

THEORIES OF HUMAN NATURE
Course Description (v.1–evolving document)
Psych 4220.06 A (SU-2021)
Department of Psychology
Faculty of Health, York University

Section: 4220.06A SU-2021 Time: Tues & Fri, 2:30-5:30 pm (synchronous online via Zoom) Rm: N/A (online)	Course: Prof. Vinod Goel 235 Director: BSB/Lab: BSB 037 Office: Email: vgoel@yorku.ca Office Hrs: TBA (via Zoom) TA: N/A TA contact info: N/A Office Hrs: N/A
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Course Prerequisite(s): Course prerequisites are strictly enforced

- HH/PSYC 1010 6.00 (Introduction to Psychology), with a minimum grade of C.
- HH/PSYC 2021 3.0 (Statistical Methods I) or HH/PSYC 2020 6.00 (Statistical Methods I and II)
- HH/PSYC 2030 3.0 (Introduction to Research Methods) or substitutes
- Students must be in an Honours program in Psychology and have completed at least 84 credits

Course Credit Exclusions

Please refer to [York Courses Website](#) for a listing of any course credit exclusions.

Course Website: <https://eclass.yorku.ca/eclass/course/view.php?id=52857> **Drop**

Date: July 9, 2021.

General Description: This is a course on the *nature of human nature*. Any attempts to understand, explain, predict, or control human behaviour depends on some (often implicit) theory of human nature. This course will review many of the basic ideas of human nature from the Western intellectual tradition. To these we will add a new account recently developed by the course instructor, referred to as Tethered Rationality. In each case we will apply the accounts to current real-world phenomena such as the response to the Covid-19 pandemic, sexism, racism, political divisions, conspiracy theories, etc., and see how they fare.

General Learning Objectives: Your immediate learning objectives should be to use the course content and exercises to develop reading, writing, presentation, and critical evaluation skills. *See below for more specific learning objectives.*

Class Format: This is a *synchronous online seminar*. We will all meet on the specified days and time on the Zoom platform. Live participation in the videoconferencing seminars is mandatory. I will expect to *see* and *hear* from you during every class. Therefore, students will need a

computer with Zoom (software available through York at <https://yorku.zoom.us/>), a WebCam, a microphone, and a stable high-speed Internet connection to participate. You should also have a quiet space and location that provides privacy for you and minimizes disruptions for other students. Please arrange all this prior to the commencement of classes.

As this is a seminar, there will be no formal lectures. Each session will be a discussion on a specified topic led by, in most cases, students. I will make a few presentations but by in large my role will be to moderate and guide the discussions. Each student can expect to make at least four presentations over the course of the term. The details of the course requirements are specified below.

Please note, because this is a summer course, we will cover twice the material each week as we do in a regular semester course. You must allow yourself 20 to 25 hours each week if you are going to succeed. If you do not have the time or discipline to do this, this may not be the right course and/or course format for you.

Virtual Office hours and communication: I will make myself available at the end of each session to speak individually with students and answer specific administrative and content questions. However, administrative questions are already dealt with in this document, so it is largely content questions that you should be raising during the virtual office hours

Email correspondence: Please note that I will generally not answer questions via email. I have peripheral nerve damage in my hands which makes it extremely difficult and painful to type. If you cannot meet with me during the virtual office hour, send me an email to make an appointment at an alternative time. In all emails that you send me, you must put the course ID number in the subject line, otherwise it is apt to get lost among my hundreds of emails each day.

Requirements & Assessment:

- 1) Term Paper (40% of grade)
 - Details attached below.
- 2) Seminar Presentations (30% of grade)
 - Details attached below.
- 3) Weekly Reading Summaries (20% of grade)
- 4) Seminar Participation (10% of grade)
 - Details attached below.

Text:

Goel, V. (in press). *Reason and Less: Pursuing Food, Sex and Politics*. MIT Press.

(As the book is still in production, I will provide a draft manuscript on the course website. As this manuscript will be in draft form, I do not wish it distributed beyond the classroom. In accessing the manuscript, you agree that you will not share the manuscript with anyone and delete your copy upon course completion.)

Readings (available on eClass)

To be made available on eClass...

Term Paper (40%):

A term paper (5000 words) addressing a preapproved topic relevant to the course is required. The paper will be graded not only for content, but also your ability to organize and express your thoughts in a structured, systematic, coherent fashion, using grammatical English sentences organized into paragraphs and sections. Term papers will be submitted through Turnitin to check for plagiarism. The topic of your paper must be different than the topics of your presentations.

The paper grade will have three components:

1. Classroom presentation of the paper before it is written (10%).
2. Draft of the paper graded by a fellow student (5%). (To receive this grade you must grade and give feedback to a fellow student's paper by the assigned date.)
3. Final draft of the paper graded by myself (25%).

Late Term Papers:

The term paper presentation date will be fixed. If you miss it, you will forfeit those 10 points. The term paper drafts and final copy are due at the beginning of class on the days indicated in the course schedule. Late submissions will be penalized 2/40 points if not submitted at the **beginning** of class, and 2/40 points per calendar day thereafter, and **will not receive feedback**. As you will always have at least 2-3 months to complete the assignment, a doctor's note indicating illness will usually not suffice to waive the penalty. To be considered, a doctor's note must indicate that you were incapable of working for at least half the number of days between the handing out the assignment and the due date. No assignments will be accepted after the last day of class.

Class/Seminar Presentations (30%):

Every student will be responsible for making **3-4 class presentations**. Each presentation should be accompanied by PowerPoint slides and last about 30 minutes. Submit the slides to me at the end of the presentation. For shorter articles you may need to combine several papers. To maximize your grade pull in relevant material not on the course outline. The presentation dates will be assigned and fixed. If you miss one, you will forfeit those points.

Short Summary Papers (20%):

Every week you will read the articles assigned for that week before coming to class. You will write a summary of one of the articles and submit it at the beginning of class. You do not need to submit a summary for the weeks you are presenting.

I'm looking for the following in the Summary papers:

1. A summary of the article in your own words.
2. Indication that you've understood and pulled out the key points.
3. Grammatical English sentences organized into paragraphs
4. Placing the article in the context of the course. How does it contribute to the main point under discussion that week, relate to other articles, etc.

I am looking for a maximum of 500 words.

Late Short Summary Papers: The short article reviews are due at the beginning of each class. They are considered part of your ongoing classroom engagement. They ensure that you have at least completed the minimal readings to participate in the seminar. Late assignments will be penalized 3/10 points if not submitted at the *beginning* of each class and one grade point per calendar day thereafter. As you will always have multiple weeks to complete an assignment, a doctor's note indicating illness will usually not suffice to waive the penalty. To be considered, a doctor's note must indicate that you were incapable of working for at least half the number of days between the handing out the assignment and the due date. No assignments will be accepted after the last day of class.

Participation Grade (10%):

The participation grade will consist of constructive vocal classroom participation and verbal or written answers to occasional (unannounced) quizzes. In terms of the vocal participation, I am looking for you to facilitate discussion during student presentations. There will be no substitute assignments to make up missed/poor participation grades. Make sure that your schedule and health permit you to attend class and participate in these exercises regularly.

Additional Requirements for Missed or Late Assignments: In addition, for any missed tests or late assignments, students MUST complete the following online form which will be received and reviewed in the Psychology undergraduate office.

HH PSYC: Missed Tests/Exams Form. Failure to complete the form within 48 hours of the original deadline will result in a grade of zero for the test/assignment.

Electronic Device Policy: This course will be delivered in an online format and therefore electronic devices (e.g., tablets, laptops) are permitted during class time for courserelated purposes. It is expected that you would complete tests/exams in a manner that does not require consulting an unauthorised source during an examination unless the tests/exams are open-book.

Grades Appeal/Correction: Any questions or concerns regarding grades on tests and assignments must be raised with the instructor within 10 days of the posting of the grade.

Grades and Entitlements:

You are entitled only to the grade that you **earn** in this course. Nothing else. I will **not** increase your grade just because "you need at least a *x* grade to graduate; or you need a *y* grade to get into some other program; or you need a *z* grade to maintain your scholarship;" etc.. It is not fair to other students. If you need a certain grade in this course, please do the required work.

Grading as per Senate Policy

The grading scheme for the course conforms to the 9-point grading system used in undergraduate programs at York (e.g., A+ = 9, A = 8, B+ = 7, C+ = 5, etc.). Assignments and tests* will bear

either a letter grade designation or a corresponding number grade (e.g. A+ = 90 to 100, A = 80 to 89, B+ = 75 to 79, etc.)

For a full description of York grading system see the York University Undergraduate Calendar - [Grading Scheme for 2020-21](#)

Plagiarism is the passing off of someone else's words and ideas as you own. This is a very serious academic offense. Do your own assignments and acknowledge all your sources. Google and Turnitin software may be used to check for plagiarism on written work. The penalty for plagiarism will be in accordance with the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty which can be found at the following URLs, along with resources to help you avoid plagiarism:

- [Information about the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty](#)
- [Online Tutorial on Academic Integrity](#)
- [Information for Students on Text-Matching Software: Turnitin.com](#)
- [Beware! Says who? A pamphlet on how to avoid plagiarism](#)
- [Resources for students to help improve their writing and research skill](#)

Student Feedback: I welcome constructive comments on course organization, lectures (content, style, presentation), assignments, etc.

Office Hours: Make use of the office hours. They are for your benefit.

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SU 2021, Proposed Schedule

See attached.

Other Information (from Department):**Learning Outcomes**

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate in-depth knowledge of theories of human nature.
2. Critically evaluate, synthesize and resolve conflicting results in theories of human nature.
3. Articulate trends in theories of human nature.
4. Locate research articles on theories of human nature and show critical thinking about research findings.
5. Express knowledge of theories of human nature in written form.
6. Engage in evidence-based dialogue with course director and peers.
7. Demonstrate an ability to work with others.

Add/Drop Deadlines

For a list of all important dates please refer to: [Summer 2021 Important Dates](#)

Event	SU	S1	S2
Last date to add a course without permission of instructor	23-May	14-May	02-Jul
Last date to add a course with permission of instructor	07-Jun	21-May	09-Jul
Last date to drop course without receiving a grade	09-Jul	07-Jun	23-Jul
Course Withdrawal Period (withdraw from course and receive a "W" on transcript – see Add and Drop Deadline Information below)	July 10-Aug. 10	June 8-June 21	July 24-Aug. 10

Add and Drop Deadline Information

There are deadlines for adding and dropping courses, both academic and financial. Since, for the most part, the dates are **different**, be sure to read the information carefully so that you understand the differences between the sessional dates below and the [Refund Tables](#).

You are strongly advised to pay close attention to the "Last date to enrol without permission of course instructor" deadlines. These deadlines represent the last date students have unrestricted access to the registration and enrolment system.

After that date, you must contact the professor/department offering the course to arrange permission.

You can drop courses using the registration and enrolment system up until the last date to drop a course without receiving a grade (drop deadline).

You may [withdraw from a course](#) using the registration and enrolment system after the drop deadline until the last day of class for the term associated with the course. When you withdraw from a course, the course remains on your transcript without a grade and is notated as 'W'. The

withdrawal will not affect your grade point average or count towards the credits required for your degree.

Academic Integrity for Students

York University takes academic integrity very seriously; please familiarize yourself with [Information about the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty](#).

It is recommended that you review Academic Integrity by completing the [Academic Integrity Tutorial](#) and [Academic Honesty Quiz](#)

Test Banks

The offering for sale of, buying of, and attempting to sell or buy test banks (banks of test questions and/or answers), or any course specific test questions/answers is not permitted in the Faculty of Health. Any student found to be doing this may be considered to have breached the Senate Policy on Academic Honesty. In particular, buying and attempting to sell banks of test questions and/or answers may be considered as “Cheating in an attempt to gain an improper advantage in an academic evaluation” (article 2.1.1 from the Senate Policy) and/or “encouraging, enabling or causing others” (article 2.1.10 from the Senate Policy) to cheat.

Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

While all individuals are expected to satisfy the requirements of their program of study and to aspire to do so at a level of excellence, the university recognizes that persons with disabilities may require reasonable accommodation to enable them to do so. The university encourages students with disabilities to register with *Student Accessibility Services (SAS)* to discuss their accommodation needs as early as possible in the term to establish the recommended academic accommodations that will be communicated to Course Directors as necessary. **Please let me know as early as possible in the term if you anticipate requiring academic accommodation so that we can discuss how to consider your accommodation needs within the context of this course.** <https://accessibility.students.yorku.ca/>

Excerpt from Senate Policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:

1. Pursuant to its commitment to sustaining an inclusive, equitable community in which all members are treated with respect and dignity, and consistent with applicable accessibility legislation, York University shall make reasonable and appropriate accommodations in order to promote the ability of students with disabilities to fulfill the academic requirements of their programs. This policy aims to eliminate systemic barriers to participation in academic activities by students with disabilities.

All students are expected to satisfy the essential learning outcomes of courses. Accommodations shall be consistent with, support and preserve the academic integrity of the curriculum and the academic standards of courses and programs. For further information please refer to: [York University Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities Policy](#).

Course Materials Copyright Information

These course materials are designed for use as part of the Psych 4220 course at York University and are the property of the instructor unless otherwise stated. Third party copyrighted materials (such as book chapters, journal articles, music, videos, etc.) have either been licensed for use in this course or fall under an exception or limitation in Canadian Copyright law.

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