PHIL1031

The Philosophy of Human Nature

Session 1, Online-flexible 2022

Department of Philosophy

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff
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Lecturer (Section 2)
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Lecturer (Section 3)
Paul Podosky
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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://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-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:

https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/tools-and-resources/ilearn/ilearn-quick-guides-for-students/assignments-and-grades

Special Consideration

Requests for extensions should be submitted via a Special Consideration request, which is available in the 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 https://students.mq.edu.au/study/assessment-exams/special-consideration for further details and instructions. Read this information 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. The Macquarie University Special Consideration Policy can be found at the end of this document.

Late Submission Penalty

Unless a **Special Consideration** request has been submitted and approved, (a) a penalty for lateness will apply – 10 marks out of 100 credit will be deducted per day for assignments

submitted after the due date – and (b) no assignment will be accepted more than seven days (incl. weekends) after the original submission deadline.

Academic Integrity

In Philosophy, academic honesty is taken very seriously, and a range of methods, including but not restricted to the use of Turnitin, are used to detect plagiarism. Misrepresenting someone else's work as your own may be grounds for referral to the Faculty Disciplinary Committee. If you have questions about how to properly cite work or how to credit sources, please ask the convenor for help and see also the Academic Integrity Policy https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policies/academic-integrity

Please note that the policy also prohibits resubmitting work you have already submitted in another unit or unit offering. This counts as **self-plagiarism**. To avoid self-plagiarism, if you have done this unit previously, you should write on another topic this time. If this presents you with any problems, please contact the unit convenor as soon as possible.

All assessment tasks in this unit are individual tasks. Using other students' work or making your work available to other students counts as **collusion**, which also puts you in breach of the Academic Integrity policy.

A helpful resource if you would like to know more about referencing and avoiding plagiarism is Macquarie's Academic Integrity Module, available here: https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/skills-development. You will need to complete this Module before accessing the unit content, if you have not already done so. More information is available in iLearn.

Academic Writing and Study Support

Macquarie University offers a number of services to help with academic writing, referencing and study skills. For details, see: https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/skills/assignments

For information about policies related to Assessment, see *Policies and Procedures* section below.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
Tutorial Participation/Online Participation	15%	No	Ongoing
Reflective tasks	20%	No	Part 1 23:59 6/3/22; Part 2 23:59 3/4/22
Online Quizzes	25%	No	23:59 Sundays, weekly
Essay preparation task	5%	No	23:59 15/5/22
Essay	35%	No	23:59 5/6/22

Tutorial Participation/Online Participation

Assessment Type [1]: Participatory task
Indicative Time on Task [2]: 15 hours
Due: **Ongoing**
Weighting: **15%**

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

Reflective tasks

Assessment Type [1]: Reflective Writing
Indicative Time on Task [2]: 15 hours
Due: **Part 1 23:59 6/3/22; Part 2 23:59 3/4/22**
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

Online Quizzes

Assessment Type [1]: Quiz/Test
Indicative Time on Task [2]: 15 hours
Due: **23:59 Sundays, weekly**
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.

Essay preparation task

Assessment Type [1]: Plan
Indicative Time on Task [2]: 5 hours
Due: **23:59 15/5/22**
Weighting: **5%**

A short essay preparation task

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

Essay

Assessment Type [1]: Essay
Indicative Time on Task [2]: 25 hours
Due: **23:59 5/6/22**
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

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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 Writing Centre 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

Lectures will be delivered live on campus from 9-11 on Monday of each week, in 29WW T1. Internal students are strongly encouraged to attend, but the lectures will also be streamed and recorded for online students, and those unable to attend. **All students need to have attended or watched the lectures before attending tutorials or engaging in tutorial discussions, since each week's tutorial discussions will focus on content from the same week's lecture.** Please take this into consideration when choosing a tutorial time.

Tutorials

All students will engage in the same tutorial activities with their classmates and tutor, but the mode of participation will depend on how you've enrolled:

- Students enrolled in the '**in person scheduled**' offering will attend one tutorial each week (Weeks 1-7; 9-11) on campus. Check the timetable for details (http://timetables.mq.edu.au)
- Students enrolled in the '**online scheduled**' offering will attend one tutorial each week (Weeks 1-7; 9-11) on Zoom. Zoom links will be available in iLearn. Check the timetable for details (http://timetables.mq.edu.au)

- Students enrolled in the '**online flexible**' offering (either in PHIL1031 or via OUA in PHIX1031)will engage in tutorial activities flexibly, through the discussion forums in iLearn. More information will be available 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**	
Week 1 (week beginning 21st February)	**Introduction** 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.
Week 2 (w/b 28th February)	**The Mind/Body Problem** 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?
Week 3 (w/b 7th March)	**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 (w/b 14th March)	**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 (w/b 21st March)	**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 (w/b 28th March)	**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. **(Reflective task part 2 due Sunday 3/4)**
Week 7 (w/b 4th April)	**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.
	(Mid-Semester break 9/4-25/4)
Week 8 (w/b 25th April) No tutorials this week	**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. ****This lecture will be delivered online due to the ANZAC Day holiday on Monday, and there will be no tutorials this week.****

SECTION 3 - ARE HUMANS UNIQUE?

Lecturer: Dr Paul Podosky

Week 9 (w/b 2nd May)	**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 (w/b 9th May)	**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 (w/b 16th May)	**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 (w/b 23rd May) No tutorials this week	**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 (w/b 30th May)	There are no lectures or tutorials this week: Use the time to finalise your essay. We hope you have enjoyed PHIL/PHIX1031. **(Essay due Sunday 5/6)**

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from Policy Central (https://policies.mq.edu.au). 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
- Fitness to Practice Procedure
- Assessment Procedure
- Complaints Resolution Procedure for Students and Members of the Public
- Special Consideration Policy

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

To find other policies relating to Teaching and Learning, visit Policy Central (https://policies.mq.edu.au) and use the search tool.

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

Academic Integrity

At Macquarie, we believe academic integrity – honesty, respect, trust, responsibility, fairness and courage – is at the core of learning, teaching and research. We recognise that meeting the expectations required to complete your assessments can be challenging. So, we offer you a range of resources and services to help you reach your potential, including free online writing and maths support, academic skills development and wellbeing consultations.

Student Support

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

The Writing Centre

The Writing Centre provides resources to develop your English language proficiency, academic writing, and communication skills.

- Workshops
- Chat with a WriteWISE peer writing leader
- Access StudyWISE
- Upload an assignment to Studiosity
- Complete the 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 Services and Support

Macquarie University offers a range of Student Support Services including:

- IT Support
- Accessibility and disability support with study
- Mental health support
- Safety support to respond to bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and sexual

assault

- Social support including information about finances, tenancy and legal issues

Student Enquiries

Got a question? Ask us via AskMQ, or contact Service Connect.

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

Minor changes to assessment and readings.