The Good Life

Philosophy 190x
Winter 2013

Instructor

Jonathan Ellis
108 Cowell Annex
Office Hours: Thursdays 2:15 – 3:45, & by appointment
Email: jellis@ucsc.edu

Course Description

How should I live my life? What factors should I take into account when deciding this? What makes for a meaningful life? Or a happy life? Or a “good” life? Or a rewarding or fulfilling life? What is “happiness” anyway? Or meaning or fulfillment? These perennial philosophical questions are the central questions of this seminar.

The course will be divided into four parts. We will begin with the Ancient Stoics and their approach to some of these questions. We will then turn to some empirical research from psychology, especially concerning happiness. In the third part of the course, we will investigate some ideas from Eastern philosophy, primarily from the Buddhist tradition. We will conclude with the notion of meaning and the role that it plays in various answers to the central questions of the course. In each part, we will not only critically assess the ideas we study but also consider the possibility of applying them to our own everyday lives. We will also pay close attention to the relationships among the ideas discussed in the four parts of the course.

Texts

1. Books

Available for purchase at The Literary Guillotine, 204 Locust St., one and a half blocks west of Pacific Ave. in Downtown Santa Cruz. (Tel.#: 457-1195)

Dharma Punx (2003) by Noah Levine
Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness: Walking the Buddha’s Path (2001) by Bhante Henepola Gunaratana
Man’s Search for Meaning (1946) by Viktor Frankl
2. **Selected readings posted on eCommons**

- Seneca, “On the Happy Life”
- M. Aurelius, from *Meditations*
- Nozick, R. “Happiness”
- Bok, S., from *Exploring Happiness*
- Schopenhauer, A., from *Essays and Aphorisms*
- Thich Nhat Hanh, from *The Miracle of Mindfulness*
- Ben-Shahar, T., from *Happier*
- Nietzsche, F., from *Untimely Meditations*
- Tolstoy, L., “My Confession”
- Wilson, T., from *Strangers to Ourselves*

**Course Requirements**

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<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Percent of Semester Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>In-Class Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly Journal</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Project (including two drafts of a 1-2 page proposal and one 6-8 page report)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper (10-15 pgs.)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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**Course Policies and Suggestions**

1. The class will be divided into groups of 4 or 5 students, which will meet weekly outside of the seminar in order to continue discussion from the most recent seminar meeting as well as, when applicable, to discuss students’ projects. Attendance at these meetings is mandatory. We will divide everyone into groups the second meeting of the term.

2. The reading assignments below are tentative. I will occasionally assign additional readings (posted on eCommons) or online podcasts or videos. It is your responsibility to be aware of announcements made in class or by email. Please be sure that the email address I have for you is one that you check at least every other day.

3. You are required to bring to each class your journals as well as the reading for that meeting.

4. Please drop by during my office hours. I’m always happy to continue class discussion or to discuss other philosophical matters or issues concerning the course. If I’m already talking with someone, be sure to let me know that you’re waiting.

5. My email is jellis@ucsc.edu. Feel free to email me about any administrative matters (deadlines, appointments, syllabus, etc.). Please do not email me with philosophical questions. Explaining a philosophical matter often requires more than a few sentences and in my courses is best reserved for office hours and appointments.
6. Policy on late papers: Each day a paper is late, one third of a grade will be deducted (i.e., a B+ moves to a B, a C to a C-, etc.). All days count—weekend days, holidays, etc.

7. If you qualify for classroom accommodations because of a disability, please attain an Accommodation Authorization from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) and submit it to me in person outside of class (e.g., office hours) within the first two weeks of the quarter. Contact DRC at 459-2089 (voice), 459-4806 (TTY), or http://drc.ucsc.edu/ for more information on the requirements and/or process.

8. You are responsible for being familiar with UCSC’s policies on plagiarism and proper sourcing. Plagiarism is a grave offense, which I take very seriously. Helpful guidelines can be found at the following two sites:

   http://library.ucsc.edu/science/instruction/CitingSources.pdf

   NetTrail: http://nettrail.ucsc.edu/ (Section XI, Info Ethics)

COURSE CALENDAR

Jan. 8  Introductory Meeting

Jan. 15 Ancient Stoicism

   Reading:
   A Guide to the Good Life, introduction and parts 1 & 2
   Seneca, “On the Happy Life” (eCommons)

Jan. 22 Ancient Stoicism

   A Guide to the Good Life, finish book
   Marcus Aurelius, from Meditations (eCommons)
   Nozick, R. “Happiness” (eCommons)

Jan. 29 Contemporary Science

   Reading
   The Happiness Hypothesis, entire book
   Bok, S., from Exploring Happiness (eCommons)
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tr>
<td>Feb. 5</td>
<td>Ideas from the East</td>
<td><em>Eight Mindful Steps</em>, pgs. 1-56</td>
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<td>Schopenhauer, A., from <em>Essays and Aphorisms</em> (eCommons)</td>
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<td><em>Dharma Punx</em>, preface &amp; chapters 1-12</td>
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<td>Feb. 12</td>
<td>Ideas from the East</td>
<td><em>Eight Mindful Steps</em>, pgs. 57-131</td>
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<td><em>Dharma Punx</em>, finish book</td>
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<td>Feb. 19</td>
<td>Ideas from the East</td>
<td><em>Eight Mindful Steps</em>, finish book</td>
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<td>Thich Nhat Hanh, from <em>The Miracle of Mindfulness</em> (eCommons)</td>
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<td>Feb. 26</td>
<td>The Role of Meaning</td>
<td><em>Man’s Search for Meaning</em>, entire book</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar. 5</td>
<td>The Role of Meaning</td>
<td>Ben-Shahar, T., from <em>Happier</em> (eCommons)</td>
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<td>Nietzsche, F., from <em>Untimely Meditations</em> (eCommons)</td>
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<td>Wilson, T., from <em>Strangers to Ourselves</em> (eCommons)</td>
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<td>Mar. 12</td>
<td>Topic to Be Determined by the Interests of the Class</td>
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<td>Mar. 19</td>
<td>Final Papers due by 5pm</td>
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