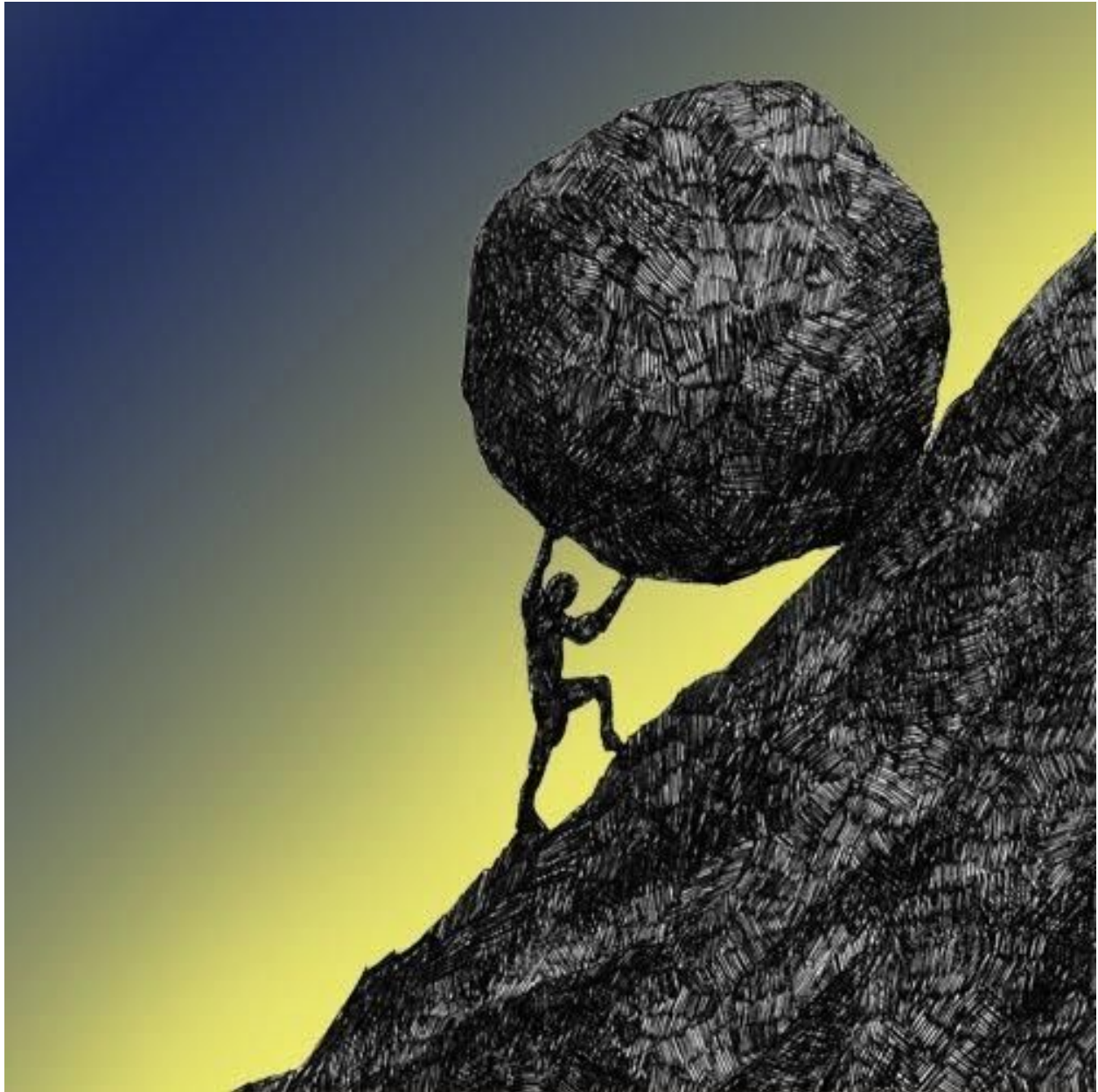


Views of Human Nature

PHR-370-5 / Winter 2018-19
Phillips Academy



Instructor: Mr. Prescott
Location: Chapel 015
Email: kprescott@andover.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

A critical examination of selected traditional and contemporary views of human nature with the following questions in mind: Do we have a characteristic nature? What are our basic needs, purposes, rights, obligations, and values? To what extent are our actions determined by heredity and instinct? Are we free? Are we responsible for our actions? How - if at all - do the answers to any of these questions differ depending on our individual identities? Given an understanding of human nature, how should we structure society to satisfy our needs and take advantage of our potential?

COURSE REQUIREMENTS, EVALUATION, AND POLICIES

I. Required Texts:

1. Jonathan Haidt, *The Happiness Hypothesis* (New York: Basic Books, 2006).
2. Victor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959).
3. Bryan Stevenson, *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015)
4. Additional readings will be made available as handouts in class and posted on Canvas

II. Evaluation

i. Classroom Participation (25%) – Much of this class will proceed as a seminar, which means careful reading of assigned work, regular attendance, and participation in class are all essential in order to succeed in the course. A separate handout/rubric will be distributed regarding expectations for classroom participation/discussion.

ii. Essays (65%) – Two different analytical/argumentative essays will be assigned throughout the term. More specific information about the expectations for these assignments will be provided in a separate handout.

- a. **Essay 1a (7.5%)** – Due Friday, December 7
- b. **Essay 1b (7.5%)** - Due Thursday, December 13
- c. **Essay 2a (7.5%)** – Due Monday, January 14
- d. **Essay 2b (12.5%)** - Due Monday, January 28
- e. **Essay 3 (30%)** - Due Monday, February 18

iii. Student Journal (10%) – Many of our class sessions will include some form of on-demand process writing (prompts, reflecting, etc.) that engages with either reading, subject matter, or central questions of the course. To that end, students should acquire a notebook in which this writing will be housed. I will periodically collect this notebook and assess it for completion.

III. Extensions – Generally speaking, I don't grant extensions. It is your responsibility to plan ahead and manage your time appropriately. The only exception is when you have three or more **major** assignments due on the same day, in which case you should follow the protocols outlined on p. 51 of the Blue Book under "Workload & Assignments".

IV. Late Work – All written assignments are due at the beginning of class. Any work handed in after this point will be counted as late and will receive a lower grade as a result. Please note that problems with technology are **not** an excuse for lateness. Anticipate that the printer will break, that files will be lost, or that your computer will die!

V. Revisions – If you are interested in revising one of your essays, I would encourage you to meet with me soon after feedback is returned to discuss the prospect of doing so. Please note that all revisions must be substantial; it is not sufficient simply to plug in my feedback. Also, due to the fact that all students will be revising "A" essays in this course, note that the revision option is only available for "B" essays.

VI. Absences - Regular attendance is essential! That said, I realize that this course is not your only commitment this term, just as I realize that circumstances inevitably arise that are outside of your control. First and foremost, I ask that you communicate with me (the earlier the better). Regarding **Personal Time**, I ask that you follow the procedures outlined on pp. 54-55 of the Blue Book. Finally, in the event that you are sick on the day that an assignment is due (with an excused absence from the Health Center), said assignment will be due at the beginning of the next class meeting.

VII. E-mail – I will respond to all e-mail within 24 hours. However, please note that any e-mail sent after 8:00 PM will not receive a response until the following morning, so please plan ahead!

VIII. Religious Observances – You may wish to take part in religious observances that conflict with our class meetings. If this is the case, you should contact Ms. Ralston (gralston@andover.edu) in the Office of Spiritual Life in order for your absence to be excused.

IX. Disabilities – Students with learning, physical, or psychiatric disabilities who may require disability-related classroom accommodations should reach out to the Academic Skills Center (lwarner@andover.edu) for appropriate documentation.

X. Technology – Although we live in an increasingly digitized world, please note that I do not allow the use of computers/tablet/phones during class unless otherwise specified.

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

(SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29 – INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

- No assigned readings

Unit 1: The Neuroscience of Human Nature

WEEK 1 – THE HUMAN BRAIN

MONDAY, DECEMBER 3 – THE ALLEGORY OF THE CAVE

- Read: Plato, *The Republic*, VII.514A-521B.
- Due: Drawing of Plato's Cave
- Due: Journal Entry (see Canvas for prompt)

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 4 – THE DIVIDED SELF

- Read: Jonathan Haidt, "The Divided Self," in *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), pp. 1-5, 9-22.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 6 – NO CLASS

- Note: Mr. Prescott at an administrator training

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7 – DEFINING HUMAN NATURE

- Due: Essay #1a

WEEK 2 – HUMAN NATURE AND PLATO'S CAVE

MONDAY, DECEMBER 10 – SWIMMING UPSTREAM: FIGHTING THE EVOLUTIONARY CURRENTS

- Read: Jonathan Haidt, "Changing Your Mind," in *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), pp. 23-34.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20 – HUMAN NATURE AND PLATO'S CAVE

- Due: Essay #1b

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 21 – THE CULTURE INSIDE

- Listen: "The Culture Inside," *Invisibilia*, NPR (June 15, 2017).
- Note: Link to the podcast is on Canvas

HAPPY WINTER BREAK!

Unit 2: Dehumanization and the Holocaust

FRIDAY, JANUARY 4 – DEHUMANIZATION OF JEWS IN PRE-WAR GERMANY

- Note: No assigned readings

WEEK 3 – DEHUMANIZATION AND THE HOLOCAUST

MONDAY, JANUARY 7 – INTRODUCTION TO THE HOLOCAUST

- Read: "The Holocaust: A Historical Summary," pp. 87-99

THURSDAY, JANUARY 10 – EXPERIENCES IN A CONCENTRATION CAMP

- Read: Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), pp. 3-20.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 11 – EBI FRIDAY

- Note: Class does not meet; work on essays

WEEK 4 – THE MYTH OF SISYPHUS

MONDAY, JANUARY 14 – THE STATE OF APATHY

- Due: Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), pp. 20-52.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 17 – THE MYTH OF SISYPHUS

- Due: Essay #2a

FRIDAY, JANUARY 18 – THE ADAPTATION PRINCIPLE

- Read: Jonathan Haidt, "The Pursuit of Happiness," in *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), pp. 81-86.

WEEK 5 – DEHUMANIZATION AND THE HOLOCAUST

MONDAY, JANUARY 21 – MLK DAY

- Note: Class does not meet

TUESDAY, JANUARY 22 – THE ART OF LIVING

- Read: Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), pp. 52-72.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 24 – THE HUMANITY OF DE-HUMANIZATION

- Read: Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), pp. 72-93.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 25 – WRITING WORKSHOP

- Due: Essay Outline

Unit 3: Human Nature and Mass Incarceration

WEEK 6 – MASS INCARCERATION 101

MONDAY, JANUARY 28 – INTRODUCTION TO MASS INCARCERATION

- Due: Essay #2b

THURSDAY, JANUARY 31 – RACISM AND SELF-SERVING BIAS

- Read: Jonathan Haidt, "The Faults of Others," in *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), pp. 59-80.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1 – IMPLICIT BIAS, RACE, AND THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

- Read: Michelle Alexander, "The Color of Justice," *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2012), abridged version

WEEK 7 – PRISONS, REAL AND IMAGINED

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5 – MASS INCARCERATION IN THE UNITED STATES

- Read: Michelle Alexander, “The Lockdown,” *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2012), abridged version

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7 – PRISONS OF THE AMERICAN REALITY

- Read: Angela Davis, "Introduction: Prison Reform or Prison Abolition?" in *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), pp. 9-21.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8 – THE INCARCERATION OF CHILDREN

- Read: Bryan Stevenson, “All God’s Children,” in *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015), pp. 147-162

WEEK 8 – MASS INCARCERATION AND JUSTICE

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 11 – THE INCARCERATION OF MOTHERS

- Read: Bryan Stevenson, “Mother, Mother,” in *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015), pp. 227-241.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14 – THE INCARCERATION OF THE MENTALLY ILL

- Read: Bryan Stevenson, “Mitigation,” in *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015), pp. 186-202.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 15 – HOS DAY

- Note: Lost class

WEEK 9 – REFORMING THE U.S. PRISON SYSTEM

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 18 – TBD

- Read: Michelle Alexander, Chapter 6, “The Fire This Time,” *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2012), abridged version

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21 – TBD

- Read: Amy L. Solomon, “Out from the Holocaust,” *The Marshall Project* (December 20, 2018)

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22 – WRITING WORKSHOP

- Due: Journal Entry

WEEK 10 – FINALS WEEK

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25 – CONFERENCE PERIOD DAY

- Note: Mr. Prescott available during normal class block

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27 – FINAL ESSAY DUE

- Due: Essay #3