

Assignments for Class 11:

- **Write a First Draft of your seminar paper**, w/ copies for others to present, discuss in class.

Class 12. April 4: Writing Workshop on First Draft/ Intro to Other Modern Worldviews**DUE at 6 p.m. at Class: First Draft of seminar paper, w/ copies for all, to present & discuss.**Discussion questions:

1. In examining your first draft of your seminar papers, do you identify the paper's clear and distinct thesis statement? Do we see the logical "moves" of your argument to assert and defend it with reasons, evidence, counter-reasons and rebuttals? Suggestions?

2. Who was Sigmund Freud, and what is the method of psychoanalysis that he developed? If we have time, we will start a close reading of the Freud reading for next class.

Assignments for Class 13:

- ▶ **Revise your paper and prepare a Second Draft** to turn in at the start of Class 13, April 11.
- ▶ Read *Ten Theories*, 4th Edition: Freud: "The Unconscious Basis of Mind." (Class handout from 4th Edition.)

Class 13. APRIL 11: Modern Psychological Worldview: Freud**DUE BY 6 PM at Class: Second Draft of paper in 12-point, Times New Roman, double-spaced, proper margins and footnotes and bibliography.**Discussion questions:

How would you describe Freud's definition of the unconscious? How does this compare to the Greek idea of the soul? What similarities and differences do you find between Plato's and Freud's "three parts" of the mind (soul)? Can we describe Freud's philosophy of the human person underlying his psychological description? What is distinctly different in Freud that marks a modern temperament? How does science figure in the background of Freud's thought?

Assignments for Class 14:

- ▶ Read *Ten Theories*, Ch. 9: "Sartre: Radical Freedom," 181-200.
- ▶ Read Jean-Paul Sartre: "Existentialism is a Humanism." (Class handout, on Blackboard)
- ▶ Read Simone de Beauvoir: "Introduction to *The Second Sex*," (Class handout, on Blackboard)

Optional, Class Discussion:

- ▶ Read excerpt from Judith Butler *Gender Trouble*. (Class Handout, on Blackboard)
- ▶ Read following one (or more) of the following articles in *Study of Human Nature (On Reserve in HNU Library)*:
 - ▶ Nancy Holmstrom, "Do Women Have a Distinct Nature?" 288-302.
 - ▶ Henry Bracken, "Essence, Accident and Race," 257-269.
 - ▶ Rose, Lewontin, Kamin, "Not in Our Genes," 303-315.
 - ▶ Matt Ridley, "The Origins of Virtue," 316 - 330.

Class 14. APRIL 18: Modern Trends: Sartre, Feminism, Gender Theory, Post-ModernismDiscussion questions:

1. If you were asked, “what characterizes existentialist thought,” how would you answer? What does Sartre mean when he says “We are condemned to be free”? What constitutes responsible moral action in the face of this “burden of freedom”? What is “bad faith”? What is the “prescription,” according to Sartre?

2. What does Simone de Beauvoir mean by the term “otherness,” and why is woman’s otherness so absolute? With regard to women, what does “liberty” consist of, according to Simone de Beauvoir? For Butler, is gender inherent in human nature, or is it conditioned and a social construct?

Overall, what are some of the critiques of modernism leading to the development of post-modernism? Are there any defining characteristics of “post-modernism”? Does it reflect – or cause – a crisis in philosophical modernism? Does it come from a changed view of the human person or other sources?

Assignments for Class 15:

► No assigned readings. Work on final seminar paper to turn in for class presentation.

Class 15. APRIL 25: Class Presentation of Seminar Paper

DUE BY 6 PM at Class: FINAL PAPER, printed copy, 12-point, Times New Roman, double-spaced, proper margins, footnotes, bibliography, with copies for everyone.

Discussion Questions: Apply the class approach to a reading: 1) Are there any terms or concepts need clarification? 2) What does the author say? How would we paraphrase it in simpler words? 3) How does this compare to other authors’ ideas? 4) What is most convincing and least convincing to us? What have we learned for ourselves from the paper? Suggestions for refinement and further work?

MAY 2: Final Class Summation: Next Steps?

DUE BY 6:30 PM at CLASS: REVISED FINAL PAPER, printed copy, 12-point, Times New Roman, double-spaced, proper margins and footnotes and bibliography, for grade. ALSO: EMAIL ME A COPY IN MICROSOFT WORD FOR ELECTRONIC RESPONSE AND FINAL GRADE.

FINAL DISCUSSION CLASS IS REQUIRED AND TAKES PLACE OF EXAM

Discussion Questions: What have we learned? How are we different? Any effect on how we live? What are some next steps to live the philosophical life? Class evaluations.

HAVE A GOOD SUMMER VACATION!

Syllabus Addendum

Definition of Grades:

“A” – Demonstrated exceptional effort in understanding the philosophical discussion, advanced class discussions, shown imagination and insight in generating philosophical ideas and in the final seminar paper..

“B” – Good performance in class discussion, participation and in writing the seminar paper.

“C” – Present in body but less so in mind or spirit. Adequate work. Fulfilled basic requirements.

“D” – Inadequate effort understanding the ideas, participating in class discussions, writing the final seminar paper and meeting class requirements.

“F” – Unacceptable work; failure in basic class requirements.

University Requirements:

Attendance:

The HNU Catalogue states that students who have excessive absences may receive a grade of F. Excessive absences occur when more than one-fifth of the scheduled class hours are missed. The instructor reserves the right to assign a grade of F to any student who misses more than 20% of class time.

Disability policy and support services:

If you are a student who needs academic accommodations or support because of a documented disability, you should contact your instructor—and provide copies of your contract or accommodation letters—as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made. All discussions will remain confidential. If you have questions about accessing Disability Support Services, documenting a disability or requesting accommodations, contact Laura Lydon, Director of Disability Support Services. DSS is located in Brennan 40, and can be reached by calling x1658 or emailing dss@hnu.edu.

No plagiarism policy:

The policies regarding academic honesty described in the *HNU Catalog* must be strictly followed. These include submission of work that is the student’s own, adequate and proper acknowledgement of sources used in preparation of assignments, and not accepting or providing answers on tests. As cheating undermines the learning process, the instructor reserves the right to assign a grade of *F* to any student who represents the work or ideas of another person as his/her own.

Note the following Academic Calendar dates:

Last date to add: January 25, 2012

Last date to drop: January 25, 2012 (100% Refund); February 1, 2012 (50% Refund)

Last date to withdraw: April 4, 2012

Last day to file for incomplete: April 30, 2012