Introduction to Philosophy: Theories of Human Nature
Philosophy 110, Hamilton College, Fall 2003
Room 204, Root Hall
Section 01: Tuesday & Thursday 9 – 10:15
Section 02: Tuesday & Thursday 10:30 – 11:45
Professor Friend
Office: Philosophy Department, Second Floor – Phone: 4056, Email: cfriend@hamilton.edu
Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-4 in Café Opus, Wednesdays 12-1 in my office

Course Description and Objectives
In this course, as an introduction to philosophy, we will examine a number of ways in which philosophers have described human nature. Philosophers and others have come to a variety of competing conclusions concerning the nature of human beings. We will begin the course by reading a futuristic novel, *Woman on the Edge of Time* by Marge Piercy. Then, we will study Thomas Hobbes’s mechanistic and egoistic view of human nature. Next, we will study Jean Jacques Rousseau’s understanding of the way that social life corrupts man’s original nature. In the second half of the course, we will study the theories of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, who are critical of modern conceptions of human nature, although from different perspectives. To complete the course, we will read two French existential philosophers, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. We will be reading an excerpt from de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, a book that is often credited with inspiring the second wave of feminism. A major theme we will take up in the course will be the ways in which different conceptions of human nature can make a difference for how we might conceive of our political obligations and social relationships.

The objectives of this course are three-fold. First, we will be learning the particular ideas and theories of the philosophers we will be studying. Second, we will be learning how to do close and careful readings of texts and how to think critically about those texts. This will involve learning both how to identify and how to evaluate the arguments that philosophers make in order to persuade others of the views that they hold. And third, we will focus on engaging the process of philosophy ourselves and learning to develop our own arguments for the philosophical positions that we already have or come to adopt. This will include bettering your writing skills.

Make no doubt about it: philosophy is a hard subject, and this course will challenge you. For many of you, this course may be quite difficult, and will challenge you to broaden your intellectual horizons, as well as strengthen your intellectual skills. This is not to dissuade anyone from being in the course, but to make it clear that what lies ahead of us will be demanding. At the same time, philosophy has the potential to be very exciting, rewarding, and fun.

Texts
*Woman on the Edge of Time*, Marge Piercy
*Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes
*The Basic Political Writings*, Jean Jacques Rousseau
*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Karl Marx
*Civilization and Its Discontents*, Sigmund Freud
*Existentialism and Human Emotions*, Jean-Paul Sartre
*The Second Sex* (selection), Simone de Beauvoir (on reserve)
Class Format
To introduce each of the philosophers we will be studying, I will kick off that philosopher with an introductory lecture. For the rest of the classes, I may occasionally come into class with a lot to say about the texts that we will be reading, but I generally will not lecture. Rather, these classes will consist of a conversation between all of us. Each of us will come to class having carefully read the assigned text, prepared to discuss it with the rest of the group in a way which will enable all of us to better understand it.

Requirements
All students will come to class regularly and on time, do all of the assigned readings, and complete all of the expected assignments, which include four papers.

Attendance is expected and required. You are responsible for all class materials. I will begin each class with taking attendance. Any student who misses more than three classes, for any reason, will have this reflected in her or his final grade.

Readings For each section of the course, which will be about two weeks, there will be a reading assignment. You are expected to do all of that reading by the first class for that section. This will give you time to reread the assignment as we discuss it in class.

Papers Each student will write four short papers for the course. Instructions and topics for the papers are available on Blackboard. You will be required to revise a first draft of the first and second papers before handing them in. The first paper will be worth 20% of your overall grade, the second and third papers will be worth 25% each, and the fourth paper will be worth 30% of your overall grade for the course.

Grading Each paper will be assigned a letter grade (A-F). The letter grades for the papers will be translated into numbers on the following scale:
A+=98, A=95, A-=92, B+=88, B=85, B-=82, C+=78, C=75, C-=72, D+=68, D=65, D-=62, F=55 FF=40

When evaluating both individual assignments and final grades for the course, I will keep the following qualitative scale in mind:
A’s will be reserved for truly excellent work, which not only does a good job of meeting the expectations as described in the instructions, but which goes above and beyond these expectations by displaying a certain measure of original thought, and an understanding of the complexities and subtleties of the material being dealt with. An A also reflects excellence in writing ability. Consequently, A’s will be relatively rare.
B’s will be awarded for above-average work, in which the expectations for the assignment are met in a consistently good manner, and for work that does not reflect any important misunderstanding of the material involved.
C’s will be awarded for satisfactory work that reflects an average, basic understanding of the material being dealt with.
D’s will be assigned to work that is less than satisfactory, and in which only a rudimentary understanding of the material is demonstrated.
F’s will be handed out for work that is poor, and does not manage to meet the expectations of the assignment in even a minimal way.

Miscellany

Disabilities
Any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me during the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain confidential. Students with disabilities should also contact Nancy Thompson in the Dean of Students Office (KJ 104; ext. 4022) who coordinates services for students with disabilities.

Academic Honesty
The virtue of honesty is integral to the health of any academic community. I expect students to contribute to the health of Hamilton College by maintaining this virtue. Any student found cheating on a paper or exam, or helping another student to cheat will be referred to the Honor Court. If you are not sure what constitutes plagiarism, you are encouraged to read the Honor Code.

Blackboard
Most of the documents that you need for this course you will find on Blackboard. These include the syllabus, paper instructions, and each of the paper topics. You are responsible for getting these documents off of Blackboard, and I will not be bringing them to class. There are also some very helpful links to Writing Center documents. You will also be able to keep track of your grades on Blackboard, and engage in discussions about issues raised in class.

Reading and Assignment Schedule*

Introduction
Dates: Tuesday, September 2nd
Reading: none

Marge Piercy: A View of What Humans Might Be
Dates: Thursday, September 4th – Thursday, September 11th
Reading: Woman on the Edge of Time

Thomas Hobbes: The First Truly Modern Philosopher 1588-1679
Dates: Tuesday, September 16th – Thursday, October 2nd
Reading: Leviathan, Introduction, Chapters 1 - 18
Thursday, September 18th: First Paper Due

Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The Great Philosopher of the Enlightenment 1712-1778
Dates: Tuesday, October 7th – Thursday, October 23rd
Reading: Discourse on the Origin of Inequality
Karl Marx: Founder of Communism 1818-1883  
Dates: Tuesday, October 28th – Thursday, November 6th  
Tuesday, October 28th, Second Paper Due

Sigmund Freud: Discoverer of the Unconscious 1856-1939  
Dates: Tuesday, November 11th – Thursday, November 20th  
Reading: Civilization and Its Discontents

Jean-Paul Sartre: French Existentialist 1905-1980  
Dates: Tuesday, November 25th – Tuesday, December 2nd  
Reading: “Existentialism”  
Tuesday, November 25th, Third Paper Due

Simone de Beauvoir: The Inspirer of the Second Wave of Feminism 1908-1986  
Dates: Thursday, December 4th – Thursday, December 11th  
Reading: selections from The Second Sex  
Monday, December 15th, 9am, Fourth Paper Due

* This schedule may be adjusted at my discretion. At least one week’s notice will be given for any change in the schedule of readings or assignments.

**How to Do Well in This Course**

Come to class. Read the assigned readings both before and after they are discussed in class. Take time to do the readings carefully and slowly, and expect to need to read them more than once in order to understand them as fully as possible. Take good and careful notes from both the readings and class discussions. As soon as possible after each class, sit down and copy your notes over, expanding on them, adding your own thoughts, and noting any questions which you want to bring to the next class. Study together with other students in the class. Ask questions about the readings and discussions during class. Come to my office hours.