ECON/ENG/PHIL 357 - Topics in Humanomics - Cause, Effect, and Freedom

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| **INSTRUCTORS:** Professor Erik Kimbrough ([ekimbrou@chapman.edu](mailto:ekimbrou@chapman.edu)) and Professor John Thrasher ([thrasheriv@chapman.edu](mailto:thrashers@chapman.edu))  **COURSE MEETINGS: T (4:00 - 6:50) - Argyros Forum 206C**  **OFFICE HOURS:**We will have joint office hours from 10:30-11:30 on Wednesdays at the Smith Institute - 1st floor of Becket Hall (Free Coffee!) We are also available by appointment (just give us 24 hours notice).  **PREREQUISITES:**None  **RESTRICTIONS**: Sophomore Standing or Faculty Consent Required  **COURSE COMMUNICATIONS**: The vast majority of classroom communications will take place through email. YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING SURE THAT YOU RECEIVE THESE COMMUNICATIONS. We are a team, so if you email one of us, email both of us.  **Description**: Why are some people rich and others poor? Why are some tall and some short? Why do some companies succeed and others fail? Why are some societies growing while others are shrinking? Answers to these questions all involve claims about *causation*. We assume the world around us is largely governed by regular relations between *cause*and *effect*. Science is the attempt to tease out these relationships and to make valid inferences from cause to effect and vice versa.    Explaining the world causally in this way, however, raises the specter of *determinism*. Since every effect follows from some cause, there seems to be no room for genuine freedom of choice. Who we are and the choices we make might seem to be determined by previous events and our underlying biological constitution. This possibility has troubled thinkers in a variety of disciplines throughout human history. Regardless of how troubling this possibility is, however, the scientific worldview that explains the world in terms of cause and effect also gives us tremendous power to understand and make interventions in the world for the better.    This course will explore various visions of determinism and our reactions to those visions. Do we live in a deterministic world? What does determinism mean for our values and a notion of the good life? How do we *know*what causes what? We will explore these questions by looking at recent scientific arguments in favor of determinism, while at the same time reading classics of literature and philosophy that wrestle with the ethical and practical implications of understanding our world as a world of causes and effects.    Humanomics classes (like this one) adopt a distinctively interdisciplinary approach. Throughout the term, we will address these questions through the lenses of economics, philosophy, and art. We will not just ask what these disciplines have to say about our topic independently of one another; we will also ask how these disciplines interact, enrich each other, and have unique ways of capturing parts of reality. The overarching idea is that there are many ways of expressing important ideas and that focusing on any one form of expression (social scientific, philosophical, artistic) in isolation is bound to leave important aspects of those ideas unstated, or incompletely expressed. Moreover, by working with media situated in a variety of historical contexts, we will necessarily ask why a set of ideas have been expressed in different ways in different times and places, and how this form of expression affects what’s being said.  **Required Books**:  Robert Plomin. 2018. [*Blueprint: How DNA Makes Us Who We Are*](https://www.amazon.com/Blueprint-How-DNA-Makes-Press/dp/0262039168). MIT Press.  Fyodor Dostoevsky. 1864. [*Notes from Underground, in Best Short Stories of Fyodor Dostoevsky*](https://www.amazon.com/Stories-Fyodor-Dostoevsky-Modern-Library/dp/0375756884/ref=asc_df_0375756884/?tag=hyprod-20&linkCode=df0&hvadid=312089030079&hvpos=1o1&hvnetw=g&hvrand=2001618383078660386&hvpone=&hvptwo=&hvqmt=&hvdev=c&hvdvcmdl=&hvlocint=&hvlocphy=9031589&hvtargid=aud-801381245258:pla-495105057320&psc=1), Richard Peaver and Larissa Volokhonsky Translation.  J.T. Ismael. 2016. [*How Physics Makes Us Free*](https://www.amazon.com/How-Physics-Makes-Us-Free/dp/0190269448). Oxford University Press.  Sophocles. 2013. [*Oedipus Rex*](https://www.amazon.com/Sophocles-Antigone-Oedipus-Complete-Tragedies-dp-0226311511/dp/0226311511/ref=mt_paperback?_encoding=UTF8&me=&qid=1554161383). University of Chicago Press.  Joshua Angrist and Jorn-Steffen Pischke. 2018. [*Mastering Metrics: The Path from Cause to Effect*](https://www.amazon.com/Mastering-Metrics-Path-Cause-Effect/dp/0691152845/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?_encoding=UTF8&qid=1554161481&sr=1-1). Princeton University Press.  Ryan North. 2016. [*To Be or Not to Be: A Choosable Path Adventure*](https://www.amazon.com/Be-Not-Chooseable-Path-Adventure/dp/0735212198/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=north+to+be+or+not+to+be&qid=1554161724&s=books&sr=1-1)*.*Riverhead Books.  **Excerpts/Articles:**  Excerpts from David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*.  Excerpts from Baruch Spinoza,*Ethics*  Excerpts from Toby Handfield, *Chance*  Links to these and other materials will be made available on this website in the course schedule below.  **Movies:**  The Truman Show (1998)  Black Mirror: Bandersnatch (2018)  **Course Schedule (subject to change, assignments updated as we go):**   |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | *Date* | *Topic* | *Readings* | Assignments | | **Week 1:** | 8/27 | Fate and Freedom | *Hour 1*: Oedipus Rex, [OK Go](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qybUFnY7Y8w) | Writer's Workshop | |  |  |  | *Hour 3*: Oedipus Rex               [David Hume, Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding §8](https://www.dropbox.com/s/7wkrph28td3b3o7/Hume%20on%20Liberty%20and%20Necessity.pdf?dl=0)               [Spinoza, *Ethics* P48-P49](https://www.dropbox.com/s/9j0cacabz8u4h2u/Spinoza%20Ethics%20Free%20Will.pdf?dl=0) |  | | **Week 2:** | 9/3 | Determinism 1 | *Hour 1*: Blueprint, Ch. 1-2 | Writer's Workshop | |  |  |  | *Hour 3*: Blueprint, Ch. 3-4 |  | | **Week 3:** | 9/10 | Determinism 2 | *Hour 1*: Blueprint, Ch. 5-7 | Writer's Workshop | |  |  |  | *Hour 3*: Blueprint, Ch. 8-9 |  | | **Week 4:** | 9/17 | Determinism 3 | *Hour 1:*Notes from Underground, Part 1 | Writer's Workshop | |  |  |  | *Hour 3:*Blueprint, Ch. 10-11 |  | | **Week 5:** | 9/24 | Freedom 1 | *Hour 1:*Notes from Underground, Part 2 (Ch. 1-4) | Paper 1 Prompt | |  |  |  | *Hour 3*: Blueprint, Ch. 12 - Epilogue |  | | **Week 6:** | 10/1 | Freedom 2 | *Hour 1*: Notes from Underground, Part 2 (Ch. 5-10) | Writer's Workshop | |  |  |  | *Hour 3*: How Physics Makes Us Free, Ch. 1 |  | | **Week 7:** | 10/8 | Freedom 3 | *Hour 1*: How Physics Makes Us Free, Ch. 2-3 | **Paper 1 Due** | |  |  |  | *Hour 3*: The Truman Show |  | | **Week 8:** | 10/15 | Chance/Possibility | *Hour 1*: [Chance, Ch. 1-2](https://www.dropbox.com/s/v5it2iksz8pcnrb/Handfield_Ch1-2.pdf?dl=0) | Writer's Workshop | |  |  |  | *Hour 3*: How Physics Makes Us Free, Ch. 5 |  | | **Week 9:** | 10/22 | Causes | *Hour 1*: Mastering Metrics, Ch. 1 | Paper 2 Prompt | |  |  |  | *Hour 3*: How Physics Makes Us Free, Ch. 6 |  | | **Week 10:** | 10/29 | Measuring Causes | *Hour 1*: Mastering Metrics, Ch. 2 | Writer's Workshop | |  |  |  | *Hour 3*: To Be or Not to Be (as one character) |  | | **Week 11:** | 11/5 | Dependence & Independence | *Hour 1*: Mastering Metrics, Ch. 3 | Writer's Workshop | |  |  |  | *Hour 3*: To Be or Not to Be (as another character) |  | | **Week 12:** | 11/12 | Finding Difference | *Hour 1*: Mastering Metrics, Ch. 4 | Writer's Workshop | |  |  |  | *Hour 3*: To Be or Not to Be (as the same character, but with different choices) |  | | **Week 13:** | 11/19 | Measuring Effects | *Hour 1*: Mastering Metrics, Ch. 5 | Writer's Workshop | |  |  |  | *Hour 3*: How Physics Makes Us Free, Ch. 7 |  | | **Week 14:** | 11/26 |  | **THANKSGIVING BREAK** |  | |  |  |  |  |  | | **Week 15:** | 12/5 | What Causes What? | *Hour 1*: Black Mirror: Bandersnatch | **Paper 2 Due** | |  |  |  | *Presentations* |  | |  | 12/12 | **Final Exam** | **4:15-6:45** |  |   **Course Learning Outcomes:**Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:  ● Challenge and deconstruct the perceived tensions between economics and the humanities.  ● Ask cogent, thought-provoking questions based upon critical reading of texts across a range of literary, philosophical, and historical genres—film, fiction and non-fiction.  ● Explain theories of determinism, including their assumptions and their implications.  ● Explain techniques used to identify causal relationships.  ● Articulate how texts across the disciplines are co-constitutive of knowledge, ethics, and aesthetics.  ● Demonstrate thoughtful rhetorical choices in creative and expository prose.  **Program or General Education Outcomes:**Upon completion of the course, students will have:  ● Composed critical and creative works motivated by theories of economic, genetic, divine, environmental, and other determinisms.  ● Explored and explained processes by which humans develop social and/or historical perspectives.  ● Explored and explained values and ethical perspectives in light of theories of determinism.  ● Artistic Inquiry Learning Outcome: Composes critical or creative works that embody or analyze conceptually an artistic form at a baccalaureate / pre-professional level.  ● Social Inquiry Learning Outcome: Students identify, frame and analyze social and/or historical structures and institutions in the world today.  ● Values/Ethics Inquiry Learning Outcome: Students articulate how values and ethics inform human understanding, structures, and behavior.  **Grading:**  Because of the interactive nature of the class, attendance is an essential component. Excessive tardies constitute absences; three absences may result in failure (Undergraduate Catalog, “Academic Policies and Procedures.”) Please keep this in mind. Missed in-class work cannot be made up.  1. Participation in Class Discussion [10%] Class discussion provides an opportunity for students to explore questions about consumerism. Through this shared inquiry, students gain experience reading for meaning and communicating complex ideas; thinking reflectively about an interpretive problem; and supporting and testing thoughts through dialogue with peers. Class discussion fosters the flexibility of mind to consider problems from multiple perspectives and the ability to analyze ideas critically. Students must enter the discussion with specific questions generated by the texts as well as a desire to probe and reevaluate ideas. It is essential that students bring texts and questions to each class session.  2. Written Questions [10%] - [Guidelines for Asking Questions](https://www.dropbox.com/s/upum3ilm7eiy0xx/Guidelines%20for%20Questions.E.E.357.S2018.docx?dl=0) Shared inquiry is a process for exploring the central ideas of the course. This means students must read for meaning, identifying possible interpretative problems they would like to address in discussion. For each class period with an assignment, students will word process in advance two questions to be handed in before class starts. Asking a good question is harder than providing a good answer. The student’s task is to delve into a claim or idea they find puzzling, exploring what has unsettled them. When writing the second paper, we will periodically use the writer’s workshop to provide waypoints on the path from research question to the completed paper.  3. Writer’s and Presenter's Workshop [25%]  The writer's workshop is based on the idea that students learn to write when they write often; in this case, focusing their attention on ideas from the readings and discussions immediately preceding the workshop. An important component of these assignments is to understand each week’s media in their social scientific, philosophical, and/or artistic context. Students will encounter a variety of writing assignments for the workshop, including both critical and creative works. Students will be asked to produce a number of papers, of approximately 250 words, and submit a polished piece at the end of the hour. Also includes grades based on participation in in-class experiments.  4. Papers – Expository and Creative [40% = 2 x 20% each] - [Guidelines for Paper Formatting](https://www.dropbox.com/s/pq0rtlbefttln5x/Paper%20Formatting%20Guidelines.docx?dl=0)  In addition to the writer’s workshop papers, students will complete two major papers in the course, one expository/critical and one creative in nature. These papers will provide opportunities for students to explore ideas and use texts to add to the ongoing discourse. The second paper, which requires students to produce their own artistic work, either in the form of a short story or a scene, will challenge students to analyze and embody conceptually the idea of artistic form. Provide two printed copies.  5. Oral Final Examination [15%] Students will consider the course objectives and respond to questions posed by the professors in an oral examination during the exam period. More details will be given towards the end of the class.  **Academic Integrity:**  Chapman University is a community of scholars that emphasizes the mutual responsibility of all members to seek knowledge honestly and in good faith. Students are responsible for doing their own work and academic dishonesty of any kind will be subject to sanction by the instructor/administrator and referral to the university Academic Integrity Committee, which may impose additional sanctions including expulsion. Please see the full description of Chapman University’s policy on Academic Integrity at [www.chapman.edu/academics/academicintegrity/index.aspx](http://www.chapman.edu/academics/academicintegrity/index.aspx).  **Chapman University’s Students with Disabilities Policy:** In compliance with ADA guidelines, students who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, that might affect their ability to perform in this class are encouraged to contact the [Office of Disability Services](https://www.chapman.edu/students/health-and-safety/disability-services/index.aspx). If you will need to utilize your approved accommodations in this class, please follow the proper notification procedure for informing your professor(s). This notification process must occur more than a week before any accommodation can be utilized.   Please contact Disability Services at (714) 516-4520 if you have questions regarding this procedure, or for information and to make an appointment to discuss and/or request potential accommodations based on documentation of your disability. Once formal approval of your need for accommodation has been granted, you are encouraged to talk with your professor(s) about your accommodation options. The granting of any accommodation will not be retroactive and cannot jeopardize the academic standards or integrity of the course.  **Equity and Diversity Statement**: Chapman University is committed to ensuring equality and valuing diversity. Students and professors are reminded to show respect at all times as outlined in [Chapman’s Harassment and Discrimination Policy](https://www.chapman.edu/diversity/_files/strategic-initiatives/harassment-and-discrimination-policy.pdf). Any violations of this policy should be discussed with the professor, the [Dean of Students](https://www.chapman.edu/students/dean-of-students/index.aspx) and/or otherwise reported in accordance with this policy. |