

Philosophy of Psychology (730:328)

Fall 2014
MW 2:50 – 4:10
Murray 210, CAC

1. **Instructor**: Frances Egan
Room 532, 106 Somerset Street
Email: fegan@rci.rutgers.edu

Office hours: Thursdays 3:00 – 4:30, and by appointment.

Sakai website: Course announcements, assignments, etc. will be posted on the course's Sakai website. Email notification of these postings will be sent to your RU email address.

2. **Course description**: The study of a variety of conceptions of *human nature*. We will consider such questions as: Is there really a distinctive, fixed human nature? To what extent is human psychology determined by genetic factors? By environmental factors? Could there be a *science* of human nature?

Some evidence suggests that humans are unique among animal species in possessing (1) the capacity for *language*, and (2) the ability to shape behavior according to the dictates of *morality*. In addition to the above general questions we will examine attempts to explain these (apparently) distinctive human capacities.

3. **Course Learning Goals**: Mastery of the material covered in class, and related assigned material, as measured by required coursework (see below).

4. **Required coursework**: Final grades will be based on mid-term and final examinations, and a paper (6-8 pages in length) on an assigned topic. (Final exam date: Fri. Dec. 19th, 12-3 p.m.)

Students are expected to attend all classes, and to read assigned readings prior to the class for which they are assigned. If you anticipate missing a class, please use the University's absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to report the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me.

Any violation of academic integrity (e.g. plagiarism, cheating on exams) will be dealt with strictly in accordance with published University policies.

5. **Required texts**: There is one required textbook – Richard Joyce's *The Evolution of Morality*. Additional required material will be available on the Sakai website.

6. **Tentative syllabus and readings**.

Plato, *Republic* (excerpt)

Rene Descartes, *Discourse on Method* (excerpt)

B.F. Skinner, *About Behaviorism* (excerpt)

Noam Chomsky, "A Review of B.F. Skinner's *About Behaviorism*
"Language and the Human Mind"

Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (excerpt)

Richard Joyce, *The Evolution of Morality* (chs. 1-4)