

**THEORIES OF HUMAN NATURE**  
**Course Description (v1)**  
**Psych 4220.06 A (FW-2024-25)**  
**Department of Psychology**  
**Faculty of Health, York University**

<p><b>Section: 4220.06A FW-2024-25</b>  <b>Time: Thurs 2:30 – 5:30 pm</b> (<i>synchronous</i>  online via Zoom)  <b>Rm: N/A (online)</b></p>	<p>Course Director: Prof. Vinod Goel  Office: 235 BSB/Lab: BSB 037  Email: vgoel@yorku.ca  Office Hrs: TBA (via Zoom)</p> <p>TA: N/A  TA contact info: N/A  Office Hrs: N/A</p>
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**Course Prerequisite(s): Course prerequisites are strictly enforced**

- HH/PSYC 1010 6.00 (Introduction to Psychology).
- 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/course/view.php?id=127000>

**Class zoom link:**

<https://yorku.zoom.us/j/98730253027?pwd=tEWOsgYrIAP5AayupNMq7Aga6SGO2O.1>

Meeting ID: 987 3025 3027

Passcode: 539764

**Drop Date:** Feb. 7, 2025.

**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,

racism, gender identity, sexual harassment, political divisions, wars, genocide, 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.

**Program/Dept. Learning Outcomes:**

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

1. Demonstrate in-depth knowledge in at least 2 sub-disciplines.
2. Critically evaluate, synthesize and resolve conflicting results.
3. Articulate trends in sub-disciplines of psychology.
4. Locate research articles and show critical thinking about research findings.
5. Express psychological knowledge in written form in more than 1 sub-discipline.
6. Engage in evidence-based dialogue with course director and peers.

**Class Format:** This is an INTERACTIVE *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 3 presentations over the course of the term. The details of the course requirements are specified below.

**Class Recordings:** All class sessions will be recorded and the links to the recordings made available on eClass for student use (confined to this class). In taking this class you agree to this policy and also acknowledge agreeing to the University's "*Student Notice of Recording for Remote Teaching and Learning*" document (reproduced at the end of this document).

**Time Commitment:** You should allow yourself 12-15 hours a week, in addition to class time, if you wish to do well in the course. Without substantive time commitments you will not succeed.

**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 & Presentation (40 % of grade)
  - Details attached below.
- 2) Class Presentations (3) (15% of grade)
- 3) Test 1 (25% of grade)
  - Details attached below.
- 4) Weekly submissions (10% of grade)
  - Details attached below.
- 5) Vocal Participation (10% of grade)
  - Details attached below.

### **Text:**

Goel, V. (2022). *Reason and Less: Pursuing Food, Sex and Politics*. MIT Press.

If you wish to have a hard copy or a Kindle copy of the book, you may purchase it from Amazon. If you are happy with PDF files of individual chapters (there may be some restrictions on printing these out) you may download from the publisher's website: <https://mitpress.mit.edu/9780262045476/>

### **Other Readings**

To be made available on eClass.

### **Term Paper (40 %):**

A term paper (5000 words) addressing one of the issues from the list provided 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. You do not get any points for bold statements and opinions. I'm interested in the scaffolding of empirical evidence and reason that supports your opinions. 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 2 components:

1. Class presentation of the paper (10%).
2. Grade on written document (30%).

**Late Term Papers:**

The term paper presentation date will be fixed. If you miss it, you will forfeit those 5 points. The term paper is due at the beginning of class on the day indicated in the course schedule. Late submissions will be penalized 10% if not submitted at the *beginning* of class, and 10% 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.

**Weekly submissions (10%):**

There are two components to the weekly submissions. Both submissions must be made weekly to get the grade.

**Component 1:**

Submit two questions to the forum board based on the specified readings and/or videos for that week. This must be done each week prior to class. I will use these questions as a basis of class discussions and to judge how carefully you have completed the readings.

**Component 2:**

At the end of each class, I will pose some questions based on the readings and/or videos assigned for that week. You will submit a one page written answer to the questions. In some cases you will be asked to do this during the class itself. In other cases, there will be a later submission date specified. If you submit the document on time, you get the grade. There will be no individual feedback.

**Grading and Late submissions:** The purpose of these submissions is to ensure that you are doing the readings and keeping up in class. If you make the submissions on time and demonstrate engagement of the material, you'll get the full grade. If the submissions are late (or if you "fake" the submission by writing gibberish) you will get a zero grade. Engaging in this exercise will serve you well in preparing for the tests. These are the easiest grades to get in the course. It will be a shame to throw them away.

These submissions are considered part of your ongoing classroom preparation and engagement. They ensure that you have at least completed the minimal readings to participate in the seminar. Therefore, late submissions will not be accepted.

**Participation Grade (15%):**

The participation grade will consist of constructive vocal classroom interaction with me and your fellow students. I am looking for you to ask questions, answer questions that I ask, and facilitate discussion during student presentations. There will be no substitute assignments to make up missed/poor participation grades. To maximize your participation grade make sure I *see* you and *hear* you every week. Any week I do not see you or hear you, you will not get a

point. Make sure that your schedule and health permit you to attend class and participate in class regularly. Attendance is tracked by the Zoom software. I track vocal participation on a spread sheet.

**Requirements for Missed or Late Assignments, Tests and Quizzes:** 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. I only make exceptions for medical reasons.

[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 course-related 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 2024-25](#)

**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.

**Psych 4220.06 A (FW-2024-25) Proposed Schedule**

Meeting	Date	Lecture Topics	Readings	Presenter	Major Submissions
1	Sept 5	Admin/Intro	R&L-1	VG	
2	Sept 12		R&L-2-3	VG	
3	Sept 19		R&L-4	VG	
4	Sept 26		R&L-5		Student Presentation
5	Oct 3		R&L-6		Student Presentation
6	Oct 10		R&L-7-8		Student Presentation
	Oct 17	<b>Reading Week</b>	R&L-9		
7	Oct 24		R&L-10		Student Presentation
8	Oct 31		R&L-11		Student Presentation
9	Nov 7		R&L-12		Student Presentation
10	Nov 14		R&L-13		Student Presentation
11	Nov 21		R&L-14,		Student Presentation
12	Nov 28		R&L- 15		Student Presentation
		<b>X-mas Break</b>			
13	Jan 9				Test 1 (25%)
14	Jan 16		Reason & Responsibility		Student Presentation
15	Jan 23		Reason & Responsibility		Student Presentation
16	Jan 30		Reason & Responsibility		Student Presentation
17	Feb 6		Reason & Responsibility		Student Presentation
18	Feb 13		Reason & Responsibility		Student Presentation

	Feb 20	<b>Reading Week</b>			
<b>19</b>	Feb 27		<b>TPP</b>		Term Paper Presentations
<b>20</b>	Mar 6		<b>TPP</b>		Term Paper Presentations
<b>21</b>	Mar 13		<b>TPP</b>		Term Paper Presentations
<b>22</b>	Mar 20		TBD		
<b>23</b>	Mar 27		TBD		
<b>24</b>	Apr 3		TBD		

### Other Information (from Department):

#### **Add/Drop Deadlines**

For a list of all important dates please refer to [Undergraduate Fall/Winter 2024-2025 Important Dates](#)

	<b>Fall (Term F)</b>	<b>Year (Term Y)</b>	<b>Winter (Term W)</b>
Last date to add a course <b>without permission</b> of instructor (also see Financial Deadlines)	September 18	September 18	January 20
Last date to add a course <b>with permission</b> of instructor (also see Financial Deadlines)	October 2	October 16	January 31
Drop deadline: Last date to drop a course without receiving a grade (also see Financial Deadlines)	November 8	February 7	March 14
Course Withdrawal Period (withdraw from a course and receive a grade of "W" on transcript – see note below)	November 9 – December 3	February 8- April 4	March 15- April 4

#### **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.

## Information on Plagiarism Detection

Description of software used to detect plagiarism.

## 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 course-related 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.

## 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 **COURSE CODE** 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.

Copying this material for distribution (e.g. uploading material to a commercial third-party website) may lead to a violation of Copyright law. [Intellectual Property Rights Statement](#).

### **Course Schedule**

**If you would like to provide a week-by-week course schedule please add this here.**

## Student Notice of Recording for Remote Teaching and Learning

Activities for this course involve recording, in partial fulfillment of the course learning outcomes. Images, audio, text/chat messaging that have been recorded may be used and/or made available by the University to students enrolled in the course and those supporting the course for the purpose of materials review, for assessment, etc. Recordings will be managed according to the University's Common Record Schedule and will be securely destroyed when no longer needed by the University. Your personal information is protected in accordance with the York University's [Policy on Access of Information and Protection of Privacy](#) and the [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#). Access to online materials, including recordings or live meetings, is subject to York University's Senate Policy on Computing and Information Technology Facilities.

The University will use reasonable means to protect the security and confidentiality of the recorded information, but cannot provide a guarantee of such due to factors beyond the University's control, such as recordings being forwarded, copied, intercepted, circulated, disclosed, or stored without the University's knowledge or permission, or the introduction of malware into computer system which could potentially damage or disrupt the computer, networks, and security settings. The University is not responsible for connectivity/technical difficulties or loss of data associated with your hardware, software, or Internet connection.

By engaging in course activities that involve recording, you are consenting to the use of your appearance, image, text/chat messaging, and voice and/or likeness in the manner and under the conditions specified herein. In the case of a live stream recording, if you choose not to have your image or audio recorded, you may disable the audio and video functionality. If you choose to participate using a pseudonym instead of your real name you must disclose the pseudonym to your instructor in advance to facilitate class participation.

You are not permitted to disclose the link to/URL of an event or an event session recording or copies of recording to anyone, for any reason. Recordings are available only to authorized individuals who have been directly provided the above instructions/link for their use. Recordings for personal use, required to facilitate your learning and preparation of personal course/lecture notes, may not be shared with others without the permission of the instructor or event coordinator, and may not be published, posted linked to or otherwise made available online including on social media feeds even if those feeds are private.

I Understand