PHIL1031
The Philosophy of Human Nature
Session 1, Fully online/virtual 2021

Department of Philosophy

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Disclaimer
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Notice
As part of Phase 3 of our return to campus plan, most units will now run tutorials, seminars and other small group activities on campus, and most will keep an online version available to those students unable to return or those who choose to continue their studies online.

To check the availability of face-to-face activities for your unit, please go to timetable viewer. To check detailed information on unit assessments visit your unit’s iLearn space or consult your unit convenor.
General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff
Convenor; Lecturer (Section 1)
Jennifer Duke-Yonge
jennifer.duke-yonge@mq.edu.au
Contact via Email
25WWB719
By arrangement

Lecturer (Section 2)
Robert Sinnerbrink
robert.sinnerbrink@mq.edu.au

Lecturer (Section 3)
Richard Menary
richard.menary@mq.edu.au

Tutor details will be available in iLearn

Credit points
10

Prerequisites

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description
The unit introduces the big philosophical questions about human nature, personal identity and the meaning of life. Are human beings somehow unique in nature? Do we have distinct selves that endure through time? Do we have free will? What is the relation between our identity and the things that matter to us? The main theme is whether there is such a thing as human nature at all. We begin by asking whether mind is entirely physical or could in principle survive bodily death. We also explore the links between the self, time, and memory. The remainder of the unit introduces some key thinkers of the twentieth century; and we explore their views on freedom, lived experience, and our relations to others. The unit as a whole offers a detailed introduction to controversial questions about the nature of the mind, showing how historical understanding animates current debates, and demonstrating the relevance of philosophy to live modern issues about science, human nature, and culture.
Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at [https://students.mq.edu.au/important-dates](https://students.mq.edu.au/important-dates)

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

**ULO1**: identify key philosophical problems about human nature at an introductory level

**ULO2**: explain important philosophical responses to problems about human nature at an introductory level

**ULO3**: critically and reflectively respond to the problems and theories introduced in the unit.

**ULO4**: express and defend your own views with increased clarity

**ULO5**: contribute to the learning of the group by engaging constructively in philosophical discussion and activities

General Assessment Information

**Detailed assessment information and rubrics**

Detailed information about each of the assessments, including rubrics, will be available in iLearn. Please make sure you read the assessment information carefully, and contact the convenor if you have any questions.

**Submission and return of assessments**

Assessments in this unit are to be submitted through the appropriate 'Turnitin' links in the unit website. They will be marked through 'Grademark', which will allow you to access your marked assignments directly through the website. For information about Turnitin and Grademark, see:


**Special Consideration**

Requests for extensions should be submitted via a Special Consideration request, which is available in the [http://ask.mq.edu.au](http://ask.mq.edu.au) portal. Your request should be submitted no later than five days after the due date and should be accompanied by appropriate documentation. Please see the Special Consideration policy in the list of policies at the end of this document for further details.

Read the policy closely as your request may be turned down if you have not followed procedure, or if you have not submitted a request in a timely manner.

**Late Submission Penalty**

Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, (a) a penalty for
Assessment Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Hurdle</th>
<th>Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Quizzes</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Open Mon (from Wk2); close 11.59pm Sun of following week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective tasks</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Part 1 (intro quiz), Sun 7/3; Part 2 (reflection), Sun 11/4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>11.59pm, Sunday 6/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutorial Participation/Online Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Weeks 1-7; 9-11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Online Quizzes
Assessment Type ¹: Quiz/Test
Indicative Time on Task ²: 15 hours
Due: Open Mon (from Wk2); close 11.59pm Sun of following week
Weighting: 25%
Multiple choice questions will cover material discussed in the weekly content.

On successful completion you will be able to:
- identify key philosophical problems about human nature at an introductory level
- explain important philosophical responses to problems about human nature at an introductory level
- critically and reflectively respond to the problems and theories introduced in the unit.

Reflective tasks
Assessment Type 1: Reflective Writing
Indicative Time on Task 2: 15 hours
Due: Part 1 (intro quiz), Sun 7/3; Part 2 (reflection), Sun 11/4.
Weighting: 20%

Short reflective tasks

On successful completion you will be able to:
- identify key philosophical problems about human nature at an introductory level
- explain important philosophical responses to problems about human nature at an introductory level
- critically and reflectively respond to the problems and theories introduced in the unit.
- express and defend your own views with increased clarity
- contribute to the learning of the group by engaging constructively in philosophical discussion and activities

Essay
Assessment Type 1: Essay
Indicative Time on Task 2: 30 hours
Due: 11.59pm, Sunday 6/6
Weighting: 35%

An argumentative Essay about themes from the unit.
On successful completion you will be able to:

- identify key philosophical problems about human nature at an introductory level
- explain important philosophical responses to problems about human nature at an introductory level
- critically and reflectively respond to the problems and theories introduced in the unit.
- express and defend your own views with increased clarity

**Tutorial Participation/Online Participation**

Assessment Type 1: Participatory task

Indicative Time on Task 2: 15 hours

Due: **Weeks 1-7; 9-11**

Weighting: **20%**

Students should be well prepared for tutorials, having done the required reading and devised questions and discussion points. Students should make a constructive contribution to classroom/online discussion and associated activities.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- identify key philosophical problems about human nature at an introductory level
- explain important philosophical responses to problems about human nature at an introductory level
- critically and reflectively respond to the problems and theories introduced in the unit.
- express and defend your own views with increased clarity
- contribute to the learning of the group by engaging constructively in philosophical discussion and activities

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1. If you need help with your assignment, please contact:

   - the academic teaching staff in your unit for guidance in understanding or completing this type of assessment
   - the Learning Skills Unit for academic skills support.

2. Indicative time-on-task is an estimate of the time required for completion of the assessment task and is subject to individual variation

**Delivery and Resources**

**Lectures**

https://unitguides.mq.edu.au/unit_offerings/131912/unit_guide/print
Lectures will be available online from Monday of each week. You should make sure you watch the lectures before attending tutorials or engaging in tutorial discussions.

Tutorials

Internal Students will attend one tutorial each week (Weeks 1-7; 9-11), either on-campus or on Zoom. Check the timetable for details (http://timetables.mq.edu.au)

External/Online students will engage in tutorial discussions through the discussion forums in iLearn.

Reading

All the essential readings and some supplementary readings for the course will be available electronically through the library, with links from iLearn. A list of weekly readings will be available through iLearn in week 1. You should do the essential weekly reading before your tutorial/discussion.

Website

The unit website is available through iLearn (http://ilearn.mq.edu.au). It contains essential resources for the unit, and you are expected to log in on a regular basis.

Student Email

Communications about the unit may be sent to your MQ student email address. Please make sure you check it regularly. For more information about accessing your MQ email, and how to redirect it to a personal email account if you wish to do so, can be found here: https://students.mq.edu.au/support/technology/service-desk/student-email

Unit Schedule

SECTION 1 - HUMAN NATURE: TRADITIONAL DEBATES

Lecturer: Dr Jenny Duke-Yonge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(week beginning 22nd February)</td>
<td>A general introduction: What is Philosophy? What is Human Nature? This week we will have a general introduction to the methods of Philosophy, and to the concerns about human nature that we will be examining over the unit.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>The Mind/Body Problem</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>(w/b 1st March)</td>
<td>This week we discuss the mind-body problem: Are we purely physical beings, or do we have a mind that cannot be explained in physical terms? If we have an immaterial mind, how does it fit into the material world? But if we don’t, how can we make sense of our experience?</td>
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### Week 3
**Personal Identity**
What makes you a person? And what makes you the same person over time? This week we’ll look at some classic and contemporary arguments and thought experiments to help us understand what it is for you to be you.

### Week 4
**Free will and Determinism**
Do we have free will? Or are our actions determined by causes outside our control? What implications does this question have for our sense of agency and responsibility?

### SECTION 2 – EXISTENTIAL QUESTIONS
Lecturer: Associate Professor Robert Sinnerbrink

### Week 5
**Human Freedom and Consciousness**
What is human freedom? How does it relate to consciousness? Are human relationships inevitably conflictual? This week introduces existentialism and focuses on Jean Paul Sartre’s existentialist account of freedom, consciousness, and our relations with others.

### Week 6
**Being-in-the-world and Mortality**
An introduction to phenomenology focusing on practical everyday existence. Martin Heidegger’s anti-dualistic account of human existence as ‘being-in-the-world’. Why we are ‘skilled copers’ rather than disengaged knowers. How we deal with our environment but also with our mortality.

*Midsemester break 2nd-18th April (Reflection due 11th April)*

### Week 7
**Literature and Art as Philosophical Tools**
The importance of art and literature as alternative ways of exploring philosophical questions. Sartre on literature and why it helps us understand human freedom and social relations. Merleau-Ponty on visual art as a way of exploring the phenomenology of perception. What painting can show us about embodied perception and experiencing nature.

### Week 8
**Essay Writing (Jenny Duke-Yonge)**
This week’s lecture will focus on essay writing, to help you develop skills for researching and writing philosophical essays, in preparation for your essay due at the end of semester.

### SECTION 3 - ARE HUMANS UNIQUE?
Lecturer: Professor Richard Menary
## Week 9
### What's so Special about Humans?
There is a long tradition of thinking about humans which proposes that we are a unique species. Prior to Darwin the prevalent view (in the West) was that humans were unique because they were created with special properties that no other creature possessed: an immortal soul; freedom of the will; reason; language; etc. In other words, Humans are discontinuous with the rest of the natural world, including other species. Darwin and the incredible success of evolutionary Biology in the twentieth century gave a very different account of Human nature: humans are continuous with the rest of the natural world; our capacities for thinking, communicating, emotions and technology have evolved from earlier precursors; and there are hallmarks of all these traits in other species. We are not discontinuous with the rest of the natural world. How then to explain some of the features of human nature that have been proposed as markers of uniqueness?

## Week 10
### Animals Like Us: Why Animals Have Minds
Philosophers such as Aristotle and Descartes have argued that animals don’t really have minds like us. Descartes went so far as to propose that animals are essentially mechanisms, whereas Aristotle proposed a hierarchy of souls with humans at the top and animals being incapable of rational thought. Were they right? This lecture will propose an answer to the question: They were wrong. The balance of argument is between some of the markers of uniqueness of human nature with the Darwinian account of the continuity of humans with the natural world. We will look at some of the fascinating accounts of animal mindedness and arguments for both the continuity and discontinuity of human nature.

## Week 11
### Emotions, what are they good for?
We’ve all got them, but why do we have them? Why do we spend so much time thinking about our own emotions and those of others? Why do we have so many ways that we express them, or evaluate them? Why do we want to be moved by Art and fiction? One possibility is that emotions in humans evolved for social bonding and engagement. This lecture will expand on the idea that Human Nature is strongly pro-social and human emotions should be considered in the light of human sociality.

## Week 12
### Tools for Thought: Technology, Culture and Mind
We make, we learn, we inherit artefacts, stories, religions, rules, morals and traditions. Humans are cultural and technical animals. We make cultures and we inherit them. We learn about them from our parents, teachers and peers. The way that we do this appears to be the result both of the way that our minds have evolved, but also, that the slow, incremental process of the evolution of culture has gradually transformed our minds as well. This lecture argues that Humans are both continuous in Darwin’s sense, but also unique, in that we are the pre-eminently cultural and technological species.

## Week 13
There are no lectures or tutorials this week: Use the time to finalise your essay, which is due on Sunday 6/6/21.
We hope you have enjoyed PHIL1031.

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### Policies and Procedures
Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- **Academic Appeals Policy**
- **Academic Integrity Policy**
- **Academic Progression Policy**
- **Assessment Policy**
Students seeking more policy resources can visit the Student Policy Gateway (https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/student-policy-gateway). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

If you would like to see all the policies relevant to Learning and Teaching visit Policy Central (https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central).

**Student Code of Conduct**

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/admin/other-resources/student-conduct

**Results**

Results published on platform other than eStudent, (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in eStudent. For more information visit ask.mq.edu.au or if you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

**Student Support**

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit http://students.mq.edu.au/support/

**Learning Skills**

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to help you improve your marks and take control of your study.

- Getting help with your assignment
- Workshops
- StudyWise
- Academic Integrity Module

The Library provides online and face to face support to help you find and use relevant information resources.

- Subject and Research Guides
- Ask a Librarian
Student Enquiry Service
For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au
If you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

Equity Support
Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the Disability Service who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

IT Help
For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/.
When using the University’s IT, you must adhere to the Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy. The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Changes from Previous Offering
Some changes to topics, readings and assessment.