

Philosophy 494 (31826)
Seminar: Transhumanism
TR 9:25 – 10:40
ROM 104
3 units

Dr. Sara Waller
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appointment
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Primary Texts

David Levy [Love and Sex with Robots](#)
Savulescu and Bostrom [Human Enhancement](#)

Primary Texts on the Web or Desire2Learn

Farah & Heberlein “Personhood & Neuroscience: Naturalizing or Nihilating?” (D2L)
Dennett “The Self as a Center of Narrative Gravity” <http://ase.tufts.edu/cogstud/papers/selfctr.htm>

Important Texts to Remember, Review, and Know

Aristotle [Nicomachean Ethics](#) (on Gutenberg.org – look up under [Ethics](#))
Kant [Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals](#) (on Gutenberg.org)
Mill [Utilitarianism](#) (on Gutenberg.org)
Nietzsche [On the Genealogy of Morals](http://www.mala.bc.ca/~johnstoi/Nietzsche/genealogytofc.htm) <http://www.mala.bc.ca/~johnstoi/Nietzsche/genealogytofc.htm>
Carol Gilligan [In a Different Voice](#)
Andy Clark [Natural Born Cyborgs](#)

Great Resources

The Journal Neuroethics is free online at <http://www.springerlink.com/content/1874-5490>
The Journal of Evolution and Technology <http://jetpress.org/>
Bioethics page <http://bioethics.com/?cat=21>
H+ Magazine <http://hplusmagazine.com/>
The WTA is fun and interesting <http://www.transhumanism.org/resources/transhumanism.htm>

Odd Miscellany

Extropy: Journal of Transhumanist Solutions <http://www.extropy.org/extropyonline.htm>

Course Description

Transhumanism is a field, a set of beliefs, or perhaps a movement, that is currently emerging in interdisciplinary discourse. What implications does technology have on the way in which we are human? We have many new, scientifically-based powers to heal, ‘correct,’ palliate and enhance ourselves. How should such technologies, and such enhancements, be managed, disseminated, and used, if at all? Our discussions will take place with several normative ethical systems (Relativism, Aristotelian Virtue Theory, Kantian Deontology, Millian Utilitarianism, Egoism, Naturalism, Divine Command Theory and Context-Based Ethics) in the background. However, transhumanist abilities for enhancement may raise meta-ethical concerns, for if we change human nature or human ability, then standard ethical systems, distinctions, and questions may begin to fail to clearly apply to us. Specific topics to be discussed are largely up to student interest, as long as transhumanism remains a centerpiece in the course. Topics may include: super-intelligent machines and AI, palliation/elimination of pain, enhancement of mental and/or physical abilities, crowd control and manipulation, mood enhancement, mechanical enhancement (nanobots, mind-reading devices, etc.), immortality, personality change/development/transformation, and ethical concerns surrounding all of these. Of course, trying to define or understand *human nature* is a central part of the transhumanist question-set.

Grading Scale:

A	93-100%	373-401 points	C	73-76%	292-304 points
A-	90-92%	360-372 points	C-	70-72%	280-291 points
B+	87-89%	345-359 points	D+	67-69%	265-279 points
B	83-86%	332-344 points	D	60-66%	240-264 points
B-	80-82%	320-331 points	F	0-59%	0-239 points
C+	77-79%	305-319 points			

Grading Policy

Grades are based on the following course requirements:
1) Two Thesis Defense Papers; 2) Leading Discussions.
The specifics of each assignment type are detailed on the following pages.

Course Objectives:

This course provides students with the opportunity to understand, explain and critique concepts, theories, issues and questions in the emerging field of transhumanism. Students will construct and defend arguments as professional philosophers do in the field of transhumanism. Successful students will have demonstrated the ability to do the following at the completion of the course:

- **Write formal, philosophical thesis defense papers. This skill demands:**
 - Accurate use of the English language
 - Accurate use of terminology specific to philosophy and the field of axiology
 - Identification, and avoidance of, fallacies of reasoning
 - Identification & description of theories, concepts, questions & issues pertaining to transhumanism
 - Construction of a clear, specific, philosophical thesis on an issue about transhumanism
 - Reading & understanding primary texts as demonstrated by accurate summaries of them, and the use of quotations from these texts to further an argument
 - Clear presentation of reasons and evidence (found in texts or originally developed by the student) that furthers the thesis
 - Avoidance of discussing irrelevant subjects
 - Recognition and precise description of objections (critiques of, or potential problems with), a theory or thesis
 - Presentation of a relevant, content-bearing response to such objections
- **Demonstrate (orally and in writing) knowledge of several philosophers, psychologists and philosophical writings, as well as the arguments, principles, concepts, and issues contained therein,**
- **Describe (orally and in writing) philosophical theories, concepts, techniques and issues, probably including, but not limited to:**
 - Ethical questions raised by enhancement, healing and palliation
 - Meta-ethical questions raised by the potential to change human nature
 - Questions of enhancement, privacy & information
 - The nature of philosophy and normative judgment as a priori and/or empirical
 - Questions of human nature & self
 - The nature of moral agency

Course Requirements:

- 1) **1 Final Thesis Defense Paper:** (15-18 pages, about 3,500 to 4,500 words, 220 points total) consisting of both a **summary of a selected current reading (or set of readings on a topic)**, and **your own well-supported position on a question or issue at hand**. Grades are based on: Directness and clarity of thesis, accuracy and completeness of summary, how well your argument is supported (this will include response to objections), grammar and spelling (see handout), and finesse. The papers must pertain to relevant issues in philosophy currently covered in class. The position that you choose to critique or defend is entirely up to you, so pick topics that interest you. Papers are often due by email to sara.waller@montana.edu by 11:59 pm on the due date. Internet problems are not my problems, so send early and ask for receipt confirmation. Send **ONLY** .doc, docx, .txt or .pdf documents, and .docx is preferred. Papers I can't open will not be accepted. Feel free to use articles from recommended journals.

- 2) **Discussion & Leading Discussion:** there will be approximately 25 discussion opportunities, offering 4 points for participating, (100 total) and 20 points for leading the discussion (80 points total), until your personal 180 point total is reached.
 - You should plan on leading about 4 discussions in order to accumulate points. When you lead, prepare to work in teams of 2, though you might lead by yourself, or you might work in a team of 3
 - Discussion leaders will:
 - Summarize main points of the day's readings
 - Main thesis
 - Main arguments, with detailed premises
 - Present critiques of the arguments, both in the text, and original
 - Bring an activity (worksheet, group quiz, question set, etc.) for the class to discuss/complete/participate in that will help clarify concepts, arguments, and **further thoughtful, philosophical discussion pertaining to the reading.**
 - You can use TED talks and similar sources for up to 20 minutes.
 - You can't make up a missed discussion, but you can miss about 2 without grade penalty.
 - When you lead, if you bring us readings beyond the books, you **MUST** get the readings to us 10 days in advance for posting on D2L; the late penalty is 5 points per day.

Paper Grading Guidelines

Thesis and reasons, i.e. your argument, and support for it (100 pts. total, 10 pts. each error).

- Failing to state a thesis is an error. State your thesis clearly, and distinguish your position from other positions.
- Fallacies are errors. See handout.
- Distorting facts to make your case is an error. For example, claiming that the planets move in perfect circles, or that the moon only appears at night, is a distortion of our best-substantiated view of the world today and cannot be used for evidence of any view.
- Failing to define terms that are relevant to your thesis is an error.
- Failing to give a reason for your view is an error.
 - Agreeing with your other beliefs/what you were taught is not a reason
 - Making you feel good is not a reason
 - Claiming you have a right to your opinion is not a reason to believe that the opinion is true. In this culture we often agree that each person has a right to his or her own opinion. However, that does not make all opinions equally

true or equally well supported. Some opinions are false, and some views have no substantiation.

- Part of supporting your argument is considering a reasonable, well thought out objection from an opposing viewpoint. Explain the other viewpoint clearly and thoroughly. Why does your opposition believe something that you do not?
- Part of supporting your argument is responding to this objection. How can you defend your view against the view you just presented? This response is usually the conclusion of a professional philosophy paper.

Accuracy and completeness of summary (100 pts. total, 10 pts. each error).

- Misattributing a view to a philosopher is an error.
- Failing to produce **four** relevant quotes from the text is an error. When citing from a web source without page numbers, note book title, author, chapter and section.
- Failing to include information important to your thesis that was covered in class is an error.
- Including information that is irrelevant to your thesis is an error. Do not wildly summarize everything that comes to mind about a philosopher or position.

Number of grammatical errors (up to 10 pts.).

- *Nota Bene*, if you spell a philosopher's name incorrectly in your paper, I will remove 10 points immediately (over and above the 10 points), and then continue to count fatal errors.
- If you use philosophical terminology learned in class incorrectly, I will remove 5 points (over and above the 10 points).
- All other fatal grammatical errors appear in the attached or forthcoming handout, and are worth 1 point each. Spell checking is an easy way to keep many paper points.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty are Serious Offenses. Know what they are and recognize that the consequences could be worse than a failing grade on the assignment. If I discover academic misconduct, I will 1) meet with you, 2) fill out an Academic Misconduct Notification Form, and 3) provide a written request for the Dean of Students to press charges of violation of the Student Conduct Code.

http://www2.montana.edu/policy/student_conduct/student_conductc-code_2007-2008.htm#instructorrespon

Ground Rules & Notes on General Civility

1. *If a disagreement arises, present facts and evidence calmly rather than a heated and useless personal attack. Some opinions are more well-justified than others, but none merit active hostility or degradation.*
2. *Missed papers, presentations, discussions, quizzes and exams cannot be made up, but an opportunity for extra credit will be provided for those who have experienced some difficulties in attending class. If you experience an extended illness or catastrophe, see me.*
3. *If something or someone in the class is genuinely and persistently bothersome, offensive and/or inhibiting your learning process, please bring it to my attention.*
4. *If work is accepted by email, it is always due at 11:59 p.m. on the stated due date. If your work does not arrive in my inbox with that time stamp (because you experience internet difficulties, your computer has problems, your computer clock is inaccurate, or for any other reason), or if I cannot open your file or if it is corrupt, you will receive 0 points for that assignment.*

Schedule (subject to change)

Date	Class Content	
Thur. Jan. 10	Syllabus, Introduction to course, Review of Philosophy Ontology, Epistemology, Axiology, Philosophy of Mind, personhood	Freaky AI robot Robot hands google images
Tue. Jan. 15	The fields of Ethics: Descriptive, Normative & Meta-Ethics. Meta-Ethics & Neuroscience. Review of Ethical Theories Farah & Dennett	
Thur. Jan. 17	Human Enhancement: Daniels & Juengst	Discussion (4/20) Leader: Leader:
Tue. Jan. 22	Human Enhancement: Ryuichi & Sandel	Discussion (4/20) Leader: Leader:
Thur. Jan. 24	Human Enhancement: Kamm & Harris	Discussion (4/20) Leader: Leader:
Tue. Jan. 29	Human Enhancement: Coady & Parens	Discussion (4/20) Leader: Leader:
Thur. Jan. 31	Human Enhancement: Caplan & Savulescu	Discussion (4/20) Leader: Leader:
Tue. Feb. 5	Human Enhancement: Brock & Singer	Discussion (4/20) Leader: Leader:
Thurs Feb. 7	Human Enhancement: Shimazono & Tännsjö	Discussion (4/20) Leader: Leader:
Tue. Feb. 12	Human Enhancement: Overall & Wikler	Discussion (4/20) Leader: Leader:
Thur. Feb. 14	Human Enhancement: Hanson, & Bostrom & Sandberg	Discussion (4/20) Leader: Leader:
Tue. Feb. 19	Love & Sex: Chapters 1, 2, 3	Discussion (4/20) Leader: Leader:
Thur. Feb. 21	Love & Sex Chapters 4, 8, Conclusion Enjoy the very sexy chapters on your own	Discussion (4/20) Leader: Leader:
Tue. Feb. 26	<i>Neuroethics</i> , selections from volume 5 issue 3 (sex and gender)	Discussion (4/20) Leader: Leader:
Thur. Feb. 28	<i>Neuroethics</i> , you choose	Discussion (4/20) Leader: Leader:
Tue. March 5	<i>Neuroethics</i> , you choose	Discussion (4/20) Leader: Leader:

Thur. March 7	<i>Neuroethics</i> , you choose	Discussion (4/20) Leader: Leader:
Tue. March 12	Spring Break	Extra Credit Possibilities: Deep Space 9, Season 5, Episode 16 “Dr. Bashir, I Presume” Star Trek: Enterprise, Season 3 Episode 10 “Similitude”
Thur. March 14	Spring Break	“Dollhouse” (any), “Eternal Sunshine” “Forbidden Planet”
Tue. March 19	You choose	Discussion (4/20) Leader: Leader:
Thur. March 21	Sara in Kentucky	
Tue. March 26	You choose	Discussion (4/20) Leader: Leader:
Thur. March 28	Sara in San Francisco	
Tue. April 2	You choose	Discussion (4/20) Leader: Leader:
Thur. April 4	You choose	Discussion (4/20) Leader: Leader:
Tue. April 9	You choose	Discussion (4/20) Leader: Leader:
Thur. April 11	You choose	Discussion (4/20) Leader: Leader:
Tue. April 16	You choose	Discussion (4/20) Leader: Leader:
Thur. April 18	You choose	Discussion (4/20) Leader: Leader:
Tue. April 23	You choose	Discussion (4/20) Leader: Leader:
Thur. April 25	Final Thesis Paper due	(220)