

Questions in Philosophical Anthropology

Semester: 1st

Code: 722031032

Academic unit: FCSH

Department: Philosophy

Unit level: Master

Credits: 10 ECTS

Teacher in charge: *Dr. Filipe Nobre Faria; Dr. Susana Cadilha*

Weekly hours: 3

Teaching language: English

Subject matter

Most political and ethical philosophies rely on assumptions about human nature. But how can we explain the human condition? This course offers an overview of the key philosophical and scientific thoughts on human nature, focusing on how these thoughts affect our understanding of politics and ethics. It analyses classical notions of what it means to be human, from the Aristotelian political animal to the enlightened rational being, further assessing influential notions such as the self or personal identity. The module also studies the scientific view of humans as the product of evolution. Drawing on evolutionary ethics, it discusses how altruism and selfishness evolve and how this knowledge of evolution transforms contemporary political thought.

The course addresses these and other questions:

- Is there something like a universal human nature or a unified definition of the human?
- What are the main problems with the notions of self, and identity?

- What are the main problems with the notion of rationality?
- What features do humans share with other animals?
- Are human beings essentially selfish or are we hard-wired for altruism?
- How can evolutionary theory explain present political questions like the tensions between liberalism vs communitarianism or between global justice vs local justice?

Bibliography

Blackburn, Simon (1998). *Ruling Passions: A Theory of Practical Reasoning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press UK.

Boyd, Robert., & Richerson, Peter. (2005). *Not by Genes Alone: How Culture Transformed Human Evolution*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Changeux, Jean-Pierre., & Ricoeur, Paul. (2002). *What Makes Us Think?: A Neuroscientist and a Philosopher Argue about Ethics, Human Nature, and the Brain*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Joyce, Richard (2006). *The Evolution of Morality*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

MacIntyre, Alasdair (2007). *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, Third Edition. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

Ruse, Michael., & Richards, Robert. (Eds.). (2017). *The Cambridge Handbook of Evolutionary Ethics* (Cambridge Handbooks in Philosophy). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Taylor, Charles (1989). *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Teaching method

Lecture and seminar mode.

Evaluation method

The evaluation focuses on a final paper, which the students propose and write under supervision. The assessment also takes attendance, paper presentations and class participation into account.