

FC-0503: MIND and BEHAVIOUR

Spring Semester 2024

Cap – 100 students

Date & Time – Tuesday-Friday 15:00-16:30

Instructor: Professor William McDonald

Learning Management System is Canvas with the Perusall App embedded.

Your Wellbeing

Your health and wellbeing are a top priority for our teaching team. You need to achieve a healthy balance of work and physical and mental wellbeing. The course is designed to challenge you and to feel a sense of accomplishment in completing it. However, that must not come at the cost of your wellbeing. If you need assistance in maintaining your wellbeing, it is important to reach out. The [Ashoka Centre for Wellbeing](#) has resources to help you. While we cannot provide professional support, please feel free to talk to us either during office hours or by appointment and let us know immediately if you will need any accommodations such as extensions on papers or absences from Discussion Sections.

Course Description

Who were we? Who are we? Who will we become? How should we act? This course examines texts on human nature, human identity and human enlightenment from *The Epic of*

Gilgamesh to current speculations on post-humanism. We will read epic, tragic, comic, philosophical and spiritual works in our quest to find meaning in the human condition and guidance on how best to live. We will draw on texts from various traditions to see if there are any universal answers to these questions.

Learning Objectives

This course will help you:

- Develop a capacity for active reading in which you pose questions of texts and place them in context.
- Develop an ability to view issues under discussion from a variety of perspectives.
- Relate the theoretical models studied to your context.
- Improve your ability to read and interpret difficult texts.
- Improve your analytical skills (your ability to construct arguments, anticipate objections, and respond to them).
- Improve your listening skills (your ability to pay close and mindful attention to what others are saying).
- Improve your writing skills (your ability to formulate and execute a writing plan with the aim of expressing yourself clearly, succinctly, and persuasively).

Assessment

You will be assessed in this course in the following ways:

Course attendance and participation (25%): You are expected to participate regularly in class discussions, particularly in discussion sessions but also during lecture sessions. The goal is to ensure that you engage with the readings and have the space and time to share your views and critically analyse them with your classmates.

You are permitted four excused absences, but you must inform your TF and TA *beforehand*.

(ii) Perusall responses (25%): You will have to respond to readings placed on Perusall.

(iii) Papers – midterm and final (50% total): You will write one 500-word paper (worth 20%) and one 1000-word paper (worth 30%).

Each of the above is a requirement – if you fail to meet any of the requirements, you may receive an ‘F’ for the entire course. Late submissions will be marked down by 1/3 of a letter grade every 24 hours. Submissions more than a week late will not be accepted.

Student Responsibilities

Lecture and Discussion Section attendance are mandatory. You are permitted four excused absences, but you must inform your TF and TA *beforehand*. Because late arrivals disturb the class, doors will close at the start of time and you will not be able to attend.

- Behaviour during the course: Treat the instructor, Teaching Fellows, and your fellow classmates with respect. Be considerate when speaking and make sure others get a chance to voice their views too. While your participation is actively encouraged, remember that listening is as much a form of participation as speaking. Do not confuse the volume of your participation with its value. You are

welcome to vigorously disagree but remember not to be disagreeable! If you are rude or disruptive, we will have to have a word with you.

- **Electronic Etiquette:** Your phone must be off or on silent mode, and out of sight. No laptops are permitted in class. (For those interested in some of the research motivating this policy, see <https://goo.gl/y2dphK>.)
- **Academic Integrity:** You are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Your work must be your own. Submitting work which you have not composed yourself, or using another person's ideas without due credit, or failing to mark another person's words with appropriate quotation marks all constitute plagiarism. The instructor reserves the right to assess penalties for violations of academic integrity, which may include giving a failing grade for an assignment, for the entire course, or referral to a university disciplinary committee. Plagiarism, whether intentional or not, will result in an automatic F for that assignment.
- **Cheating on any component of the course** (such as copying another student's work either wholly or in part) will result in an automatic F for the entire course.
- **Work submission:** All work must be submitted on time. Work that is submitted past the deadline will be docked 1/3 of a letter grade for every successive 24-hour period after the deadline. Submissions more than a week late will not be accepted.
- **Students with Disabilities:** Reasonable academic accommodation will be made for students with documented disabilities. You must contact me, or one of the Teaching Fellows before our next meeting if you need such accommodation.

Instructional Materials

All readings will be made available to you through Canvas. Some of them will be made available as whole texts, the excerpts from which will be specified in class.

Readings

The Epic of Gilgamesh (excerpts)

Katha Upanishad

Sophocles - *Antigone*

Aristophanes - *The Clouds*

Plato – *Symposium*

Śāntideva – *The Bodhicaryāvatāra* (selected chapters)

Ibn Tufail – *Hayy Ibin Yaqzan* (excerpts)

Thomas Hobbes - *Leviathan* (excerpts)

Rene Descartes – *Meditations* (excerpts)

Immanuel Kant – "What is Enlightenment?"

Friedrich Nietzsche – "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-moral Sense"

Jorge Luis Borges - "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote"

Michel Foucault – "What is Enlightenment?"

Nick Bostom – "The Future of Humanity"

This syllabus is subject to change