

# **Philosophy of Human Nature (PHIL 1000 L11)**

Summer 2020

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday 10:00-11:00 AM (via Blackboard Collaborate)

Room—Everywhere and Nowhere (i.e., on-line)

Instructor: Joseph Gruber ([jgruber3@fordham.edu](mailto:jgruber3@fordham.edu)) - I reserve taking up to 24 hours to reply to emails.)

Office Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday 11:00 AM-1:00 PM, **and by appointment** (I will be on Google Hangouts, but if that is untenable, reach out to me—I want to accommodate your needs *however I can.*)

## **Course Description:**

Various and sundry philosophical traditions have spent centuries determining what it is to be a human being. While no definitive answer will appear over the course of a single semester of study, some introduction to the central terms of the debate are possible. That introduction is the aim of the course, alongside developing skills of philosophical reading, writing, and speaking.

## **Course Objectives:**

- An introduction to some Western perspectives on what it is to be a human being, with a special focus on the development of these ideas throughout time.
- To develop philosophical skills, notably reading, writing, discussing, and giving presentations in a clear and cogent philosophical manner.
- Encouraging productive discourse on complex topics and recognizing that discourse in the figures we read and among ourselves.

## **Required Texts:**

Plato, *Gorgias*, Hackett Publishing Company, ISBN: 978-0872200166.

René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, Hackett Publishing Company, ISBN: 978-0872204201.

Margaret Atherton, ed., *Women Philosophers of the Early Modern Period*, Hackett Publishing Company, ISBN: 978-0872202597

Acquire these versions to have the same translation; additional materials will be made available on Blackboard.

## **Course Requirements:**

Posts	10%
Midterm Exam	10%
Final Exam	15%
Debate	20%
First Paper	15%
Second paper	25%
Participation	5%

## The General Format of the Class:

Before each class session you will have done the reading listed for that day *and* watched a video lecture that I will post to YouTube (in the first class session I will go over this process). After having done that I want you to write **3 substantive questions or comments about the material for that day of class**. The time spent together in Blackboard Collaborate will be a discussion of the material; if conversation stalls we will turn the questions and comments you wrote. Then, after class, there will be forums on Blackboard in which you will post. You can either post questions you had that the conversation did not cover *or* reflections on the conversations. Once those posts are made you will, for *each class session*, also need to respond to one of your peers. Again, I will walk through this process on the first day of class, but, if you have any questions, *please ask*.

## Class Aspects:

### Posts:

I expect that the initial posts to Blackboard will be substantive reflections or questions about the material for that day of class. These need not be incredibly lengthy—three to five sentences should suffice—but they should, in some way, *add* to the conversation that already underway. Now, if there is a theme or idea that is still inscrutable to you, asking for clarification could be a perfectly appropriate use of this sort of post.

The response posts should relate to what your peers are saying in a meaningful way. These should extend *beyond* simply stating that you agree or disagree with your peer and at least begin to develop *why* you take the position that you do. Disagreement can be highly productive, but you must remain respectful.

### Exams:

There will be midterm and a final examination. These examinations will be comprised of short answer and essay questions. The exact format of the examinations will be determined by vote—it is something that we will discuss and determine as they approach. The final will be cumulative; it will cover all the content in the course.

### Debate:

On the last day of the course there will be an in-class debate in addition to the final. This debate will be between three groups of students that defending positions based on the thinkers we will have read. More information will be made available as the debate approaches. These groups will make a 10-minute presentation to explain their positions. The remainder of debate will be spent in back-and-forth engagement, moderated by the instructor.

### Papers:

The first paper will be based on a prompt I will provide and must be a **minimum of 7 pages, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font, with one-inch margins**. Any bibliographical or cover pages will not count toward that total and the seventh page must be 4/5ths full for it to be considered a complete page.

The second paper will be based on an idea that you bring to me; to that end, we will need to meet so that we can be certain your idea will work. You will need to use at least two of the thinkers from the class to say something about the human condition; what exactly you want to say, if you choose to agree to disagree with our thinkers, and which thinkers you use are all matters that we will discuss. Now, given that my office hours might not work with your schedule, email me if the timing does not work—I am *always* happy to schedule additional times. Meeting with me is a part of the grade here—if you fail to do so you lose a letter grade off the paper—so if my office hours do not work, schedule an alternative with me. All meetings should be completed before the first draft is due. This paper will be a **minimum of 8 pages**, with the same formatting criteria as the first.

### Participation:

Regular participation is a central element of this course I will consider the level of regular and constructive participation in classroom conversations when determining the participation grade.

## Course Policies:

### Attendance:

Given the importance of productive conversation, missing sessions of class is highly, highly discouraged. If you know of days that you must miss for reasons related to the university, let me know ahead of time and we can likely accommodate them. If you know in advance even if the absence would be unexcused sending me an email greatly encourages me to help in finding solutions for the absence. If you are ill to the point of missing class, I need to see a doctor's note. Take heed: according to University policy only 4 absences (excused or unexcused) will be tolerated, and **a sixth absence will result in a failing grade.**

### Late Penalty:

Given that our papers involve drafting steps, and that your fellow students' grades depend, in part, on your having drafts at the appropriate time, this course does not allow for late work. If circumstances preclude it, it does help to email me **24 hours before the deadline**, but I can promise nothing, as the paper-writing process demands that the drafts be available for the peer editing process. For each *calendar day* that the paper is late I reduce the percentage of the grade by 5%.

### Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is a serious academic failing **and will not be tolerated**. Plagiarism includes copying verbatim, paraphrasing without citation, and using ideas not original to you. I am obligated to report all plagiarism to the Dean, including suspected plagiarism. At minimum the punishment for plagiarism is a zero on the assignment and at maximum the plagiarist will receive a zero in the course, or further disciplinary actions might be taken. For further information, see: *Fordham University Undergraduate Handbook* or the Fordham website: [http://www.fordham.edu/info/21684/university\\_regulations/3695/the\\_fordham\\_university\\_undergraduate\\_policy\\_on\\_academic\\_integrity](http://www.fordham.edu/info/21684/university_regulations/3695/the_fordham_university_undergraduate_policy_on_academic_integrity)

### Special Needs:

If you are a student with a documented disability and require academic accommodations you need to register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) in order to request academic accommodations for your courses. Please contact the main ODS office at Lincoln Center at 212-636-6282 to arrange services. Staff at ODS can walk you through the process and arrange appointments depending on which campus you take courses at. Accommodations are not retroactive, so you need to register with ODS prior to receiving your accommodations. Please see me after class or during office hours if you have questions or would like to submit your academic accommodation letter to me if you are already registered for accommodations with Fordham.

### Communication:

For any and all class related matters please see me during my office hours. I will attempt to be available via Google Hangouts during the scheduled office hours times; if I am not, send me an email. If the standard times or Hangouts fail to work, we will find accommodations as needed. I am also available by email. Again, as stated above, I reserve taking up to 24 hours to reply to emails. I strongly encourage you all to reach out during my office hours regardless, as coming shows thoughtfulness and particular difficulties can often be more quickly and fully addressed one on one (or two or three).

A	100%-94%	Excellent. Honors-level work, outstanding.
A-	93%-90%	Still excellent.
B+	89%-87%	Very good. High level of performance.
B	86%-83%	Good. Solid and above average level of performance.
B-	82%-80%	Good. Still above average.
C+	79%-77%	Average level of performance.
C	76%-73%	Satisfactory. Acceptable level of performance.
C-	72%-70%	Minimally acceptable.
D	69%-59%	Passing but unsatisfactory. Below average performance.
F	59%-0%	Failure. Inferior performance.

### Course Reading Schedule:

<b>Class 1 – 5/26</b>	Class Introduction and Paper Writing Presentation
<b>Class 2 – 5/27</b>	<b>Module I: Plato:</b> Plato, <i>Gorgias</i> 447a-466a
<b>Class 3 – 5/28</b>	Plato, <i>Gorgias</i> 466a-506b
<b>Class 4 – 6/2</b>	Plato, <i>Gorgias</i> 506b-527e
<b>Class 5 – 6/3</b>	<b>Module II: Aristotle:</b> Aristotle, <i>Rhetoric</i> Book 1, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4
<b>Class 6 – 6/4</b>	Aristotle, <i>Rhetoric</i> Book 1, Chapters 3, 4, 5
<b>Class 7 – 6/9</b>	<b>Module III: Augustine:</b> Augustine, <i>On the Free Choice of the Will</i> , Book I, <b>Midterm Examination, First Paper Due</b>
<b>Class 8 – 6/10</b>	Augustine, <i>On the Free Choice of the Will</i> , Book II, up to ix, 25.
<b>Class 9 – 6/11</b>	Augustine, <i>On the Free Choice of the Will</i> , Book II, remainder.
<b>Class 10 – 6/16</b>	<b>Module IV: Descartes:</b> Descartes, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> , I-III.
<b>Class 11 – 6/17</b>	Descartes, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> , III-IV
<b>Class 12 – 6/18</b>	Descartes, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> , V <b>Final Paper First Draft Due.</b>
<b>Class 13 – 6/23</b>	<b>Module V: Modern Period Philosophers:</b> Margaret Cavendish
<b>Class 14 – 6/24</b>	Anne Conway
<b>Class 15 – 6/25</b>	<b>Closing Debate, Final Exam, Final Paper Due</b>

All scheduled readings and assignments are subject to revision based on the pace and interest of the class.