

HNRS 320

Science & Human Values

Professor Daniel Veidlinger, ARTS 393, office hours: W 2-5, TR 3:30-5 and by appointment, email: dveidlinger@csuchico.edu

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Western societies are characterized, at least in part, by their commitment to scientific discovery and technological innovation. Consequently, we face a need to understand the nature of relationships between science and society, empirical facts and human values, and nature and culture. We will explore various ways of conceptualizing these relationships by considering evolutionary theory and its significance for how we think about ourselves and what we ought to do.

GE Pathways

HNRS 320 is an upper-division writing intensive General Education course that satisfies Areas B & C for the Diversity Studies, Ethics, Justice & Policy, Gender & Sexuality Studies, Great Books & Ideas, Health & Wellness, and Science, Technology, & Values Pathways.

The class format combines discussion, some brief lectures, video, and student presentations.

Course Materials:

Readings, hyperlinks, and videos for the course will be available on Blackboard. All assignments will be turned in to Bb.

You should have a hard copy of these two books (available in the Wildcat Bookstore)

Why Buddhism is True, Robert Wright
The Moral Landscape, Sam Harris

There are a limited number of these books available in the Wildcat Bookstore. They are also readily available online.

GE Learning Objectives

Student Learning Outcomes

The Student Learning Outcomes for our General Education program flow from the recognition that certain essential intellectual and practical skills rest at the foundation of a high-quality General Education program. These include effective written and oral communication, critical thinking, and mathematical reasoning skills.

- 1. Oral Communication:** Demonstrates effective listening and speaking skills necessary to organize information and deliver it effectively to the intended audience. Students utilize oral communication for class discussions and their small group presentation.
- 2. Written Communication:** Demonstrates the ability to question, investigate and draw well-reasoned conclusions and to formulate ideas through effective written communication appropriate to the intended audience. Students participate in daily writing assignments as well as a philosophical argumentative essay.
- 3. Critical Thinking:** Identifies issues and problems raised in written texts, visual media and

other forms of discourse, and assesses the relevance, adequacy and credibility of arguments and evidence used in reaching conclusions. Students are confronted with different and often opposing views, they have to work through these controversies to reach their own conclusions.

4. Diversity: Demonstrates an understanding of and facility with different intellectual viewpoints as well as the unique perspectives of others based on varied experiences, identities and social attributes. Students consider the relationship of humans to other animals in the natural world. The biological differences between men and women are explored in several contexts.

Grading:

Course grades will be assigned based on the standard scale: (scores will not be rounded up)

93--100 = A

90--92 = A-

87--89 = B+

83--86 = B

80--82 = B-

77--79 = C+

73--76 = C

70--72 = C-

67--69 = D+

60--66 = D

< 60 = F

Final grades for the course will be calculated as follows:

5% Attendance

5% Science News Watch

20% Reading Questions

15% Midsemester Examination

15% Final Examination

25% Essay (approximately 2400 words)

15% Class presentation

Specific information regarding grades:

Attendance (5%)

Attendance will count as 5% of your course grade. Much of the value of this class is derived from our class discussions. If you are not in attendance, you won't benefit from the discussions. There will be daily sign in sheets that will serve as the official record for attendance. It is your responsibility to sign in, but only for yourself.

Science New Watch (5%)

Students will monitor various media sources, NGOs, science journals and blogs throughout the semester. Before Tuesday class students will submit via Blackboard a report of a relevant issue.

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Please bring a printed copy of your Science News Watch to class. During the first ten or fifteen minutes of the class, a couple of students will share their findings with the class.

Reading Questions (20%)

Points will be earned for quality of Reading Question responses (submitted via Blackboard). Responses to the Reading Questions will **ONLY** be accepted on time and through Blackboard (email or paper copy responses will not be accepted).

Midsemester Examination (15%)

This exam will be take-home. Essay prompts will be posted a week before the exam.

Essay (25%)

There will be one essay, approximately 2400 words. Due date is on the class schedule. Essays will be submitted electronically through Blackboard Learn. Each late paper will be penalized with 5% of the maximum value deducted for every (work)day past the deadline. Students will submit an abstract including a thesis statement (in **bold**) as a proposal for their essay. The essay proposal must be approved or you risk missing the main point of the assignment and thereby earning no credit for the essay. Note: there are resources on writing this type of essay under the menu item *Essay*.

Class presentation (15%)

In the last three weeks of the semester, there will be group presentations. We will discuss and choose the topics for the presentations. Students will be able to rank their favorite topics. Prior to the presentation, each group **MUST** meet with the instructors to discuss their presentation. A rubric used in the scoring of the presentations will be posted on Bb.

Final Examination (15%)

The final examination will be held during the final examination period. The essay should be written in a large Green book in dark ink. Essay prompts will be posted a week before the exam.

There are no extra credit assignments.

Only in extreme circumstances and with prior notification and permission as well as approved documentation will examinations be rescheduled, extensions on essay assignments be granted, or class participation requirements be modified.

Cell phones and other electronic devices, including laptop computers, should be turned off and stored in a backpack during class.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated in any assignment, exam, or presentation. Students who plagiarize will be assigned an F for the assignment or in some cases for the class and may be reported to Student Judicial Affairs.

Note that this plagiarism policy is not subject to alteration or negotiation. See the document, "What is Plagiarism and Why Is It Important?" in Blackboard Learn, for more information on the definition and nature of plagiarism.

Students with disabilities

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability or chronic illness, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Please also contact Accessibility Resource Center (ARC) as they are the designated department responsible for approving and coordinating reasonable accommodations and services for students with disabilities. ARC will help you understand your rights and responsibilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act and provide you further assistance with requesting and arranging accommodations. ARC is in SSC 170 and can be reached at 898---5959.

Confidentiality and Mandatory Reporting

As instructors, one of our responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. As Professors, we also have a mandatory reporting responsibility. It is our goal that you feel able to share information related to your life experiences in classroom discussions, in your written work, and in our one-on-one meetings. We will seek to keep information you share private to the greatest extent possible. However, please be aware that **We am required to share information regarding sexual misconduct with the University.** Students may speak to someone confidentially by contacting the Counseling and Wellness Center (898-6345) or Safe Place (898-3030). Information on campus reporting obligations and other Title IX related resources are available here: www.csuchico.edu/title

Chico State Basic Needs Project

The Hungry Wildcat Food Pantry provides supplemental food, fresh produce, CalFresh application assistance and basic needs referral services for students experiencing food and housing insecurity.

All students are welcomed to visit the Pantry located in the Student Service Center 196, open Monday-Friday, 11am-4pm or call 530-898-4098.

Please visit the Chico State Basic Needs website <http://www.csuchico.edu/basic-needs> for more information.

Course Schedule

Week 1 – What is science? How do we evaluate scientific controversies? How is science conducted? What are morals and where do they come from?

Tuesday – John Cottingham, (2002) *On the Meaning of Life*, Chapter One, The Question

Thursday – Gavin DeBeer, *Darwin*, “Biology Before the Beagle” in *Darwin: A Norton Critical Edition*, edited by Philip Appleman (2001)

Week 2 – Evolution, the greatest scientific idea ever? Not everyone agrees.

Thursday – Kenneth Miller (2008) *Only a Theory*, Chapter 8, Devil in the Details

Week 3 – How should we think about sex and gender differences?

Tuesday – Robert Wright, (1994) *The Moral Animal*, Chapter 2, Male and Female & Chapter 3, Men and

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Women

Thursday – Janet Radcliffe-Richards (2004) *Human Nature After Darwin*, Chapter 5, Biology as Destiny

Week 4 – Polyamory

Tuesday – Carrie Jenkins, (2016) *What Love Is: And What It Could Be*, Prologue, Chapter 1, Chapter 4

Thursday – Carrie Jenkins, (2016) *What Love Is: And What It Could Be*, Chapter 5, Chapter 6

Week 5 – Sexbots & The Hard Problem of Consciousness

Tuesday – Neil Levy and Julian Savulescu, Moral significance of phenomenal consciousness

Aeon, Could Machines Have Become Aware Without Our Knowing It?

Thursday – Romy Eskens, Is Sex with Robots Rape? Anders Sandberg, Sex and Death Among the Robots: When Should We Campaign to Ban Robots?

Week 6 – What is the Relationship Between Science and Human Values?

Tuesday – TED Talk, Sam Harris, [Science Can Answer Moral Questions](#)

Sam Harris, (2010) *The Moral Landscape*, Introduction & Chapter 1, Moral Truth, pages 1-54

Thursday – Sam Harris, (2010) *The Moral Landscape*, Chapter 2, Good & Evil, pages 55-112

Week 7 - The Moral Landscape. How Science Can Determine Human Values

Tuesday – Sam Harris, (2010) *The Moral Landscape*, Chapter 3, Belief, pages 113-144

Thursday – Sam Harris, (2010) *The Moral Landscape*, Chapter 4, Religion, pages 145-176

Sam Harris, (2010) *The Moral Landscape*, Chapter 5, The Future of Happiness, pages 177-192

Week 8 – Evolutionary Psychology and Buddhism

Tuesday – Robert Wright (2017) *Why Buddhism is True: The Science and Philosophy of Meditation and Enlightenment*, A Note to Readers & Chapters 1-3

Thursday – Robert Wright (2017) *Why Buddhism is True: The Science and Philosophy of Meditation and Enlightenment*, Chapters 4-7

Robert Wright (2017) *Why Buddhism is True: The Science and Philosophy of Meditation and Enlightenment*, Chapters 8-10

Week 9 - Evolutionary Psychology and Buddhism

Tuesday – Robert Wright (2017) *Why Buddhism is True: The Science and Philosophy of Meditation and Enlightenment*, Chapters 11-13

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Thursday – Robert Wright (2017) *Why Buddhism is True: The Science and Philosophy of Meditation and Enlightenment*, Chapters 14-16

Week 10 – Selfish Genes and Altruism

Tuesday – Robert Wright, (1994) *The Moral Animal*, Chapter 7, Family

Thursday – Robert Wright, (1994) *The Moral Animal*, Chapter 9, Friends

Week 11 - Altruism

Tuesday – Larissa MacFarquhar, (2016) *Strangers Drowning: Impossible Idealism, Drastic Choices, and the Urge to Help*, For Do-Gooders, It Is Always Wartime, pages 1-12

Thursday– Larissa MacFarquhar, (2016) *Strangers Drowning: Impossible Idealism, Drastic Choices, and the Urge to Help*, The Most Oppressed of All, pages 41-69

Andrew Flescher *The Organ Shortage Crisis in America* “Living Donors and the Confluence of Altruism and Self-Regard”

Week 12 – The Gene

Tuesday - Siddhartha Mukherjee, (2016) *The Gene*, The Future of the Future, pages 417-436

Thursday - Siddhartha Mukherjee, (2016) *The Gene*, Genetic Diagnosis: ‘Previvors’, pages 437-462

Siddhartha Mukherjee, (2016) *The Gene*, Genetic Therapies: Post-Human & Epilogue, pages 463-49

Week 13 - Presentations

Week 14 - Presentations

Week 15 - Presentations and Reflection

Final Examination – Tuesday, December 18th, 2-3:50 PM