**Human Suffering** 2 credits (elective) Fall 2014

Time and Location: M 13:30 -15:10 in Z14, 411A

Instructor: David Weberman. Office Hours: M 11:30-13:30, W 15:15-17:15 & by appt. in Z14, 416

Course Description: The course explore the idea that there is much suffering endemic in the human condition and much of this suffering is rather uniquely human. We will begin by reading David Benatar’s *Better Never to Have Been* (2006). We will then turn to discussions of Schopenhauer’s pessimism and Stoic ideas about suffering. I will then attempt to develop the idea of surplus suffering. We will consider some possible sources of such surplus suffering such as competitiveness, the difficulty of knowing what one needs and the problem of artificial desires.

Course Goal: The course has two primary goals: 1) acquiring the skills needed to understand and critically assess the relevant texts as well as to formulate and present one’s own arguments and views on the subject-matter and 2) acquiring detailed knowledge of the issues, positions and arguments.

Learning Outcomes: By the end of the course students will be expected to possess the skills to work with the material studied. They are expected to be able to analyze the concepts and argumentative structures and discern points of interest for a deeper analysis.

Requirement and Assessment: Regular attendance, regular preparation, active participation in discussion, one class presentation, one 2,000-word term paper; 20% class participation, 80% term paper,

Texts: Book by Benatar; articles and books chapters in pdf form by e-mail and on e-learning website.

Week 1 Mo Sep 22 Introduction; Benatar

Week 2 Mo, Sep 29 Benatar

Week 3 Mo Oct 6 Benatar

Week 4 Mo Oct 13 Schopenhauer

Week 5 Mo Oct 20 Schopenhauer

Week 6 Mo Oct 27 Stoicism

Week 7 Mo Nov 3 Stoicism

Week 8 Mo Nov 10 Surplus Suffering

Week 9 Mo Nov 17 Difficulty of Knowing Oneself

Week 10 Mo Nov 24 Artificial Desires

Week 11 Mo Dec 1 Competitiveness

Week 12 Mo Dec 8 Open