THEORIES OF HUMAN NATURE
HH/PSYC 4220 6.0 A, 2014 – 2015
Mondays 8:30 – 11:30
Location: MC 112

Course Director: Tifrah Warner, Ph.D.
Office contact: Agnes Levstik
BSB #281; (416) 736-2100 ext. 55125
Email contact: tifrahw@yorku.ca

Please contact me only when it is an issue that cannot be addressed during the class or office hours. (always put course number in the subject line)
Office hours: after each class

Course Description
This course surveys an array of psychological views on human nature. The first half consists of a review of traditional perspectives of human nature, and a review of currently proposed principles of human nature, mostly from Systems theory perspective, but also from elsewhere.

This half of the course introduces two special topics: a particularly expansive framework for viewing human nature in terms of strata of existence, and the work of Milton H. Erickson as an example of application of many of the principles of human nature that were reviewed.

The second half of this course follows the format of the introduced framework and looks at current psychological theories. It consists of assigned readings and students’ presentations.

The readings for this course comprise of a mixture of material; including original academic articles and chapters from popular books by scientists. These readings are meant to give you both the experience of studying primary scientific material and to rouse your interest.

The grading scheme aims to create an opportunity for deeper study, thus there is no one all-encompassing exam and class work is distributed throughout the course. There is an assignment for every class, quizzes twice a month, presentations and a paper.

Textbooks
Any Introduction to Psychology textbook
Course Kit

Prerequisites:
AK/AS/HH/SC/PSYC 1010 6.00 or AK/HH/PSYC 2410 6.00, with a minimum grade of C; AK/AS/HH/SC/PSYC 2030 3.00 or AK/HH/PSYC 2530 3.00; one of AK/AS/HH/SC/PSYC 2021 3.00, AK/AS/HH/SC/PSYC 2020 6.00, AK/HH/PSYC 2510 3.00. Open to students after completion of 84 credits.
Course Objectives

Students are expected to gain:
- an appreciation of the varied, paradoxical, dynamic, and at times beyond definition, nature of human experience.
- understanding of the perspectives offered by traditional theories of human nature.
- knowledge of Systems theory approach.
- acquaintance with a selection of current theoretical works on human nature. These works range in their focus on the physiological, mental, environmental, and spiritual strata of human life.
- acquaintance with a framework that allows a comprehensive overview and a systematic organization of theories of human nature.
- ability to apply theoretical principles of human nature to daily life.

Grading Scheme, option 1

1. 7 multiple-choice quizzes 40%
2. 12 class reading assignments (pass/fail) 10%
3. Self-nurture research journal (2 parts) 20%
4. Paper-Presentation, including
   a. team game (pass/fail) 30%
   b. class presentation (pass/fail)
   c. 1 page handout
   d. A short essay

Grading Scheme, option 2

Recommended for those who plan to continue with graduate studies

1. 7 multiple-choice quizzes 20%
2. 12 class reading assignments (pass or fail) 10%
3. Self-nurture research journal (2 parts) 20%
4. Paper-Presentation, including
   a. team game (pass/fail) 30%
   b. class presentation (pass/fail)
   c. 1 page handout
   d. A short essay 30%
5. 1 paper 20%

Conversion Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>A+</td>
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<tr>
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<td>49-48</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Course Requirements, details

Quizzes
- Each one will cover all the topics scheduled since the last quiz, unless otherwise specified.
- Multiple-choice format
- 15 or 30 minutes (depending on number of questions)

Assignments: an overview
All assignments are
- to be typed (or written up in a very, very clear way)
- to be written up in point form.
- on the material that is to be covered in class on the date the assignment is due. An Exception: assignment # 1 is due 1 class earlier (see schedule)

Assignments #1 to #6 (Fall semester)
For each reading:
- List the main points.
Answer the following:
- What is main the argument/point that this reading advances?
- What are the principles that describe the structure of the human area that this reading covers?
- What are the principles that describe how a person (or a specific area of a person) functions?
- What are the principles that describe the conditions for change?
- Compose a question (or more) about something in the material that was not clear to you or that you would like to hear being reviewed in class. No answer is needed.

Assignment #7
This assignment is meant to be an applied review of all the principles of human nature we identified in class.
- Course kit reading (O’Hanlon)
  o State the main points of the reading.
  o Identify the principles of human nature (structure, function, change) applied by M. H. Erickson.
- An Ericksonian case of your choice that was not mentioned in O’Hanlon’s reading (see references in class schedule).
  o Briefly describe the case using full sentences, paragraph format
  o Identify the principles of human functioning applied in this case. Briefly describe the application of each principle.
- A clarification question/s about the assigned material.

Assignments #8 to #17 (part A), (Winter semester)
- State the thesis of each reading or audio material.
- List the main points of each reading or audio material.
- List human nature principles found in the reading or audio material.
- Compose a question (or more) about something in the material that was not clear to you or that you would like to hear being reviewed in class. No answer is needed.

Assignment #17 (part B)
- What does the poem extract mean to you? (Paragraph format)
**Human Nature: Self-observation journal**

*Part I: Fall Semester. Due date: November 23*

**Some principles underlying human experience**

The journal consists of the following:

1. **Introduction**
   - 1 paragraph
   - Explain what is meant by: ‘principles of human nature’. Include in your explanation one or two examples of principles of human nature from traditional theories.

2. **6 weekly entries**
   - Each week describe 3 or more examples of principles of human nature from your own life, at least one example that actually happened in the present week.
   - Use principles that are in the course material, starting with the article by Michel, G. F & Tyler, A. N. (2007).
   - Cover as many principles as you can, at least 9 different ones.
   - You may start with the principles listed in the table below.

3. **Create a table of all human nature principles covered in class, starting with the article by Michel, G. F & Tyler, A. N. (2007).** Follow the format of the table below.

4. **Conclusion**
   - 1 to 2 paragraphs.
   - Describe your experience of self-observation.
   - Note any interesting and new discoveries you have made about your life.

### Principles of Human Nature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Formal description (citations)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Your description</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Chaos has a meaning” (Prena &amp; Masterpasqua, 1990, pg ..)</td>
<td>Disturbing and upsetting events precede qualitative change and growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Change is not programmed or preformed” (Oyama et al, 2000,..)</td>
<td>A person’s development and experiences, including behaviours, talents, traits are not predetermined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Multiple causes” (Michel &amp; Tyler, 2007,..)</td>
<td>A person’s traits are formed as a result of diverse causes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Relativity” (Ariely, 2009)</td>
<td>When individuals make a choice, they are most likely to decide by comparing their choice to something similar in their environment, not by using logic.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Human Nature: Self-observation journal**  
Part II: Winter Semester. Due date: March 14  
Different dimensions of human life

The journal consists of the following:

**Section 1:** Introduction  
- 1 paragraph  
- Briefly describe the different dimensions of human nature and how they relate to each other according to the Vedic science of yoga as presented in class.

**Sections 2 to 6:** observations of 6 different dimensions  
- Each section covers 6 (or more) days of observation, all within a period of up to 10 days.  
- Each section includes 4 subsections:  
  - A succinct description of your observation schedule  
  - A numerical summary of your observations  
  - A diagram/s that summarizes your observations (e.g., a pie graph)  
  - A short verbal summary of your observations (1 paragraph)

**Section 2:** Observation of the environmental dimension  
- At a fixed time every day, list all the different types of environments (consider physical, social, cultural features) you were in during the last 24 hours.  
- Note the length of time you have spent in each type.  
- Rate each type for:  
  - How uplifting it was (1=least, 10=most)  
  - Anything else that you want.

**Section 3:** Observation of the physical dimension  
- Choose an observation period/s for each day  
- Choose frequency of recording  
- At each recording point mentally scan your body and note the following:  
  - What is the most dominant physical sensation?  
  - How comfortable are you in your present posture? (1=least, 10=most)  
  - How straight are you sitting/standing (1=least, 10=most)?  
  - What is each one of your senses experiencing?  
  - Check to what extent (1=least, 10=most) the body wants to:  
    - Stretch?  
    - Engage in energetic activity?  
    - Rest?  
    - Something else?  
  - Add anything else that you would like to record.
Section 4: Observation of mental dimension.
- Choose an observation period/s for each day
- Choose frequency of recording
- At each recording point identify the mental state you have just been experiencing:
  - Memory: remembering,
  - Imagination: day dreaming or planning,
  - Logic: organizing, classifying, judging, comparing, or arguing
  - Emotion: feeling
  - Sleep...

Section 5: Observation of ego dimension.
- Organize an observation schedule to include 5 or more different types of situations you are typically in.
- Choose one or more points of recording within each observational period.
- At each point of recording rate your experience on a 10-point scale,
  - 1 = feeling very self-conscious, 10 = feeling completely natural

Section 6: Wisdom dimension.
- At the beginning of each day, at a fixed point: select a quotation or a proverb that reflects a broad perspective of life, or has a meaning that extends beyond the individual’s life.
- During the day: watch for instances that reflect the quotation.
- At the end of each day, at a fixed point: record your observations.

Section 7: Conclusions
- 1 to 2 paragraphs.
- Describe your experience observing the different dimensions of your life.
- Note any interesting and new discoveries you have made about yourself.

Raw data (your daily numerical and verbal recordings) – is not part of the journal, but the data have to be available for review until you received the final course grade.
Paper - Presentations

Due dates:
Handouts to students – day of presentation
Paper & all handouts to Course Director – Feb. 8

Topic
The dimension of human existence listed in class schedule.

Team presentation
Format: A panel with a chairperson.
Content:
Part 1. The team presents the general topic and the specific class readings by
- reviewing a diagram of all the layers of human existence (1 min.)
- arguing how essential is the specific dimension of existence they are presenting (2 min.)
- Organizing a game and Q & A period about the class reading (up to 20 min.)

Part 2. Individual presentations, 10 min each.
Part 3. A Q & A period on the individual presentations.

Individuals’ presentations
References are:
• 1 to 2
• chosen by you
• academic (written for academic readers)
• about a theory (most likely to be found in books)
• preselected in 2 cases (see on schedule)

Individuals’ Write-ups

1. A handout for all students
   • An outline of the presented reference/s in a point form. (Include the complete reference in APA style.)
   • State the thesis of your reference at the beginning of your outline.
   • 2 multiple-choice questions about the main points of the reference.
   • Each handout is 1 to 2 pages in length.
   • For the Course Director:
     o 2 copies of the write-up and
     o a photocopy of the reference/s; it may have your notes on it and will be returned to you.

2. A 4 to 5 pages, APA style, discussion paper
   Organize your paper according to the following:
   • The main point that this theory advances (introductory paragraph).
   • The proposed structure of the human dimension this theory covers.
   • The way this human dimension functions according to this theory.
   • The conditions for change and development according to this theory.
   • Identify theoretical principles that are similar to those covered in class (skip those covered in the first 3 classes).
   • Your reflections and conclusions.
Course Requirements, continued

Paper for option 2
Content: A look at three theoretical perspectives on human nature, all about the same dimension of human life.
Length: 8 to 12 pages
Format: APA style
Content: Review - each theory following the same points of the short paper.
Discuss - (a) to what extent these theories complement or contrast each other, (b) to what extent this dimension is fully covered by these theories.
Conclude – your thoughts and insights; including other theoretical directions and other dimensions of human nature.
Due dates Complete paper draft – November 16
Final submission – January 18

Class Schedule
Fall Semester

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>September 14</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Traditional perspectives of human nature, part 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Readings</td>
<td>Your old Introduction to Psychology textbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 21</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Traditional perspectives of human nature. Part 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readings</td>
<td>Your old Introduction to Psychology textbook</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 28</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>A framework for studying human nature: strata of existence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment</td>
<td># 1 on Michel, G. F &amp; Tyler, A. N. (2007).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 5</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Principles from Systems Theory: part 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiz</td>
<td># 1 (does not include Michel &amp; Tyler, 2007)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 12</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Thanksgiving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 19</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Principles from Systems Theory: part 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Readings | - Perna, P. A. & Masterpasqua F. Introduction: The history, Meaning... (Focus on first 10 pages only)  
| Assignment | # 2 |
| October 26 | Topic | Principles from Systems Theory: part 3 |

8
| Assignment                                  | # 3                                                                 |
| Assignment                                  | # 4                                                                 |
| November 9                                   | **Quiz** # 2 (including Michel & Tyler, 2007) **Other** Discussing presentations and papers |
| November 16                                  | **Topic** Additional Principles of human nature in current literature **Readings** - Travis, F. & Harung, H., (in press) Brain integration, moral reasoning, . . . (focus on theoretical sections.) |
| Assignment                                  | # 5                                                                 |
| Other                                        | Meeting with presentation teams 1 & 2 |
| November 23                                  | **Due date: Complete paper draft (option 2), 8:30 am** |
| Assignment                                  | # 6                                                                 |
| Other                                        | Meeting with presentation teams |
| November 70                                  | **Quiz** # 3, make-up for quiz 1 & 2 **Other** meeting with presentation teams |
| December 7                                  | **Due date for Journal 1, 8:30 am** |
# Winter Semester

**January 4**

**Topic (1)** | Our physical nature: flexibility and responsiveness of the brain  
**Assignment** | # 8

**January 11**

**Topic (2)** | Environment: we are made of tools and trees  
**Readings** |  
**Assignment** | # 9

**January 18**

**Topic (3)** | Environment: we are a social network and culture  
**Assignment** | # 10

**February 1**

**Topic (4)** | Our logical nature: intellect, rationality, decision making…  
**Assignment** | # 11

**February 8**

**Topic (4)** | We are made out of memories  
**Assignment** | # 12

**February 15** | Reading Week
### February 22
**Topic (3)**  
**Our emotional nature: made to be good**

**Readings**  
- D. Keltner. Born to be Good. (2009). Chapter 1  
- Brown, N. J. L., Sokal, A. The complex dynamics of… (pg. 68 only)  
- B. L. Fredrickson. (2013) Updated...positivity ratios. (first page only)

**Assignment**  
# 13

**Quiz**  
# 5

### February 29
**Topic (4)**  
**Our Imagination: fantasy, creativity, planning**

**Readings**  

**Assignment**  
# 14

### March 7
**Topic (6)**  
**Ego: our sense of individual identity**

**Readings**  

**Assignment**  
# 15

**Quiz**  
# 6

### March 14
**Topic (9)**  
**Wisdom**

**Readings**  
- Baltes, P. B. & Staudinger U. M. Wisdom: A Metaheuristic (pragmatic) to...

**Assignment**  
# 16

**Other**  
**Due date: Self-Nurture Research Journal, part II**

### March 21
**Topic (10)**  
**Our nature: beauty and infinity**

**Readings**  
- “Beauty will save the world” (Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn quoting Fyodor Dostoyevsky), CBC ideas programme.  
- “To see a world” by William Blake

**Presentations**  
Beyond Justice Reasoning: Moral Development and Consideration of a Seventh Stage. Lawrence Kohlberg & Robert A. Ryncarz  
ch. 8 in Higher Stages of Human Development, Alexander & Langer (Eds)

**Assignment**  
# 17

### March 28
**Quiz**  
# 7, make-up quizzes
Course, Departmental, and University Policies

**Grading:** (For a full description of York grading system see the York University Undergraduate Calendar - [http://calendars.registrar.yorku.ca/pdfs/ug2004cal/calug04_5_acadinfo.pdf](http://calendars.registrar.yorku.ca/pdfs/ug2004cal/calug04_5_acadinfo.pdf))

**Assignment Submission:** Due dates and times are specified on the class schedule. Earlier submissions may be made to the course secretary (BSB 281) and have to be date stamped.

**Late Assignments:** Late assignments are not accepted without an officially satisfactory reason. Technical problems involving computer and printer are not acceptable reasons for missing these due dates.

**Eligibility for a make-up quiz**
Official departmental policy on missed exams and make-ups. Please become familiar with this policy. [http://www.yorku.ca/health/psyc/advising_missedtests.html](http://www.yorku.ca/health/psyc/advising_missedtests.html)

- The student has to contact the CD or secretary within 48 hours of the missed quiz (unless circumstances do not allow). Circumstances preventing contact within 48 hours must be accompanied by documentation.

- If the student expects to miss a quiz in advance, he or she has to apply for a make-up exam before making arrangements to be elsewhere.

**Use of laptop and other electronics in the classroom**
is acceptable for special needs situations only.

Some references about the impediment this may cause for successful learning are:


- York University newspaper, yFile 13.03.2013 Study finds multitasking on a laptop impedes classroom learning

**University policies**
All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the following information, available on the Senate Committee on Curriculum & Academic Standards webpage (see Reports, Initiatives, Documents) - [http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate_cte_main_pages/ccas.htm](http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate_cte_main_pages/ccas.htm)

- York’s Academic Honesty Policy and Procedures/Academic Integrity Website
- Ethics Review Process for research involving human participants
- Course requirement accommodation for students with disabilities, including physical, medical, systemic, learning and psychiatric disabilities
- Student Conduct Standards
- Religious Observance Accommodation