

Carleton University
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Winter 2026
ANTH 2510 B
Theories of Human Nature

Prof. Emma Bider
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Class Meets: Mondays 2:30pm-5:30pm
Course delivery: In person
Brightspace: <https://brightspace.carleton.ca/d2l/home/363811>

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?

Citation Style

APA citation style (7th edition) is to be used in the assignments and papers of this course. For more information, please see: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/index.html

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 to talk through the assumptions each reading is making, the narratives they are offering about human nature and the real-world consequences of these assumptions and narratives 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. In addition to attendance and participation, students will also receive 10% of their grade for completing a one-page essay based on the Indigenous bundle “**Indigenous Sciences | Shifting the Paradigm in Western Science**” in Week 5. 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-paragraph writing assignment about Rousseau’s ideas on inequality is worth 10%; for the second, students will annotate one of our readings and is worth 10%. The third assignment will be to create a dating profile based on one of the “theories of human nature” we discuss in class, worth 15%. The last assignment will be an essay about our final text *Robots Won’t Save Japan* worth 30%, in which students will analyze the ethnography and write an essay showing how one assumption about human nature presented in class is implicated in the use of robots in elder care in Japan. An additional 5% will go towards an outline of your paper. Each assignment must at a minimum demonstrate awareness of the substantial issues raised in lecture and discussion.

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 through writing

Required Texts

All course readings will be posted on ARES or are readily available online. In addition to the e-book version, free on ARES, hard copies of *Robots Won’t Save Japan* are available at the campus bookstore, which cost \$54.95.

Preliminary Schedule of Readings

Week 1

Monday, January 5th

Course introduction – no assigned reading

- **In class:** AI in the classroom

Week 2

January 12th

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau 1755 Discourse on the Origins of Inequality Intro and Part 1 and Part 2

Week 3

January 19th

- Kaplan, D. (2000). The darker side of the "original affluent society". *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 56(3), 301-324.
- Marks, J. (2009). "The Nature of Humanness". *Oxford Handbook of Archaeology*.

Week 4

January 26th

Three paragraph essay Due Today

- **In class:** Charles Darwin Chapter I excerpts <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2300>.
- 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>
- Fuentes, A. (2021). Searching for the "roots" of masculinity in primates and the human evolutionary past. *Current Anthropology*, 62(S23), S13-S25.
- Despret, V. (2012). "H is for Hierarchies" In *What Would Animals Say if We Asked the Right Questions?* p. 53-58.

Week 5

February 2nd

One-page essay in class assignment today

- Indigenous Sciences Bundle: Shifting the paradigms of Western Science
- Tallbear, K. (2013). *Native American DNA*. p. 1-7, 31-39 and 45-48.

Week 6

February 9th

- 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>
- Radke, H. (2022). "Chapter 1 Origins". *Butts, a backstory*.
- Southwell-Wright, W. (2013). Past perspectives: What can archaeology offer disability studies?. In *Emerging perspectives on disability studies* (pp. 67-95). New York: Palgrave Macmillan US.

February 16th

WINTER BREAK

Week 7

February 23rd

Annotation assignment due today

- 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.
- Rudiak-Gould, P. (2016). Climate Change Beyond the “Environmental”: The Marshallese Case. In *Anthropology and Climate Change* (pp. 261-270). Routledge.

Week 8

March 2nd

- Crair, B. (January 2, 2023). “The fossil flowers that rewrote the history of life.” *New Yorker*.
- Gergan, M., Smith, S., & Vasudevan, P. (2020). Earth beyond repair: Race and apocalypse in collective imagination. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 38(1), 91-110.
- Isenhour, C. (2016). Unearthing human progress? Ecomodernism and contrasting definitions of technological progress in the Anthropocene. *Economic Anthropology*, 3(2), 315-328.

Week 9

March 9th

IN CLASS: Jemisin, N. K. (2018). The ones who stay and fight. *How long 'til black future month*, 1-13

- Kubrusly, A., Marôpo, L., & Batista, S. (2024). Big data literacy for youth: an intervention agenda. *Revista de Comunicação e Linguagens*, (60-61), 114-137.
- 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>
- LeGuin, U. The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas. *New Dimensions* 3

Week 10

March 16th

Dating profile assignment due

- Wright, J. (2023). *Robots Won't Save Japan: An ethnography of eldercare automation*. Cornell University Press.

Week 11

March 23rd

- Wright, J. (2023). *Robots Won't Save Japan: An ethnography of eldercare automation*. Cornell University Press.

Week 12

March 30th

Final Paper Outline due

Instructor Evaluations

Final paper reviews with professor.

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

Week 13

April 6

Take home essay workshop.

Take Home Exam due on April 23rd

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 12PM 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.

AI use in this course:

Students may use AI tools for basic word processing functions, including grammar and spell checking (e.g. Grammarly, Microsoft Word Editor, Copilot)

Documenting AI use: It is not necessary to document the use of AI for the permitted purposes listed above. If you have questions about a specific use of AI that isn't listed above, please consult your instructor.

Why have I adopted this policy? This policy ensures that student voices and ideas are prioritized and authentically represented, maintaining the integrity of the work produced by students while allowing basic support to enhance clarity, correctness, layout and flow of ideas. The goal of adopting a limited use of AI is to help students develop foundational skills in writing and critical thinking by practicing substantive content creation without the support of AI.

Additional Information

In accordance with the Carleton University Undergraduate Calendar Regulations, the letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100	B+ = 77-79	C+ = 67-69	D+ = 57-59
A = 85-89	B = 73-76	C = 63-66	D = 53-56
A - = 80-84	B - = 70-72	C - = 60-62	D - = 50-52
F= Below 50	WDN = Withdrawn from the course	DEF = Deferred	

Academic Regulations, Accommodations, Plagiarism, Etc.

University rules regarding registration, withdrawal, appealing marks, and most anything else you might need to know can be found on the university's website, here:

<https://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulationsoftheuniversity/>

Carleton is committed to providing academic accessibility for all individuals. You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. The accommodation request processes, including information about the Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical and Other Extenuating Circumstances, are outlined on the Academic Accommodations website (<https://students.carleton.ca/course-outline/>). For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at **613-520-6608** or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your **Letter of Accommodation** at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*).

*The deadline for contacting the Paul Menton Centre regarding accommodation for February/March examinations is **February 1, 2026** and **March 15, 2026** for April examinations.

For Religious Obligations:

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: www.carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf

For Pregnancy:

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: www.carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf

For Survivors of Sexual Violence

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: www.carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support

Accommodation 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. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the passing off of someone else's work as your own and is a serious academic offence. For the details of what constitutes plagiarism, the potential penalties and the procedures refer to the section on Instructional Offences in the Undergraduate Calendar. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with and follow the Carleton University Student Academic Integrity Policy (See <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>). The Policy is strictly enforced and is binding on all students. Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated. Students who infringe the Policy may be subject to one of several penalties.

Generative Artificial Intelligence Tools (e.g. ChatGPT)

Unless explicitly permitted, either generally or for a specific assignment, any use of generative AI tools to produce assessed content is considered a violation of academic integrity standards. As our understanding of the uses of AI and its relationship to student work and academic integrity continue to evolve, students are required to discuss their use of AI in any circumstance not described here with the course instructor to ensure it supports the learning goals for the course.

Note: Students can also access resources related to citing Generative AI on the [MacOdrum Library website](#).

What are the Penalties for Plagiarism?

A student found to have plagiarized an assignment may be subject to one of several penalties including but not limited to: a grade of zero, a failure or a reduced grade for the piece of academic work; reduction of final grade in the course; completion of a remediation process; resubmission of academic work; withdrawal from course(s); suspension from a program of study; a letter of reprimand.

What are the Procedures?

All allegations of plagiarism are reported to the faculty of Dean of FASS and Management. Documentation is prepared by instructors and departmental chairs. The Dean writes to the student and the University Ombudsperson about the alleged plagiarism. The Dean reviews the allegation. If it is not resolved at this level then it is referred to a tribunal appointed by the Senate.

Statement on Student Mental Health:

“As a student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. For more information, please consult <https://wellness.carleton.ca/>”

Emergency Resources ([on and off campus](#))

- Crisis/Urgent Counselling Support: 613-520-6674 (Mon-Fri, 8:30-4:30)
- Suicide Crisis Helpline: call or text 9-8-8, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- For immediate danger or urgent medical support: call 9-1-1

Carleton Resources

- Mental Health and Wellbeing: <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>
- Health & Counselling Services: <https://carleton.ca/health/>
- Paul Menton Centre: <https://carleton.ca/pmc/>
- Academic Advising Centre (AAC): <https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/>
- Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): <https://carleton.ca/csas/>
- Equity & Inclusivity Communities: <https://carleton.ca/equity/>

Off Campus Resources

- Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: call 613-238-3311, text 343-306-5550, or connect online at <https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/>
- Mental Health Crisis Service: call 613-722-6914 or toll-free 1-866-996-0991, or connect online at <http://www.crisisline.ca/>
- Good2Talk: call 1-866-925-5454 or connect online at <https://good2talk.ca/>
- The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: for online or on-site service
<https://walkincounselling.com>

Important Information:

- Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) 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).
- Students must always retain a hard copy of all work that is submitted.
- 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.
- Carleton University is committed to protecting the privacy of those who study or work here (currently and formerly). To that end, Carleton's Privacy Office seeks to encourage the implementation of the privacy provisions of Ontario's *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA) within the university.
- In accordance with FIPPA, please ensure all communication with staff/faculty is via your Carleton email account. To get your Carleton Email you will need to activate your [MyCarletonOne account](#) through Carleton Central. Once you have activated your MyCarletonOne account, log into the [MyCarleton Portal](#).
- Please note that you will be able to link your MyCarletonOne account to other non-MyCarletonOne accounts and receive emails from us. However, for us to respond to your emails, we need to see your full name, CU ID, and the email must be written from your valid MyCarletonOne address. Therefore, it would be easier to respond to your inquiries if you would send all email from your connect account. If you do not have or have yet to activate this account, you may wish to do so by visiting <https://students.carleton.ca/>.

WINTER TERM 2026 – Important Dates and Deadlines

Date	Activity
WINTER TERM 2026	
December 29, 2025	Deadline for course outlines to be made available to students registered in full winter and early winter term courses.
January 5, 2026	University reopens.

Date	Activity
	Winter term begins. Full winter and early winter classes begin.
January 9, 2026	Last day for registration and course changes (including auditing) in early winter courses.
January 16, 2026	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 Graduate Studies will not be eligible to graduate in winter 2026 and must register for the winter 2026 term.
January 23-25, January 30- February 1, 2026	Full fall and late fall term deferred final examinations will be held.
January 31, 2026	Last day to withdraw from full winter courses and the winter portion of fall/winter courses with a full fee adjustment.
February 1, 2026	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 6, 2026	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in early winter undergraduate courses, before the

Date	Activity
	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 13, 2026	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 16, 2026	Statutory holiday. University closed.
	Deadline for course outlines to be made available to students registered in late winter courses.
February 16-20, 2026	Winter break, no classes.
February 21-22, February 28-March 1, 2026	Final examinations in early winter undergraduate courses will be held.
February 23, 2026	Late winter classes begin.

Date	Activity
February 27, 2026	Last day for registration and course changes (including auditing) in late winter courses.
March 1, 2026	Last day for receipt of applications for admission to an undergraduate degree program for the fall/winter session from applicants whose documents originate outside Canada or the United States.
	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, Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Bachelor of Social Work degree programs for the fall/winter session.
	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 6, 2026	Last day to withdraw from late winter term courses with a full fee adjustment.
March 13-15, 2026	Early winter undergraduate deferred final examinations will be held.
March 15, 2026	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

Date	Activity
	Disabilities. Note that it may not be possible to fulfil accommodation requests received after the specified deadlines.
March 25, 2026	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, 2026	Last day for graduate students to submit their supervisor-approved thesis, in examinable form to the department.
	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 3, 2026	Statutory holiday. University closed.
April 8, 2026	Winter term ends.
	Classes follow a Friday schedule.
	Last day of full winter, late winter, and fall/winter classes.

Date	Activity
	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, late winter, and fall/winter courses.
April 9-10, 2026	No classes or examinations take place.
April 11-23, 2026	Final examinations in full winter, late winter, and fall/winter courses will be held. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
April 23, 2026	All final take-home examinations are due on this day, 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.
May 1, 2026	Last day for receipt of applications for undergraduate internal degree transfers to allow for registration for the summer session.
May 15-27, 2026	Full winter, late winter term, and fall/winter deferred final examinations will be held.
June 1, 2026	Last day for receipt of applications for admission to an undergraduate program for the fall/winter session except for applications due March 1.
June 15, 2026	Last day for receipt of applications for undergraduate degree program transfers for the fall term.

