

Contents

Course Description.....	1
Textbooks.....	1
Grading.....	1
<i>Grade conversion:</i>	2
<i>Definition of Letter Grading Symbols:</i>	2
University Policies and Campus Resources.....	2
Schedule.....	3

Course Description

Is there such a thing as *the* meaning of life? What makes a life meaningful? Does the scientific worldview allow meaning or meaningfulness? What is the relation between happiness and a meaningful life? Does current technology change our understanding of meaningfulness? This course will examine philosophical and scientific perspectives on the meaning of life, the nature of happiness, and how to think about the value and purpose of our existence. This is an approved GE course.

Textbooks

1. Thomas Hurka, [*The Best Things in Life*](#) (Oxford University Press, 2011)
2. Other readings and audio/video presentations will be available through Blackboard Learn or links on the syllabus.

Grading

Your course grade is based on the score you get out of a total of 200 points:

- (i) 40 points for attendance. You may miss 3 classes with no penalty; after that, you lose 2 points for each class you miss unless you have very good reason for missing that class.
- (ii) 100 points for 5 multiple-choice quizzes. Each quiz is 20 points and has 20 questions.
- (iii) 60 points for a final paper of about 1,000 words.

Grade conversion:

181-200 points: A	171-180 points: A-	161-170 points: B+
151-160 points: B	141-150 points: B-	131-140 points: C+
121-130 points: C	111-120 points: C-	101-110 points: D
100 and below: F		

Definition of Letter Grading Symbols:

- A** Superior work. A high level of achievement that is normally attained by relatively few students.
- B** Good work. A level of achievement clearly better than adequate competence in the subject matter/skill.
- C** Adequate work. A level of achievement indicating adequate competence in the subject matter/skill.
- D** Inadequate work. A level of achievement that does not meet all the requirements of the course.
- F** Unacceptable work. A level of achievement that fails to meet the minimum requirements of the course.

University Policies and Campus Resources

Adding and Dropping: You are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, etc. found at <http://www.csuchico.edu/catalog/>. You should be aware of the new deadlines and penalties for adding and dropping classes.

Academic Integrity: Students are expected to be familiar with the University's Academic Integrity Policy. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. The policy on academic integrity and other resources related to student conduct for this course can be found at: <http://www.csuchico.edu/sjd/integrity.shtml>.

Disability Services: Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me to discuss your specific needs. You can also contact the Disability Support Services office to coordinate reasonable accommodations for your needs. Disabilities Support Services online: <http://www.csuchico.edu/dss/studentServices/>.

ScheduleThe Problem of Meaningfulness

- Week 1 Leo Tolstoy, "My Confession"
 Arthur Schopenhauer, "On the Suffering of the World"
- Week 2 Albert Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus"
 Richard Taylor, "The Meaning of Life"
- Week 3 Thomas Nagel, "The Absurd"
 Robert Nozick, "Philosophy and the Meaning of Life"
- Watch: Massimo Pigliucci, ["How to Think Like a Philosopher"](#) (5 mins)

"What Are We?" and "Who Am I?"

- Week 4 E. O. Wilson, "The Reason We Exist" (*The Meaning of Human Existence*, Part I)
- Week 5 E. O. Wilson, "The Unity of Knowledge" (*The Meaning of Human Existence*, Part II)
- Week 6 Harry Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person"
 William Ruddick, "'Biographical Lives' Revisited and Extended"
- Watch: Daniel Kahneman, ["The Riddle of Experience vs. Memory"](#) (20 mins)

Happiness and Well-Being

- Week 7 Thomas Hurka, "Feeling Good" (*The Best Things in Life*, Ch.1)
 Thomas Hurka, "Finding that Feeling" (*The Best Things in Life*, Ch.2)
- Week 8 Thomas Hurka, "The Place of Pleasure" (*The Best Things in Life*, Ch.3)
 Thomas Hurka, "Knowing What's What" (*The Best Things in Life*, Ch.4)
- Week 9 Thomas Hurka, "Making Things Happen" (*The Best Things in Life*, Ch.6)
 Thomas Hurka, "Being Good" (*The Best Things in Life*, Ch.4)
- Week 10 Thomas Hurka, "Love and Friendship" (*The Best Things in Life*, Ch.7)
 Thomas Hurka, "Putting it Together" (*The Best Things in Life*, Ch.8)
- Watch: Daniel Gilbert, ["The Surprising Science of Happiness"](#) (21 mins)

Science, Technology, and Meaningfulness

Week 11 Søren Kierkegaard, "The Present Age"

Week 12 Hubert Dreyfus, "Disembodies Telepresence and the Remoteness of the Real"
(*On the Internet*, Ch.3)

Hubert Dreyfus, "Nihilism on the Information Highway: Anonymity vs. Commitment
in the Present Age" (*On the Internet*, Ch.4)

Week 13 Daniel Dennett, "Where Am I?"

Watch: Sam Harris, "[Science Can Answer Moral Questions](#)" (23 mins)

Some Answers

Week 14 Susan Wolf, "The Meanings of Lives"

John Kekes, "The Meaning of Life"

Week 15 Wai-hung Wong, "Meaningfulness and Identities"

Watch: Jonathan Gottschall, "[The Storytelling Animal](#)" (17 mins)