

DRAFT SYLLABUS (subject to change)
American University of Beirut
CVSP 207H:
What is Human Nature?
Ancient, mediaeval & Renaissance
Spring 2009-2010 -- Dr Gallagher

Dr. Robert Gallagher
Section 1 (21141), TR 9:30 - 10:45 am Nicely 108
Section 2 (22772), TR 11:00am - 12:45 pm Nicely 409

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1. Brief Course Description (cf. 6, below)

The refutation of contemporary economic theory by the recent financial collapse has called into question the “cynical theory of human nature that lies behind economic theory...If we are not, in fact, calculating individuals trying to accumulate the maximum possible quantities of power, pleasure and material wealth, then what, precisely, are we?”¹ *CVSP 207H: Human Nature* reexamines what is the source of individual human identity, what is human nature, by reading, discussing and writing about ancient, mediaeval & Renaissance works that contributed to the development of the modern notion of the individual. The course will outline disagreements and debates among various authors, texts and works of art, including: Leonardo da Vinci, Botticelli, Aristotle, Plato, Augustine, The Egyptian Book of the Dead, Homer, Dante, Sophocles, Thomas Aquinas, Ibn Sina, al-Ghazali, and others. Key issues are: what is human nature? What makes a human being an ‘individual’?

2. Texts

You **must** purchase the following **primary text** immediately after the first class.

- 1) **Course Packet #1: CVSP 207H: Human Nature** (available at Ghali Copy Center, Rue Jean d’Arc):

Other **primary texts**: You must purchase the following editions immediately if you plan to consider these texts for your term papers. (As soon as possible otherwise: the bookstore will send back unpurchased copies soon.)

- 2) **Plato, *Phaedo*** (2nd ed.) Translated By G. M. A. Grube, 1980 72 Pp.
- 3) **Augustine, *On the Free Choice of the Will*** (Hackett)
- 4) **Sophocles, *Theban Plays***, translated by Woodruff & Meineck, Hackett Publishing Co., 2003
- 5) **Thomas Aquinas, *Treatise on Human Nature***, translated by Robert Pasnau (Hackett)
- 6) **Dante, *Divine Comedy***, trans., M Musa (Penguin)

In addition, you will purchase (when announced)

- 5) **Course Packet #2** (at Ghali Copy Center)

The instructor may also assign secondary readings.

3. Assessment Criteria.

a. ATTENDANCE I enforce University Attendance Policy. The Undergraduate Catalogue (p. 48) states: “Students who, during a semester, miss more than one-fifth of the sessions of any course in the first ten weeks of the semester ...are dropped from the course if the faculty member has stated in the syllabus that attendance will be taken.” “One-fifth of the sessions...in the first ten weeks” is **four** meetings in our course. In other words, the administration judges missing that many sessions is tantamount to failure. Since this is a discussion class, attendance is particularly important and will be taken. **Attendance** means you are present and bring your readings in the section in which you are registered. If you appear for class without the text(s) for that day’s class, expect to receive an “R” for the day, which counts as half a full absence. Two late arrivals for class count as one absence. If your total of absences (including “R”s) reaches **three** for

¹ D. Graeber, *An anthropological theory of value*, New York, 2001, p. 10, xii.

any reason expect not to benefit fully from any grade adjustment carried out at the end of the semester (see “4. Grading,” below).

b. PARTICIPATION in class is an essential part of the final grade. **Class participation** means that you have read the reading materials, formulated answers to all discussion questions, come prepared to discuss them, and that you speak up when you have something relevant to say. Participating in class does not mean speaking in perfect English

Class Participation

20%

and expressing brilliant ideas every single time you open your mouth. The instructor will post **discussion questions on Moodle** on the day before most classes. You are expected to formulate full answers to each question. You should write out answers to questions that I designate. Class discussion will focus on these questions. I will keep track of who participates in class discussions, of who offers answers to the discussion questions or other questions and issues that we raise in class. It will boost your grade if you make one oral presentation in the semester on a course reading of interest to you. Do not expect to be asked or assigned to give a presentation. Students may earn partial credit towards class participation by posting comments on the discussion questions on the Moodle discussion forum for an author/work. Comments must be posted before a question is discussed in class. No credit for repetition of other’s comments. Also included under Participation will be some very short, unscheduled and unannounced reading quizzes, as often as the instructor deems necessary. *The quizzes only help your grade; they will not lower it.* They cannot be made up. Writing out answers to discussion questions is practice for writing essays on the exams and response papers; like oral presentations, this activity is optional. The instructor *may* record that you have written answers to discussion questions on days that he chooses to do so. These written homeworks, all primary texts assigned from the website, assigned secondary readings, and all handouts (e.g., this syllabus) should be organized in an orderly fashion in a loose-leaf binder. You must respect each and every other student, regardless of religion, national origin, race, gender or any other distinguishing characteristic. Students who have special difficulties in attending class or arriving on time must visit the instructor in office hours to explain their situation. If I am *of the opinion* that you **disrupt** class, you will receive a negative participation grade, i.e., less than 0%, so that you would lose *more* than your participation grade.

c. All EXAMS will be **comprehensive**, i.e., will consider all material covered prior to the exam, with emphasis on recent material. The **final exam** lasting 2-3 hours will occur on the date scheduled by AUB administration. All

Midterm(s)

20%

Two Papers (see separate sheet to be distributed)

20%

Final Exam

40%

exams may consist of identifications, short answers and one or more essays on one or more passages. **All exams will be closed book exercises.** Midterm(s) will occur in room(s) to be announced. You will write **two** required **papers** during the course of the semester. A flysheet on the assignment will be distributed after drop and add. The papers must be submitted by you to turnitin.com. **An important note on exam essay writing:** This course demands that you write focused essays in response to direct and pointed questions. You must learn to briefly answer a question in the first sentence or two of your essay and then defend and elaborate that answer in the remainder of the essay. Making a good argument is the key to a good essay. Essays with verbose introductions that talk about an author without answering the question, receive low marks compared to essays that begin to answer a question from the very first words. **Reading** assigned texts is **critical to success in this course.** I know from the way and what you write on exams whether, how much and how well you have read the readings.

4. Grading. At the end of the term I will adjust grades in keeping with CVSP policy. During the term, I grade objectively, by student number, how well you do on a gradable activity. So, what is important in this class is not what your average *is*, but where it *ranks* in the class, i.e., what it is relative to the class average. All written work done in the course will be assessed in terms of the critical thinking skills outlined below (knowledge, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation). In grading your written work, a assessment scale similar to the one below will be applied:

- 10 *Excellent and valid argument, analytical, evaluative, accurate, well-organized, clear, focused, thoughtfully engaged with the material, original ideas, language level expresses ideas perfectly*
- 9 *Very good and largely valid argument, less analytical, evaluative, accurate, organized, or thoughtful than a 10, engaged with the material, language level expresses ideas well*
- 8 *Good and approximately valid argument, less analytical, evaluative, accurate, organized, or thoughtful than a 9 adequately clear, demonstrates independent thinking but less engaged with the material than 9, superficially comprehensive or organized, maybe repetitive, language level good*
- 7 *Not a valid argument but not useless either, not particularly analytical, evaluative, accurate, organized, or thoughtful, partial description of key ideas, somewhat engaged with material, maybe problems with organization, maybe inaccurate or vague in parts, retells the story or restates the argument discussed in class or in the text, does not directly answer the question, maybe repetitive, ideas may be isolated in separate paragraphs and not connected), language level sufficient, but may impede clear expression of ideas*
- 6 *Hard to identify an argument, not analytical, evaluative, accurate, organized, or thoughtful, partial description of key ideas, nearly off the mark, problems with organization, inaccurate or vague in parts, mostly repeats what was said in class, little independent observation, does not answer the question at all, language level may impede clear expression of ideas*
- 5 *Off the mark, poor portrayal of ideas, very few ideas at all, inaccurate and generally not thoughtful, insufficient length or depth of assignment, language level impedes clear expression of ideas*
- 0-to-4 *a waste of your time and mine, or any portion of the written work plagiarized*

5. Schedules (subject to modification)

Note: Instructor's memail messages supercede anything on this syllabus.

a. Exam and Paper Schedule

- a. *The schedule for the multi-stage term paper will appear on that assignment sheet.*
 - b. *First Midterm: in the week before or after we cover Augustine*
 - c. *Final Exam: Time and place will be announced in last week of class.*
- b. Draft Reading schedule (subject to change) (*Note: The instructor may introduce visual artistic material at any place in the syllabus.*)

<i>Week(s)</i>	<u>Tentative schedule of readings</u> (Instructor may add additional readings.)
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1	<i>Introduction to course</i> Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book ii, 369b6-372d3 Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> , Book ii, chapter 2 John Heil's student-friendly 'Introduction' to <i>Philosophy of Mind</i>
2-3	<i>Selections from authors/works related to possible paper topics (Thomas, Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, Aristotle, Plato, Augustine, Sophocles)</i>
2-4	<i>Aristotle,</i> Selections from <i>De Anima</i> and other works
5	Plato, <i>Phaedo</i> ; Plato, <i>Republic</i> , selections <i>Egyptian Book of the Dead</i> (excerpt) Homer, <i>Odyssey</i> , Books x (excerpt) and xi
6-7	Augustine, <i>On the Free Choice of the Will</i> Paul, <i>1st Letter to the Corinthians</i> (excerpt)
8	Ibn Sina, excerpts from <i>Metaphysics</i> , <i>On the soul</i>
9	Al-Ghazali, selections Sophocles, <i>Oedipus the King</i> & <i>Oedipus at Colonus</i>
10-11	Thomas Aquinas, selections from <i>Treatise on Human Nature</i> and other works
12	Leonardo da Vinci and Renaissance philosophy of man
13	Dante, <i>Purgatory</i> , selected Cantos on Love (attendance at CVSP 202 Lectures on Dante required, dates TBA)

6. **Course Description** (cont.)

Class activities will include discussion of issues and problems found in the works, close readings, and individual writing exercises. Reading and careful preparation by formulating answers to discussion questions is essential to success in this course.

Course Learning Outcomes are as follows: Upon successful completion of this course, the student will have acquired:

a. **Knowledge And Comprehension**

* varying concepts of human identity in society as posed from Plato and Aristotle through Leonardo;
* contrasting ideas of human nature from the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* (EBD) through Leonardo da Vinci, including:

- materialistic concepts of the *psuche* (life-principle or soul) (Homer);
- concepts of the *psuche* as a life-process (Aristotle);
- concepts of the *psuche* as a set of capacities (Aristotle, Ibn Sina, Al-Ghazali);
- concepts of the *psuche* as a composite of parts (EBD, Plato);
- concepts of human individuation (Sophocles, Aristotle, Plato, Thomas, Ibn Sina);
- characteristics distinguishing humans from other forms of life (Aristotle, Thomas);
- the nature of intellect (Sophocles, Aristotle, Ibn Sina, Al-Ghazali, Thomas)
- the nature of desire (Aristotle, Dante)
- the nature of imagination (Aristotle, Ibn Sina, Thomas)
- free will vs. determinism (Augustine, Ibn Sina)
- idealistic vs. realistic portrayal of humans in art (Botticelli, Leonardo)

* Analyze past or present trends in the development of the philosophy of human nature, including:

- impact of Greek civilization on Islamic civilization (Aristotle, Plato, Al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd),
- impact of Greek civilization upon Mediaeval Christian civilization (Aristotle, Plato, Thomas, Dante, Botticelli, Leonardo),
- impact of Islamic civilization and Mediaeval Christian civilization upon the modern world (Al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina, Ibn Rushd, Thomas, Dante, Botticelli, Leonardo).

b. **CRITICAL SKILLS:** such as the ability:

- to **listen to and recall** salient features of an academic lecture
- to **read** a text in different ways and **appreciate** it in its own historical and cultural context – an exercise in empathy;
- to **read closely and think critically** about the texts under study;
- to **analyze** complex original texts in English;
- to **construct and discern** valid and invalid arguments;
- to **apply** ideas and methodologies to our contemporary world;
- to **evaluate and argue** by means of the ideas and methodologies presented in the course;
- to **discuss and debate** divergent views with your fellow students and the instructor, in an atmosphere of **mutual respect and the freedom** to pursue and express one's own point of view;
- to **ground** one's views in the texts by developing scholarly methodology and responsibility;
- to **locate** the readings in their philosophic, theological, literary, political, or historic context; and
- to write focused answers to specific essay questions in English with greater skill.

7. Course Policies

- You will switch your mobile phone to OFF at the beginning of the class. If students fail to do this I will require that phones be left outside the classroom. Any phone that sounds off during class is subject to seizure. **Students who answer calls during class are marked absent.**
- If you need to leave the class early, inform the instructor, sit by the door and leave quietly.
- Lateness is disruptive to the classroom environment and will be recorded.
- If you know that you have to miss class, please inform the instructor ahead of time, via email; doing so, however, does not excuse the absence. In general, staying in communication is key.
- Students should bring their text(s), paper, a pen or pencil to class. In preparation for class, students should have read the entirety of the assigned passages and answered all discussion questions.
- Tests and exams begin promptly on time. **Talking during exams will be judged as cheating.**
- No mobile phones will be allowed during exams. Leave them home or in front of the room OFF.
- During an exam, questions are welcome during the first ten (10) minutes only.
- Excused absences for an exam must come from AUH, and are subject to verification.
- No reading quizzes are made up.
- Check the *AUB Student Handbook*, p. 33 for statements on academic integrity and honesty
- For questions concerning plagiarism: <http://pnp.aub.edu.lb/general/conductcode/158010081.html>
- If you are caught cheating on quizzes or assignments, you will receive a ZERO for that assignment and your case will be reported to the Dean's Committee on Academic Affairs (since my policy is very clear, and since my colleague, Dr. Wrisley, has been acting chair of that committee, the result will most likely be at least a Dean's Warning in your record).

8. More notes on language and essay writing.

Language and Written English: This is a not an English course, but it is a writing course. Your ability to organize the material, to focus your argument, and to demonstrate clarity of thought and expression are crucial and will obviously be reflected in your grade. For in-class exams, if you feel uncomfortable about your written English, I would suggest writing in simple, clear, short sentences. Taking regular notes about your reading and while in class and then rewriting and reworking them in answering discussion questions are good practice for the skill of written English. Mistakes in spelling and language may be corrected for your information, but you will not automatically lose points for such mistakes.

Language and Spoken English: In class I would suggest that all students attempt to speak at least once each class period, even if your preparation of the material is not great. The way that you learn to formulate ideas in spoken English is by trying them out in a class full of other students as your audience. When you hear a fellow student use a good expression, write it down.

9. Cheating and Plagiarism²

Why are cheating and plagiarism bad?

First, if you copy someone else's words or from someone else's paper, you aren't demonstrating your writing and thinking skills, which is the point of the assignment or test.

Second, they are both forms of stealing. It's stealing ideas or words. Words and ideas are the basic currency in any academic or intellectual pursuit. So stealing ideas or words is obviously wrong in academics, just like stealing money is wrong in financial pursuits.

Third, part of the reason to cite your sources is to let readers look up the source, either to see if you're capturing that writer's ideas accurately or to see what else the writer says on the topic.

What counts as plagiarism?

Any time you use another person's ideas without giving him credit, you are guilty of plagiarism. Also, any time you copy a whole paper, a paragraph, even a sentence or phrase, from some other source, you must cite that source or you're guilty of plagiarism. This applied to our in-class tests in CVSP 201 if you took an idea about the authors which did not come from the lectures or in-class discussions. If you read an essay on the Internet in preparation for the exam and it gave you a specific idea which was not yours to begin with, then you should cite it. You can write, "In an essay by Joe Smith on Lucretius found at philosophy.com, I read..."

What counts as cheating?

The AUB Policies and Procedures state: "While taking a test or examination, students shall rely on their own mastery of the subject and not attempt to receive help in any way not explicitly approved by the instructor; for example, students shall not try to use notes, study aids, or another's work. Such cheating includes trying to give or obtain information about a test, trying to take someone else's exam, or trying to have someone else take one's own exam." <http://pnp.aub.edu.lb/general/conductcode/158010081.html>

Your instructor will consider any of the following as cheating and students found to be doing the following will receive an automatic zero, *no questions asked*.

- Looking at another student's paper during the test, even if you do not take anything from it. *If you have a tendency to look around during tests, sit away from other students.*
- Using anything written before the test during the test. This would include cheat sheets, summary sheets, plagiarized essays, OR essays written for you by another which you memorize and write down when you come to the test.
- Using your mobile phone during a test for any reason.
- Talking to anyone--in any language and at any volume--during the tests, whether about the test or not. *If you have a question, raise your hand, wait for me to come to you, and ask me ONLY.*
- Showing your paper to other students during the tests. *If you do not want to run the risk, sit away from people you suspect of looking at your paper.*
- Attempting to change your answers once time is up for an exam. Attempting to doctor the exams after the exam period is over.
- Talking to other students between sections about the contents of an exam.

What will happen if someone cheats or plagiarizes in this class?

Nothing will happen to a cheater, as long as I don't catch him/her. If I catch him/her, what will usually happen is that s/he'll get a zero or will be reported to the student affairs committee. If the cheating or plagiarism is very minor, the punishment may be less than that, but don't count on anything less than a zero on the assignment. Assess the risk of cheating, and accept the responsibilities for doing it.

² Adapted from a sheet made by Prof. Richard Dean of the Philosophy Department at AUB.