FYSP 079 – Agreeing to Disagree (Fall 2022)

Instructor: Kevin Woods. Call me Kevin! (he/him)

Contacting me: Kevin.Woods@oberlin.edu or 443-695-1681 (mobile). Email is better for involved or less important questions; texting is better for quick, time-sensitive questions.

Class: MWF 3:30-4:20pm, King 121.

Office Hours: Tues 12-1:30pm (in King 203); Thurs 11am-noon and Fri 2:30-3:20pm (in King 220B)

Books:
> *Cheating Monkeys and Citizen Bees: The Nature of Cooperation in Animals and Humans*, by Lee Dugatkin. It can be hard to find physical copies of this, because it is out of print (the bookstore has a few; amazon will take too long), so **I will give you a pdf copy**. We will be reading this for class **next Wednesday.**
> *Why We Cooperate*, by Michael Tomasello, et al.
> *The Joy of Game Theory*, by Presh Talwalkar.
> *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion*, by Jonathan Haidt.

Blackboard:
> I will post reading assignments and other announcements on Blackboard. You will need regular access to Blackboard and to your Oberlin email.

Outline of course:
> The basis of the course is this tension: cooperation is important and valuable, but it often involves sacrifice. So how do we get past this? We will examine this problem from various disciplines, including animal behavior and evolution, psychology of children and great apes, and the psychology and philosophy of morality.
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> We will have daily readings and discussions about these topics. You will also write several papers on these topics. Interleaved will be a mathematical strain. A subject called game theory seeks to quantify how people interact when they have their own preferences about what happens. There will be a few assignments that are straight-forwardly mathematical, but you will also work on integrating quantitative evidence into your other writings.

Grading:
> Class participation (35%),
> Assignments (65%)
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> Class participation (35%).
>> This counts so much because it is a vital part of this discussion-based course. It is important that you be actively engaged in the discussions: listening, thinking, and talking. Try to say something almost every day! It is important that you have done the reading or the assignment for that day. It is important that you be in class each day, on time.
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>> We will be using the **Discussion Board** on Blackboard. For each day, I will create a post, including the information for the assignment or reading to be done before class. By **1pm** before each class, you must post a short paragraph commenting on the assignment/reading, or on another student's previous comments. Also I encourage you to continue the discussion with more posts, but you're only required to post one. Your posts should be focused: more than just "I didn't get

___" or "I really liked ___". Explain why you liked it or where your confusion starts. To do the one for Wednesday, sign in to blackboard.oberlin.edu, click on "Courses", follow the link for our course, click on the forum "Daily Assignments and Announcements", and click on the thread "Wednesday, September 7". You can reply to my first message here with your short paragraph comment.

There will also be a number of short mathematical assignments dealing with game theory. These will not be graded, but you will discuss them in class, and your efforts on these assignments will count toward your participation grade.

Assignments (65%).
 I will detail what they are as we go. Roughly, there will be four papers of different "genres", totaling about 15-20 pages (double-spaced); your work on these will be nicely spread out, as each will involve drafts, peer review, revision, etc. There will also be a project whose content is largely up to you (a chance to be creative!). There will be no exams and no final exam (the final version of the last paper/project will be due during the final exam week).

Honor Code:
 The general theme is that discussion with other students on your assignments is great, but the final work must be your own, though you may "use sources of assistance routinely offered to all students, such as reference librarians and writing tutors" (Honor Code text). You should never have someone else doing any of the writing for you. You should never be copying text from anywhere without citing the sources and using quotation marks. You should be careful that paraphrasing is more than just read a sentence from a source, change the words, read the next sentence, change the words, etc. (You should be reading whole paragraphs and sections, internalizing, then putting in your own words.) Paraphrasing should also be cited, but not put in quotes.

Support:
- You belong at Oberlin and you belong in this class. People arrive here with different experiences and backgrounds with respect to reading, writing, discussion, and mathematics. Put in the work, seek out support, and focus on self-improvement, and I promise you that **your intellectual skills will grow**. The rest of us are here to help, including:
- Me! Come by office hours, any time.
- Your peers! Talking and working with other students helps everyone improve.
- The Writing Center! They are available to help with writing at all stages of the process. You can either drop in or make an appointment in advance. You'll meet a Writing Associate in the next few weeks, and I'll send you more information after they officially open for the semester.
- The Library Staff! At least one paper will involve using library resources to find some external sources. We'll meet a library staff member soon, and they are available for online chat, drop in questions, and by appointment.
- Yourself! Your skills will improve best if you come at this with a growth mindset: embrace the challenge of this class, persist through difficulty, be inspired (not threatened) by the success of others, seek out support.
- If you have a disability of any sort that may affect your performance in this class, please consult with me and with Student Academic Success Programs (Peters 118). I am committed to meeting the needs of all students in my class.
- **I want you to succeed, and I want to help you succeed.** Please let me know how I can help!