

**Human Nature from the Feminine
Perspective
Political Science 306
Fall, 2005
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.**

POLITICAL SCIENCE 306
FALL, 2005
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.

This course will be graded according to the preparation you do for the class and the quality of thought and writing you add to that preparation. Ten papers (one on each of the assignments) will be required. They should be no less than one page and no more than two pages long, based on a typed, double-spaced standard of approximately three hundred words per page. These papers will be summaries or highlights of the main themes, respectively, of the works. Each paper will account for 5% of your grade. A three to five page summary of The Second Sex will also be required, and it will count for 10% of your grade. And a take-home final examination of five to seven pages that counts for 40% of your grade will be required. It should be noted that your grade will be influenced to some extent by your relevant and helpful contributions to class, whether in the form of questions or comments. However, failure to hand in any assignments 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. 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 31:	Introduction
September 2, 7, 9:	"Genesis 1, 2, 3." Paper on 2 nd .
September 5 (Labor Day):	No class
September 12, 14, 16:	"Medea". Paper on 12 th .

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September 19, 21, 23:	“Lysistrata”. Paper on 19 th .
Sept. 26, 28, 30; Oct. 3:	“The Taming of the Shrew”. Paper on 26 th .
October 5 (Rosh HaShana):	No class.
Oct. 10 (mid-semester break):	No class.
Oct. 7, 12, 14, 17, 19, 21, 24:	<u>Second Discourse</u> . Paper on 7 th .
October 24:	Deadline for paper on <u>The Second Sex</u>
October 26 (Simchat Torah):	No class.
Oct. 28, 31; Nov. 2, 4, 7:	<u>Elective Affinities</u> . Paper on 28 th .
November 9, 11, 14:	“Hedda Gabler”. Paper on 9 th .
November 16, 18, 21:	<u>Essays on Sex Equality</u> . Paper on 16 th .
Nov. 28, 30; Dec. 2:	<u>A Room of One’s Own</u> . Paper on 28 th .
December 4, 7, 9, 11:	<u>The Diary of Rachel Varnhagen</u> . Paper on 4 th .
December 13:	Conclusion

There will be no class on September 5 because it is Labor Day. There will be no classes on October 5 and 26 because I will be observing the religious holidays of Rosh HaShana and Simchat Torah, respectively. There will be no class on October 10 because it is mid-semester break.

A Note on the Papers

They must be typed. They must be at least 300 words and no more than 600. As I grade them, I will be expecting you to answer three 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? Obviously, the second and third questions are more subjective than the first. Failure to answer the first 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, 7:30am to 8:20am) 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.