



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY  
School of Continuing Studies

## Course Syllabus

Georgetown University, Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

### THE HUMAN CONDITION (LSHV-439-01)

Spring 2023

**Dates:** Wed. 6:00 PM - 8:30 PM, Jan. 11 – May 13, 2023

**Location:** 640 Mass Ave. C121

**Instructor:** Mark M. Gray, PhD, ([mmg34@georgetown.edu](mailto:mmg34@georgetown.edu)) and 202-687-0885

**Instructor Contact Information:** Outside of class, please email me through the Canvas Inbox. If you have issues with the Canvas Inbox, please contact me using the above email address. Feel free to call as well.

**Office Hours:** Scheduled as needed. These times will be open and informal for student questions. Please notify me in advance if you would like to meet with me during office hours in person or via Zoom.

### Course Description

What makes us human? How much of this is a part of our “nature” (e.g., biological hardware, chemistry, and physiological changes) and how much of it is due to how we are nurtured (our socialization, cultures, and social interactions)? This course explores some of the most central aspects of the human condition and asks, “What makes us tick?” The class explores competing paradigms derived from a combination of studies and research from biology, medicine, psychology, sociology, economics, anthropology, archaeology, and historical observation. The structure of the course is inspired by the concept of a “hierarchy of needs”—beginning with essential “lower order” aspects of the human condition moving up toward the problems and issues that are more often the focus of life once the essentials of life have been obtained. The course challenges the notion that 21st century human beings are all that different from those that existed in 100, 1,000, or even 10,000 years ago. It also seeks to understand how human behavior can vary so much across cultures now. Course readings are supplemented with suggested journal articles including current research as well as multimedia excerpts on each week’s topics.

*Prerequisite or Co-requisite: None*

## Course Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Identify and describe major theories of human decision making and behavior
2. Explain how humans have understood the concept of “human nature” over time and across cultures and what impact these understandings had on their lives
3. Demonstrate application of major theories of human decision making and behavior to a particular scenario or problem
4. Differentiate and explain the biological, physiological, psychological and sociological contributions to human decision making and behavior
5. Demonstrate the ability to identify and deconstruct human thought(s) and action(s) for a specific historical event
6. Speculate about human behavior using theories of human decision making and behavior for a specific scenario
7. Assemble argument(s) for the “most important” influences on human decision making and behavior

## Required Readings for Purchase

### Textbooks

[Through a Glass Brightly: Using Science to See Our Species as We Really Are](#)

David P. Barash

Oxford University Press (August 1, 2018)

ISBN-10: 0190673710

ISBN-13: 978-0190673710

[Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind](#)

Yuval Noah Harari

Harper Perennial; Reprint edition; Reprint edition (June 10, 2018)

ISBN-10: 9780062316110

ISBN-13: 978-0062316110

[Not So Different: Finding Human Nature in Animals](#)

Nathan H. Lents

Publisher: Columbia University Press (May 17, 2016)

ISBN-10: 0231178328

ISBN-13: 978-0231178327

Available online at Georgetown Library:

<https://www-jstor-org.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/stable/10.7312/lent17832>

[Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History](#)

David Christian

University of California Press; Second Edition, (October 3, 2011)

ISBN-10: 9780520271449

ISBN-13: 978-0520271449

Available online at Georgetown Library:

<https://www-jstor-org.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1ppz72>

## Overview of Course Structure

This course meets online using Canvas for the weekly lectures and discussions as well as the posting of assignments, multi-media, and additional content. New material appears each week on Wednesdays in the form of modules.

## Elements of This Course

Your course grade will be based on your completion of course activities and assignments.

**Activities** % of Grade

### Materials: Readings and Videos

These are module-specific readings, which are found on the Module Materials page. NA

### Office Hours

These times will be open for student questions. Please notify me in advance if you would like to meet with me during office hours via Zoom. NA

### Final Paper Project

You will identify and do research on a topic which you wish to dive more deeply into. You will then produce a paper of a minimum of 3,600 words. More details are available in Canvas. Deliverables include: Final Paper. 40%

### Reflection Papers (4)

These assignments facilitate research and reflection on some key topics. Writing reflectively allows you to think more deeply and consciously about your actions or behaviors surrounding a particular experience or key event. 20%

### Short Exercises (4)

These assignments provide you with an authentic context to explore and reflect on the fundamental concepts you are learning in this course. 20%

### Final Exam

The course will include one final exam to assess your mastery and understanding of course concepts. 20%

**TOTAL** 100%

## Grading

A: 93% to 100%

A-: 90% to 92%

B+: 87% to 89%

B: 83% to 86%

B-: 80% to 82%

C+: 77% to 79%

C: 73% to 76%

C-: 70% to 72%

D+: 67% to 69%

D: 63% to 66%

F: 62% and below

## **Course Policies**

### **Time Commitment**

For a 15-week, 3-credit course, you should allocate *7-10 hours per week* for the course.

### **Submission Policy**

Submit all assignments to the Canvas course website.

### **Late Work Policy**

As stated in the [Student Handbook](#), students must notify the instructor and obtain approval for any extensions

### **Citation Policy**

Students must use a style guide for all coursework. APA Style (APA Publication Manual 6th Edition), used in all SCS courses, is the preferred style. The SCS library has prepared an APA Citation video to guide citation formatting that you can find here: [School of Continuing Studies Library: APA 6th Edition](#).

### **Communication Policies**

#### **Communication with Instructor**

Feel free to speak with me before or after class or contact me by phone, email, or Zoom.

#### **Communication with Peers**

Please always be respectful of others in the course.

#### **Announcements**

We will post announcements in Canvas on a regular basis. They will appear on your Canvas dashboard when you log in and will be sent to you directly through your preferred method of notification. Please make certain to check them regularly, as they will contain important information about upcoming projects or class concerns.

### **Instructor Feedback/Turnaround**

If you have a concern and send me/us a message, you can expect a response within 2 business days. Please allow 3-5 business days for assessment submission feedback.

### **Honor System**

All submissions must be your original work. Any submission suspected of plagiarism will be immediately referred to the Honor Council for investigation and possible adjudication. All students are expected to follow Georgetown's honor code unconditionally. If you have not done so, please read the honor code material located online at the [Georgetown University Honor Council website](#).

#### **The Honor Pledge**

*In pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and to uphold the Georgetown University honor system:*

- *To be honest in every academic endeavor, and*
- *To conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community as we live and work together.*

## Netiquette Guidelines

To promote the highest degree of education possible, we ask each student to respect the opinions and thoughts of other students and be courteous in the way that you choose to express yourself. The topics in this course are often controversial and promote debate. Students should be respectful and considerate of all opinions.

In order for us to have meaningful discussions, we must learn to genuinely try to understand what others are saying and be open-minded about others' opinions. If you want to persuade someone to see things differently, it is much more effective to do so in a polite, non-threatening way rather than to do so antagonistically. Everyone has insights to offer based on his/her experiences, and we can all learn from each other. Civility is essential.

Additionally, what happens in Canvas stays in Canvas. In order to make this a safe space for students to take risks and learn from one another in the wake of inevitable missteps, we ask that students refrain from publicly re-posting any comments that have been shared in this online course.

Finally, this is a professional environment. This course is designed to reflect the workplace experience. Language, grammar, and assignments should reflect what you would be comfortable sharing with your colleagues and supervisors in an office environment. With this in mind:

- **Use accurate spelling and grammar in all discussion boards and assignments.** An effective communicator must be able to write well. Points will be deducted for typos and inaccurate grammar. Text speak (e.g., acronyms, shorthand phrases, numbers as words) are unacceptable.
- **Discussion boards are conversational.** You are encouraged to use a **conversational tone and convey personality on discussion boards**. This means the use of colloquial language is acceptable, as well as (limited) cliché or buzzword phrases. Emoticons, if warranted to convey tone, can be acceptable depending on the situation. This is about helping you get to know your fellow students so that you feel more comfortable expressing your thoughts openly. Think of discussion boards as a meeting with your co-workers.
- **Your assignments are assumed to be client-ready.** While the discussion boards are conversational, your assignments are not. You are expected to format and present assignments as you would to a client, which means avoiding informal tone or word use in your written assignments and presentations.

## Incomplete and Withdrawal Policies

Incompletes are given in only the most extraordinary circumstances and with appropriate documentation. Where an incomplete is granted, a grade of "N" shall be granted until the work is handed in and then the grade shall be changed accordingly.

If you wish to withdraw from the course, you must do so before the date indicated in the academic calendar. Course withdrawal requests cannot be done by simply calling programs or the Registrar's Office or by emailing an advisor. It is the student's personal responsibility to withdraw from a course in MyAccess before the official withdrawal deadline. Failure on the

student's part to withdraw officially from a course will result in a grade of "F" in the course and be factored into the student's academic standing (probation and termination) and official GPA.

## **Accommodation Policy**

### **Students with Disabilities**

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, individuals with disabilities have the right to specific accommodations that do not fundamentally alter the nature of the course. Some accommodations might include note takers, books on tape, extended time on assignments, and interpreter services, among others.

Students are responsible for communicating their needs to the Academic Resource Center, the office that oversees disability support services, (202-687-8354; [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu); [Disability Support Services website](#)) before the start of classes to allow time to review the documentation and make recommendations for appropriate accommodations. The University is not responsible for making special accommodations for students who have not declared their disabilities and have not requested an accommodation in a timely manner. Also, the University need not modify course or degree requirements considered to be an essential requirement of the program of instruction.

For the most current and up-to-date policy information, please refer to the [Georgetown University Academic Resource Center website](#). Students are highly encouraged to discuss the documentation and accommodation process with an Academic Resource Center administrator.

## **Technical Requirements**

### **Computer Requirements Outside Canvas**

You will need to have access to a computer and internet with an up-to-date browser and operating system. You will also need Adobe Reader to view course documents in PDF form. If you do not have the free Adobe Acrobat Reader software on your computer, you can download it by going to the [Adobe Reader download website](#). You will also need the most up-to-date [Flash plugin](#). If you do not have access to a computer and the internet during the course, there are computer labs at most public libraries with internet access that you can use for free.

Here are the requirements to run Canvas on your machine:

#### **Operating Systems**

- Windows XP SP3 and newer
- Mac OSX 10.6 and newer
- Linux - chromeOS

#### **Mobile Operating System Native App Support**

- iOS 7 and newer
- Android 2.3 and newer

#### **Computer Speed and Processor**

- Use a computer 5 years old or newer when possible
- 1GB of RAM
- 2GHz processor

#### **Internet Speed**

- Along with compatibility and web standards, Canvas has been carefully crafted to accommodate low bandwidth environments.
- Minimum of 512kbps

### **Audio and Video Capability**

- You will need an internal or external microphone *and* Most computers now come with them built in.
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### **Technical Skills Requirements**

As part of your online Canvas experience, you can expect to use a variety of technologies, such as:

1. Communicating via email including sending attachments
2. Navigating the World Wide Web using a Web browser
3. Using office applications such as Microsoft Office or Google Docs to create documents
4. Communicating using a discussion board and uploading assignments to a classroom website
5. Uploading and downloading saved files
6. Having easy access to the Internet
7. Navigating Canvas, including using the email component within Canvas
8. Using a microphone to record audio through your computer
9. Using an internal or external camera to record video through your computer.

## **Student Support and Help**

### **Academic Support**

#### **Library Research Guide**

Each MPS program has an extensive online Library Research Guide designed for the subject and research specifications of the program. The guide will give you direct access to the library resources central to your course research work. To access the guides, go to the [GU Library Research Guides website](#).

#### **Library Services**

Georgetown students may make an appointment with a librarian to discuss a research topic, develop a search strategy, or examine resources for projects and papers. Librarians offer overviews and in-depth assistance with important resources for papers, capstones, projects, and other types of research. Appointments are conducted in person, by using Google Hangout (video-conferencing function) through the Georgetown Gmail System, or by telephone. This service is available to currently enrolled students who need assistance with Georgetown-assigned projects and papers.

#### **eResources**

Students enrolled in courses have access to the University Library System's eResources, including 500+ research databases, 1.5+ million ebooks, and thousands of periodicals and other multimedia files (films, webinars, music, and images). You can access these resources through the [Library's Homepage](#) by using your NetID and password.

#### **Writing Lab**

The Writing Lab provides assistance SCS students during the writing process and also provides the essential writing skills necessary to succeed in school. The Writing Lab holds workshops every semester on a variety of topics, and also offers one-on-one sessions with an experienced writing tutor, either online or on-site.

To meet the diverse needs of our SCS student population, writing workshops and tutoring sessions designed to assist both native and non-native speakers are available. To learn more about the services available to you, visit the [SCS Writing Lab website](#).

### **Technical Support**

#### **Canvas Support:**

All students have access to Canvas technical support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, including live chat and a support hotline at (855) 338-2770. Clicking the 'Help' icon in the lower left of your Canvas window will display your available support and feedback options. If you are looking for help on a specific feature, please review the [Canvas Student Guide](#).

#### **Zoom Support**

Zoom enables users to conduct synchronous (“real-time”) conferences, presentations, lectures, meetings, office hours and group chats via audio, video, text chat and content sharing. [Technical support for Zoom is available on an external website](#).

#### **Turnitin Support**

TurnItIn is a writing assessment tool that is used to detect plagiarism and allows teachers to provide assignment feedback to students. [Technical support for TurnItIn is available on an external website](#).

#### **GU Account**

Contact the UIS Service Center at [Help@georgetown.edu](mailto:Help@georgetown.edu) or 202-687-4949 if you have a question regarding:

- your GU netID and/or password
- your GU email account
- any connectivity issues

Contact your instructor if you have any questions relating to course content.

### **Student Support Services**

SCS offers a variety of support systems for students that can be accessed online, at the School of Continuing Studies downtown location, and on the main Georgetown campus:

- [Academic Resource Center](#) | (202) 687-8354 | [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu)
- [Counseling and Psychiatric Services](#) | (202) 687-6985
- [Institutional Diversity, Equity & Affirmative Action \(IDEAA\)](#) | (202) 687-4798

See also SCS’s [Resources for Current Students website](#), which contains information about disability services and career resources, as well as [SCS’s Admissions and Aid website](#), which has information about financial aid and academic advising.

### **Accessibility Support**

A variety of technologies are used in this course. Every effort has been made to make the course accessible to our diverse student body. To access more information about accessibility, please see the following technology pages.

- [Canvas accessibility page](#)
- [Zoom accessibility page](#).



## **Sexual Misconduct**

Georgetown University and its faculty are committed to supporting survivors and those impacted by sexual misconduct, which includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, and stalking. Georgetown requires faculty members, unless otherwise designated as confidential, to report all disclosures of sexual misconduct to the University Title IX Coordinator or a Deputy Title IX Coordinator. If you disclose an incident of sexual misconduct to a professor in or outside of the classroom (with the exception of disclosures in papers), that faculty member must report the incident to the Title IX Coordinator, or Deputy Title IX Coordinator. The coordinator, will, in turn, reach out to the student to provide support, resources, and the option to meet. [Please note that the student is not required to meet with the Title IX coordinator.]. More information about reporting options and resources can be found on the Sexual Misconduct Website: <https://sexualassault.georgetown.edu/resourcecenter>

If you would prefer to speak to someone confidentially, Georgetown has a number of fully confidential professional resources that can provide support and assistance. These resources include:

- Health Education Services for Sexual Assault Response and Prevention: confidential email [sarp@georgetown.edu](mailto:sarp@georgetown.edu)
- Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS): 202. 687.6985 or after hours, call 202. 444.7243 and ask for the on-call CAPS clinician

Thank you for supporting our students impacted by sexual violence. If interested, other helpful more general resources are included below:

- Georgetown Self-Care Resource Guide: <https://studenthealth.georgetown.edu/self-care>
- Georgetown Wellness Wheel: <https://studenthealth.georgetown.edu/Hoya-Wellness-wheel>
- Georgetown Guide to Recognizing Students in Distress: <https://studenthealth.georgetown.edu/resourceguide>

## **Pregnancy Adjustments and Accommodations**

Georgetown University is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive environment for pregnant and parenting students. Students may request adjustments based on general pregnancy needs or accommodations based on a pregnancy-related complication. Specific adjustments will be handled on a case by case basis and will depend on medical need and academic requirements. Students seeking a pregnancy adjustment or accommodation should follow the process laid out at the [Title IX at Georgetown University website](#).

## Weekly Schedule

Each week we meet on Wednesdays at 5:20 pm at 640 Mass Ave, C121.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Module</b>	<b>Exercises &amp; Assignments Due</b>
<b>Week 1</b> Class meets Jan. 18	<b>Module 1: Introduction to “Big History”</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read and watch materials about Pre-human history: Why are we here?</li> </ul>	1. Complete Reflection Paper #1
<b>Week 2</b> Class meets Jan. 25	<b>Module 2: Dawn of Human Nature</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read and watch materials about “The state of nature” and develop comparative understandings of creation and origin, religious salvation and punishment.</li> </ul>	None.
<b>Week 3</b> Class meets Feb. 1	<b>Module 3: Communication</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read and watch materials about human language and the arts’ explore the emergence and evolution of language; visual communications from cave wall to cyberspace, and the transformative changes brought by mass media.</li> </ul>	1. Complete Short Exercise #1
<b>Week 4</b> Class meets Feb. 8	<b>Module 4: Love and Socio-biology</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read and watch materials about the makings and development of human attraction, bonding, and modern conceptions of “romance.”</li> </ul>	1. Complete Short Exercise #2
<b>Week 5</b> Class meets Feb. 15	<b>Module 5: Security and Order</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read and watch materials about leadership; how we choose our leaders; from tribal leaders to feudal monarchy, to democracy, to the next “thing” (or the “End of History”).</li> </ul>	1. Complete Short Exercise #3
<b>Week 6</b> Class meets Feb. 22	<b>Module 6: Economy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read materials about money, property and exchange; from agrarian feudalism, to free markets, to state-planned economies.</li> </ul>	1. Complete Reflection Paper #2
<b>Week 7</b> Class meets March 1	<b>Module 7: Movements Toward Equality</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read materials about the expansion of human rights, liberties, and status.</li> </ul>	1. Submit Final Paper Topic
<b>Break</b>		
<b>Week 8</b>	<b>Module 8: Advancement and Invention</b>	1. Complete Reflection Paper #3

<p>Class meets March 15</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Read materials about the different periods in technological and scientific history: enlightenment, the industrial age, and the digital age.</li> </ul> <p><b>Module 9: Good and Evil</b></p>	
<p><b>Week 9</b> Class meets March 22</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Read materials about the origins of salvation religions, and the concept of sinners and saints through the ages; ask questions about “morality” and explore post-modern claims of relativism and the inability to know truth.</li> </ul> <p><b>Module 10: Leisure</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete Short Exercise #4</li> </ol>
<p><b>Week 10</b> Class meets March 29</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Read materials about the history of human leisure time, and the concepts of entertainment, the “late coming of leisure” childhood, and how we might be “amusing ourselves to death.”</li> </ul> <p><b>Module 11: Do People Matter?</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Submit Final Paper Outline</li> </ol>
<p><b>Week 11</b> Class meets April 5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Read and watch materials about major social forces and human events, and ask big questions about free will and social determinism.</li> </ul> <p><b>Module 12: The Future</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete Reflection Paper #4</li> </ol>
<p><b>Week 12</b> Class meets April 12</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Read materials about current views of the future and what “futurists” today think about the “shape of things to come.”</li> </ul>	<p>None.</p>
<p><b>Weeks 13</b> Class meets April 19</p>	<p><b>Module 13: Exam</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Examination week</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete Exam – Due April 25</li> </ol>
<p><b>Week 14</b> Class meets April 26</p>	<p><b>Module 14: Final Paper</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Discussion and final steps</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Submit Final Paper - Due May 12</li> </ol>