

Carleton University
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Winter 2025
ANTH 2510 B
Theories of Human Nature

Prof. Emma Bider
Office Hours: Wednesdays 12pm-1pm or by appointment
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Class Meets: Tuesdays 6:00pm-9:00pm
Course delivery: In person

Overview

Theories of human nature abound: Are humans basically good or evil? Are we corrupted or constrained by society? Are we unique among the animals and, if so, why and how? In this course we will explore all these questions but with an emphasis throughout on another one: What do the theories of human nature themselves do in this world we share with so many others? This question will allow us to recollect the history of anthropological attempts to control these effects, arguing, as is our vocation, to make more room under the protective tent of humanity. At some point in the history of this process, another question arises: Is there any such thing as human nature?

Assignments and Grading

Although this class is scheduled as a lecture, attendance and participation are both required components of your grade (and vital to your success on the other assignments) to the tune of 20% of your total grade (not counting day 1 or 12 this breaks down to 1% for attendance and 1% for participation per class meeting). You should plan to come to class prepared with an insightful question or comment about the assigned readings for that day to raise during our open discussions in the second half of each class meeting. There will also be low-stakes writing assignments during class that can count as participation. Providing your writing assignment during class or sending it to the instructor via Brightspace before 8PM that same evening can make up your participation mark. The other four assignments all involve very different kinds of writing. Details will be provided two weeks in advance of their due dates. The first, a three-page reflective essay on inequality after Rousseau, is worth 20%; for the second, students will annotate one of our readings and is worth 15%. The third assignment will be to create a dating profile based on one of the “theories of human nature” we discuss in class, worth 10%. The last assignment will be an essay about our final text *Porkopolis*, worth 30%, in which students will analyze the ethnography and write how it relates to one of the themes in the class, with an additional 5% going towards an outline of your paper. Each assignment must at a minimum demonstrate awareness of the substantial issues raised in lecture and discussion. I am more than happy to read drafts of your final papers at least 7 days in advance of the due date and return them with comments.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this class, students should be able to:

- Apply concepts discussed in class to present day events and issues
- Identify different theories of human nature and analyze how they operate in the world
- Critique and/or assess attempts to control the effects of theories of human nature
- Assess and compare the arguments of scholars exploring these ideas

Required Texts

All course readings will be posted on ARES or are readily available online.

Preliminary Schedule of Readings

Tuesday, January 7th

Course introduction – no assigned reading

- **In class:** Sophia Strid, 2020 “Daphne pursued by Apollo”

January 14th

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau 1755 Discourse on the Origins of Inequality Intro and Part 1

January 21th

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau 1755 Discourse on the Origins of Inequality Part 2

January 28th

Reflective Essay Due Today

- **In class:** Charles Darwin Chapter I excerpts <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2300>.
- Ruse, M., & Wilson, E. O. (1986). Moral Philosophy as Applied Science. *Philosophy* (London), 61(236), 173–192.
- Marks, J. (2009). “The Nature of Humanness”. *Oxford Handbook of Archaeology*.

February 4th

- Marshall, S. (Host). (2023, June 12). Lesbian Seagulls [Audio podcast episode]. In *You’re Wrong About*. <https://www.buzzsprout.com/1112270/13026519-lesbian-seagulls-with-lulu-miller>

- Stanford, C. (1998). "The Social Behavior of Chimpanzees and Bonobos". *Current Anthropology* vol. 39 no. 4. p. 399-420.
- Despret, V. (2012). "H is for Hierarchies" In *What Would Animals Say if We Asked the Right Questions?* p. 53-58.

February 11th

- TallBear, K. (2007). Narratives of Race and Indigeneity in the Genographic Project. *Journal of Law, Medicine and Ethics*.
- Kofman, A. (2023). "the perils and promises of penis-enlargement surgery" *The New Yorker* <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/07/03/the-perils-and-promises-of-penis-enlargement-surgery>
- Sterling, K. (2011). Inventing Human Nature. In Reinhard Bernbeck and Randall H. McGuire (eds.). *Ideologies in Archaeology*.

February 18nd

WINTER BREAK

February 25th

Annotation assignment due today

- Singh. M. (2023). Is an All-Meat Diet What Nature Intended? *The New Yorker*
- Garret Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons"
<http://www.sciencemag.org/content/162/3859/1243.full>
- Cronon, W. (1996). The Trouble with Wilderness Or Getting back to the wrong nature. *Environmental History* 1(1) 7-28.

March 4th GOING TO CARLETON ART GALLERY

- Haraway, D. (2015). Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin. *Environmental Humanities*, 6(1), 159–165. <https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-3615934>.
- Moore, J. W. (2017). The Capitalocene, Part I: on the nature and origins of our ecological crisis. *The Journal of peasant studies*, 44(3), 594-630.
- Collard, R.-C., Dempsey, J., & Sundberg, J. (2015). A Manifesto for Abundant Futures. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 105(2), 322–330.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00045608.2014.973007>
- LeGuin, U. The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas. *New Dimensions* 3
- **IN CLASS** Jemisin, N. K. (2018). The ones who stay and fight. *How long'til black future month*, 1-13

March 11th

- Puzio, A. (2024). The entangled human being—a new materialist approach to anthropology of technology. *AI and Ethics*, 1-18.
- Lakoff, A., & Collier, S. J. (2004). Ethics and the anthropology of modern reason. *Anthropological Theory*, 4(4), 419-434.
- Fujimura, Joan H, and Christopher J. Holmes. 2019. [Staying the Course: On the Value of Social Studies of Science in Resistance to the “Post-Truth” Movement](https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12545). *Sociological Forum*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12545>

March 18th

Dating profile assignment due

Alex Blanchette 2020 Porkopolis

March 25th

Alex Blanchette 2020 Porkopolis

April 1st

Final Paper Outline due

Instructor Evaluations

In class discussion: Watch episode of TV Show *Alone*

Take Home Exam due on April 26

To Successfully Complete this Course Students Must:

Do all the Readings

Readings are always tied to course material and will be integrated discussion questions and assignments. Students who read all the class material **will** succeed in this course.

Have Access to Brightspace

The majority of class assignments and activities will be assigned over Brightspace. This is also where you will have access to course reserves, lecture slides and lectures, grading rubrics and grades. Please ensure you have logged into Brightspace and are familiar with the class site.

What I Expect of You:

Class Conduct

The Carleton University Human Rights Policies and Procedures affirm that all members of the University community share a responsibility to:

- promote equity and fairness,
- respect and value diversity,
- prevent discrimination and harassment, and
- preserve the freedom of its members to carry out responsibly their scholarly work without threat of interference.

This course welcomes the presence and contributions of all people regardless of their gender, sex, sexual orientation, age, culture, abilities, ethnic origin, marital status, nationality, race, religion, language, disciplinary background, or socioeconomic status.

Prejudice, harassment, and discrimination are detrimental to the values and purpose of any scholarly community. It is the responsibility of all participants to ensure that this course is a safe space for all participants. Please be mindful of and take responsibility for your speech and behaviour. This includes but is not limited to:

- Respecting other participants at all times
- Being generous and patient in comments and questions
- Listening to others and being careful not to dominate discussions
- Not using language that is racist, sexist, homophobic, classist, cissexist, ableist, etc.
- Be aware of your own privilege(s) and humbly accept respectful corrections (or humbly correct yourself)

This course is concerned with understanding how Eurocentric, colonial discourses and ideas impact our lives and our scholarship today. We will be discussing concepts of epistemology, ontology in the social construction of knowledge. The goal of the course is to unearth the assumptions, “common sense” notions and prejudices that form the underpinnings of neo-colonial, national and global structures that govern our world. By excavating their origins, we can begin to determine precisely how they operate in the world, who gains power in their use and how they might be “made strange”, and therefore no longer taken for granted.

Carleton University acknowledges the location of its campus on the traditional, unceded territories of the Algonquin nation. In doing so, Carleton acknowledges it has a responsibility to the Algonquin people and a responsibility to adhere to Algonquin cultural protocols.

As a non-Indigenous settler who facilitates learning about anthropology on these lands, I am committed to my own ongoing education about decolonizing the classroom and course readings. I am further committed to holding the university to its own promises of decolonization.

In my role as an instructor, I aim to act in the broader service of reconciliation, social justice and equity, to claim any mistakes and to learn from them.

If you have any comments or concerns regarding this statement, or if you experience marginalizing or silencing behaviour during the course, please talk to me. Any student who continues to violate the above policies is subject to disciplinary sanctions according to Carleton's policies.

Carleton University Equity Services states that “every member of the University community has a right to study, work and live in a safe environment free of discrimination or harassment”. [In May of 2001 Carleton University's Senate and Board of Governors approved the Carleton University Human Rights Policies and Procedures. The establishment of these policies and procedures was the culmination of the efforts of the Presidential Advisory Committee on Human Rights and a Human Rights Implementation Committee.]

Late Assignments and Accommodations

All assignments must be submitted by 8PM on their due date electronically via Brightspace or in class. Late assignments will be marked down 1 percentage point from your total grade per day (excluding weekends and holidays) Assignments will automatically receive 0 if submitted more than 7 days after the due date with no explanation and no prior discussion.

If a late submission of a paper or an assignment is unavoidable (e.g., personal or medical reasons), please inform the Instructor/TA *before* the due date if possible.

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the [Equity Services website](#).

Religious obligation: Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the [Equity Services website](#).

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. For more details, visit the [Paul Menton Centre website](#).

Survivors of Sexual Assault: As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit [Sexual Assault Support Services](#).

Accommodations for Student Activities: Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, access [the policy](#).

Petitions to Defer

Students unable to write a final examination because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control or whose performance on an examination has been impaired by such circumstances may apply within five working days to the Registrar's Office for permission to write a deferred examination. The request must be fully and specifically supported by a medical certificate or other relevant documentation. Only deferral petitions submitted to the Registrar's Office will be considered.

Grading System

Letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100 (12)	B = 73-76 (8)	C - = 60-62 (4)	F= 0-49 (0) – Failure: no academic credit
A = 85-89 (11)	B - = 70-72 (7)	D+ = 57-59 (3)	
A - = 80-84 (10)	C+ = 67-69 (6)	D = 53-56 (2)	
B+ = 77-79 (9)	C = 63-66 (5)	D - = 50-52 (1)	

The following additional final course grades may be assigned by instructors:

DEF Official deferral of final exam (see "Petitions to Defer")

GNA Grade not available. This is used when there is an allegation of an academic offence. The notation is replaced with the appropriate grade for the course as soon as it is available.

IP In Progress – a notation (IP) assigned to a course by a faculty member when: At the undergraduate level, an undergraduate thesis or course has not been completed by the end of the period of registration.

WDN Withdrawn. No academic credit, no impact on the CGPA. WDN is a permanent notation that appears on the official transcript for students who withdraw after the full fee adjustment date in each term (noted in the Academic Year section of the Calendar each term). Students may withdraw on or before the last day of classes.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Withdrawal without Academic Penalty

January 31, 2025: Last day to withdraw from full winter courses and the winter portion of fall/winter courses with a full fee adjustment.

March 15, 2025: Last day for academic withdrawal from full winter, late winter, and fall/winter courses.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is an important issue that must be considered within every course. The Undergraduate Course Calendar spells out several guidelines regarding student conduct. The University Senate defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources using proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in “substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.”

Plagiarism is a serious offence, which cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They range from a mark of zero for the plagiarized work to a final grade of "F" for the course, and even suspension from all studies or expulsion from the University.

Unless explicitly permitted by the instructor in a particular course either generally or for a specific assignment, any use of generative AI tools to produce assessed content is a violation of academic integrity standards.

Intellectual Property

Student or professor materials created for this course (including slides, assignments, activities, etc.) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s). Among other things, this means that you must receive written consent of the author(s) before offering any of these materials to a course sharing website or other service.

Students registered in the course may take notes and make copies of course materials for their own educational use only. Students are not permitted to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly for commercial or non-commercial purposes without express written consent from the copyright holder(s).

Student Resources

Department of Sociology/Anthropology	613-520 -2582	B750 Loeb
Registrar's Office	-(3500)	300 Tory
Academic Advising Centre	-(7850)	302 Tory
Paul Menton Centre	-(6608)	501 University Centre
Career Services	-(6611)	401 Tory
Health and Counselling Services	-(6674)	2600 CTTC

What to Expect from Me:

Email Policy

Please email me about any questions you may have about the course – however, please make sure that you have first checked the course syllabus, Brightspace and calendar for your answer. In the subject line, please include the course code. I will respond within 2 days (excluding weekends). Alternatively, come and ask questions in person during my office hours! Please do not email about when grades are coming out or if you can know your grade in advance.

Grades

Grades will be posted on Brightspace a maximum of **three weeks** after the assignment due date, with the exception of the Final Paper outline, which will be returned to students **within one week of the due date**. Please wait **24 hours** after receiving your grade before emailing me if you wish to have your grade reviewed and expect that I will ask if you have thoroughly read the feedback you have received.

My Conduct

You as a student have a right to study, work and live in a safe environment free of discrimination or harassment. I will abide by the equity policies outlined by Carleton University and as such pledge to treat all my students with the respect, dignity and compassion they are not only entitled to, but deserve.

My goal is to encourage students to open their minds to other ways of knowing the world and recognize that in doing so, the world becomes more livable, where radical ideas and meaningful connections can take place. I will provide a variety of methods for learning during class and I will provide ample opportunity for students to demonstrate their learning.

WINTER TERM 2025 – Important Dates and Deadlines

Date	Activity
December 30, 2024	Deadline for course outlines to be made available to students registered in full winter and early winter term courses.
January 3, 2025	University reopens.
January 6, 2025	Winter term begins. Full winter and early winter classes begin.
January 10, 2025	Last day for registration and course changes (including auditing) in early winter courses.
January 17, 2025	Last day for registration and course changes (including auditing) in full winter and late winter courses.
	Last day to withdraw from early winter courses with a full fee adjustment.
	Graduate students who have not electronically submitted their final thesis copy to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs will not be eligible to graduate in winter 2025 and must register for the winter 2025 term.
January 24-26, January 31-February 2, 2025	Full fall and late fall term deferred final examinations will be held.
January 31, 2025	Last day to withdraw from full winter courses and the winter portion of fall/winter courses with a full fee adjustment.
February 1, 2025	Last day for academic withdrawal from early winter courses.
	Last day to request Formal Examination Accommodations for Feb/Mar final examinations from the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities. Note that it may not be possible to fulfil accommodation requests received after the specified deadlines.

February 7, 2025	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in early winter term undergraduate courses, before the official Feb/Mar final examination period (see examination regulations in the Academic Regulations of the University section of the Undergraduate Calendar/General Regulations of the Graduate Calendar).
February 14, 2025	Last day of early winter classes.
	Last day for final take-home examinations to be assigned in early winter courses, with the exception of those conforming to the examination regulations in the Academic Regulations of the University section of the Undergraduate Calendar/General Regulations of the Graduate Calendar.
	Last day that can be specified by an instructor as a due date for term work for early winter courses.
	April examination schedule available online.
February 17, 2025	Statutory holiday. University closed.
	Deadline for course outlines to be made available to students registered in late winter courses.
February 17-21, 2025	Winter break, no classes.
February 22-23, March 1-2, 2025	Final examinations in early winter undergraduate courses will be held.
February 24, 2025	Late winter classes begin.
March 1, 2025	Last day for receipt of applications to Bachelor of Architecture, Bachelor of Industrial Design, Bachelor of Information Technology (Interactive Multimedia and Design), Bachelor of Music and Bachelor of Social Work degree programs for the fall/winter session.
	Last day for receipt of applications for admission to an undergraduate program for the summer term.
	Last day for receipt of applications for admission from candidates who wish to be guaranteed consideration for financial assistance (including Carleton fellowships, scholarships and teaching assistantships) administered by Carleton University. Candidates whose applications are received after the March 1 deadline may be considered for the award of a fellowship, scholarship or teaching assistantship (Graduate students only).

March 7, 2025	Last day to withdraw from late winter term courses with a full fee adjustment.
March 14-16, 2025	Early winter undergraduate deferred final examinations will be held.
March 15, 2025	Last day for academic withdrawal from full winter, late winter, and fall/winter courses.
	Last day to request Formal Examination Accommodations for April full winter, late winter, and fall/winter final examinations from the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities. Note that it may not be possible to fulfil accommodation requests received after the specified deadlines.
March 25, 2025	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in full winter term or fall/winter undergraduate courses, before the official April final examination period (see examination regulations in the Academic Regulations of the University section of the Undergraduate Calendar/General Regulations of the Graduate Calendar).
April 1, 2025	Last day for graduate students to submit their supervisor-approved thesis, in examinable form to the department.
	Last day for receipt of applications for admission to an undergraduate degree program for the fall/winter session from applicants whose documents originate from outside Canada or the United States, except for applications due March 1.
	Last day for receipt of applications from potential spring (June) graduates.
	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in late winter term undergraduate courses, before the official final examination period (see examination regulations in the Academic Regulations of the University section of the Undergraduate Calendar/General Regulations of the Graduate Calendar).
April 8, 2025	Winter term ends.
	Last day of full winter, late winter, and fall/winter classes.
	Last day for final take-home examinations to be assigned, with the exception of those conforming to the examination regulations in the Academic Regulations of the University section of the Undergraduate Calendar/General Regulations of the Graduate Calendar.
	Last day that can be specified by an instructor as a due date for term work for full winter and late winter courses.

April 9-10, 2025	No classes or examinations take place.
April 11-26, 2025	Final examinations in full winter, late winter, and fall/winter courses will be held. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.

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