

Human Nature from the Feminine Perspective
Political Science 306

Fall, 2014
Syllabus

**Read this syllabus carefully before you decide to
remain in this course.**

**The Honor Code is in force and will be
strictly followed in this course.**

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Fall, 2014
SYLLABUS

This is a course in political philosophy; in other words, it is a course in which we systematically study what some of the greatest minds have concluded about justice. To discover justice would be to discover the truth about political life or the best way for people to live together. In order to determine this superior way of life political philosophers have attempted to find “human nature.” The notion was that discovering this would allow one to construct a regime appropriate for or complementary to that nature, and that this would be the most just political order. However, most of the time the search for *human* nature has meant the search for a generic nature, ignoring the issue of whether or not there is a distinctively male nature and a distinctively female nature. The assumption was that male and female natures, respectively, were decisively the same. This course will take that “assumption” to be a question. We will consider “human nature” from this perspective; we will study what some of the greatest minds have concluded about the natures of men and women.

The course will be organized in the following way. Each member of the class will write a paper on one of the assignments. The paper will be essentially **textual exegesis** and will be between 1500 and 2100 words (this is a rigid requirement). It will be due by noon on the Friday or Monday before we take up the assignment in question. You will deliver it to me electronically and to my secretary so that she can reproduce it and other members of the class may pick it up. Your colleagues will write short (500-600 words) papers as a critique of yours (remember, a “critique” may find the paper flawed, may find it excellent, or anywhere in between) and will deliver them electronically to all the members of the class, including me, no later than 9:00am on the day we take up that assignment.

The course will be graded in the following way. Each short paper will count for 8% of your grade, each assignment paper will count for 26% of your grade, and a review of The Second Sex will count for 10% of your grade. You may write a paper due at the beginning of class on Dec. 4 (**late papers will not be accepted**) evaluating the readings in the course and their impact upon you. This paper may substitute for the grades of three short papers (24%

of your grade). There will be no quizzes, tests, or a final exam. **Any paper that contains more than 5 grammatical errors will fail.**

Failure to hand in any assignment on time will result in failure in the course, no matter what your average may be.

Some remarks about the assignments and about the course are in order. First, you will notice that you are required to read a few pages in The Bible, but you are not required to purchase a copy. If you do not own a copy, a number of editions are available in the library and others are available in the bookstore or online. Alternatively, I will provide you with a specific translation of the reading. Second, you will be expected to have read the entire assignment on the first day that we begin to discuss it. If you are unable to meet this requirement, do not take this course. The course is difficult and requires a good deal of reading and thought about that reading. Any less effort than this will surely result in a poor grade.

Books to be Purchased:

1. Medea and Other Plays, by Euripides. Penquin.
2. The Complete Plays, by Aristophanes. Bantam.
3. "The Taming of the Shrew," by William Shakespeare. Signet
4. The First and Second Discourses, by Rousseau. St. Martins.
5. Elective Affinities, by Goethe.
6. Essays on Sex Equality, by Mill and Taylor. Chicago.
7. A Room of One's Own, by Woolf, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.
8. Hedda Gabler and Other Plays, by Ibsen. Penquin.
9. The Diary of Rachel Varnhagen, by Arendt.
10. The Second Sex, by de Beauvoir. Vintage.

Schedule of Classes

August 28:	Introduction
September 2, 4:	"Genesis 1, 2, 3."
September 5:	Paper on "Medea" due

September 9:	Critiques due – 9:00am.
September 9, 11:	“Medea”
September 12:	Paper on “Lysistrata” due.
September 16:	Critiques due – 9:00am.
September 16, 18:	“Lysistrata”
September 19:	Paper on “The Taming of the Shrew” due
September 23:	Critiques due – 9:00am.
September 23, 30: October 2:	“The Taming of the Shrew”
September 25:	No class.
October 3:	Paper on <u>Second Discourse</u> due.
October 7:	Critiques due .
October 7, 9, 21, 23:	<u>Second Discourse.</u>
October 14, 16:	No class.
October 24:	Paper on <u>Elective Affinities</u> due.
October 28:	Critiques due – 9:00am.
October 28, 30; Nov. 4:	<u>Elective Affinities.</u>
November 6:	No class.
November 7:	Paper on “Hedda Gabler” due.
November 11:	Critiques due.
November 11, 13:	“Hedda Gabler.”

November 14:	Paper on <u>Essays on Sex Equality</u> due
November 18:	Critiques due – 9:00am
November 18, 20:	<u>Essays on Sex Equality</u>
November 21:	Paper on <u>A Room of One's Own</u> due
November 25:	Critiques due
November 25; December 2:	<u>A Room of One's Own</u>
December 1: <u>Varnhagen</u> due	Papers on <u>The Diary of Rahel</u>
December 4:	Critiques due – 9:00am
December 4, 9:	<u>The Diary of Rahel Varnhagen</u>

There will be no class on September 25 or October 16 because I will be observing Jewish holidays. There will be no class on October 14 because that is Spring recess. There will be no class on Nov. 6 because I have a professional obligation.

A Note on the Papers

They must be typed. They must be at least 500 words and no more than 600.* As I grade them, I will be expecting you to answer four questions. First, what is the work about? Second, what is the main thing or things the author is trying to say? Third, what do you think about the author's standpoint and why? Fourth, have your colleagues dealt with these questions adequately in his/her paper? Obviously, the second and third questions are more subjective than the first. Failure to answer the first and fourth clearly will surely result in a poor grade.

The Honor Code

You must do your own work, though I encourage you to discuss the readings among yourselves. However, do not write papers together and do not read each other's papers until they have been graded and handed back. Avoid discussing works with students you know have not read them, and report to me about students who are trying to find out what the works are about (who are seeking answers to question 1) without having read them. Use of summaries like Cliff Notes, SparkNotes, and Answers.com is plagiarism. **The Honor Code is always in force and I will enforce it vigorously.**

From time to time it is possible I will have to cancel class because of circumstances beyond my control. These classes will be made up, usually in the early mornings (Tuesdays or Thursdays, 7:00am to 8:40am) because that is when there are no conflicts. If you consider this an undue hardship, you should think twice about taking this course with me as the instructor.