

PHIL 1111 - Know Thyself: Philosophy and the Question of Life's Meaning

CU Denver First-Year Seminar

Fall 2012 TTh 11-1215; room: KING 218

Dr. David Hildebrand, CU Denver

Welcome from Professor

Welcome to the University of Colorado Denver and the First-Year Seminar (FYS) program. I'm a philosophy professor who has been teaching philosophy for over 15 years. I came to CU Denver in 2003. It's been my experience that philosophy is one of the best courses students starting college can take because they are really beginning to challenge themselves about life's biggest questions: how to find meaning in life and how to be happy. These are questions I started asking in high school and I have found that seeking answers for these questions--through art, science, philosophy, and just social conversation--has provided me not only with some answers, but also with an activity which is *itself* meaningful. I hope to help you get started on what will hopefully be a lifetime of this kind of activity.

From my perspective as a faculty member, the best aspect of the FYS program is you. Entering freshmen students are enthusiastic about earning a bachelor's degree and preparing for the future, but at the same time are typically a little apprehensive about academic success and college finances. A portion of my role as a FYS faculty member is to be a mentor, and not just in the PHIL 1111 course, but on any aspect of your transition to college.

Success in college carries responsibilities for you. Simply put, student success is highly linked to student participation and engagement. The PHIL 1111 class is designed around student participation and will provide multiple options for on- and off-campus engagement. Whether you reside in Campus Village or are living off campus, engagement activities will assist you in making a successful transition and improve your self-confidence for completing a baccalaureate degree.

I care about you and your success, and I pledge to be a resource for your transition to CU Denver.

-- David Hildebrand, Denver, Colorado, August, 2012

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Welcome from PAL Mentor

Hello my name is Jennifer Huynh and I will be your Peer Advocate Leader also known as PAL. As a PAL I will be in class with you guys twice a week, I will inform you on all the activities that will be happening on campus during that week as well as information on student life and First Year Seminar Workshops at the beginning of class and through e-mail. Not only that I also have a budget aside for our class in which we can plan a field trip to go on that fits everyone's schedule. I encourage you all to contact me with any issues or challenges you come across whether it's related to school or personal issues because I am here to help you all succeed in all that you do. Can't wait to get to know you guys more, it will be an awesome semester!

Course Description and Objectives:

This First Year Seminar is a three-part course.

- 1. The philosophy/content part of this class seeks to answer the question, Does life have meaning? This deceptively simple question will provide our entry point into philosophy. We will read and discuss a number of writers, from Plato to the present, who, in considering the relationship of the individual to the world also raise the question of the meaning of life. This fundamental philosophical question will lead us into discussions regarding character and the good life, death and suicide, advertising and consumerism, and the impact religion and science can have on meaningfulness.
- 2. The second part of the course introduces students to the campus and to student resources, activities and organizations. These may include, but are not limited to, the library, advising center, writing and career centers.
- 3. The skills part of our class will help you all become more successful students. We will spend time developing life skills that help students make the most of their university experience. We consider the purposes of a college education, and develop skills in critical thinking, listening, and writing. We will also help you learn to be proactive about getting career counseling and advising, both in general education and in your major. The purpose is to help you become more imaginative and confident in taking control of your educational and professional directions.

Core Credit: PHIL 1111 will apply toward the CU Denver Core Curriculum in the Humanities knowledge area. Philosophy majors cannot use PHIL 1111 to satisfy the Core Curriculum or the Philosophy major, but credit will apply toward graduation requirements as an elective.

Prerequisites: There are no specific prerequisites to the PHIL 1111 course.

Required Texts and Materials: One textbook (the Plato) is available at Auraria and Big Dog Textbooks (1331 15th Street). The other is available only through Auraria bookstore. (See below.)

Things you need to buy:

1. *THE TRIAL AND DEATH OF SOCRATES* by Plato, GMA Grube, translator (Hackett)
2. *STUDENT SUCCESS & CAREER DEVELOPMENT – UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER* (Pearson, ISBN 1256594024); note: **only available through Auraria Bookstore**

This is also required because it is another place where your required texts will be:

3. *COURSE BLACKBOARD SITE:* readings are posted here: <http://blackboard.cuonline.edu/> On this page are INSTRUCTIONS TO ENROLL. Please make sure you enroll right at the beginning of the class.

Note: You should take a look at: my home page at <http://www.davidhildebrand.org>. Here there are a variety of general study tips and resources in philosophy.

Outcomes: from the *academic content* portion of this first-year seminar, students will be able to:

- Become familiar with the variety of ways philosophers have tried to analyze and make meaningful the difficult issues of happiness and meaningfulness of life.
- Be able to comprehend the logical arguments offered by various philosophers in their analyses of the problems involved.

- Be able to criticize those arguments by pointing out where they lack evidence, make an unreasonable leap, hold a false assumption, etc. and express this criticism through exams, verbal responses, and writing.
- Be able to discuss philosophical issues in a focused and informed way with others in the class. This will involve listening closely to their points, then responding in a way that moves the discussion ahead.
- Demonstration of the above will be expressed in writing and verbally, as described by the course requirements, below.

From the *academic skills* portion of this first-year seminar, students will be able to:

- develop an awareness and utilization of campus resources including library, learning resource center, writing center, career center, advising office(s), etc.
- improve academic skills including listening and study skills, test taking, time management, career counseling, and advising
- gain self confidence for a successful first year in college

Early Alert: PHIL 1111 participates in the Early Alert program designed to identify undergraduate students in the 5th-6th week who need assistance based on their academic performance, class participation and/or class behavior. I will notify you about any alerts, and alerted students will be contacted by their college advisor via e-mail to initiate the review process. It is important to respond quickly when contacted by your advisor about any faculty generated alert.

Student Effort: Time Management and Expectations about Reading/Understanding Material

Time Per Week: Many of us have responsibilities that compete with this class. Though I am sympathetic, these will not excuse poor attendance or late work. If short term, non-emergency illnesses or other contingencies create problems with attending class or completing assignments in a timely manner, students must notify me before class time by leaving a message on my office telephone. I will discuss the matter with students during the next class meeting or schedule an appointment at that time if needed. I will only consider an extension if I receive notification prior to the class or deadline except in cases of documented emergency.

A higher level of thinking and analysis will be required in PHIL 1111 than used in high school. Students will be asked to learn philosophical principles, critically evaluate logical and philosophical issues, and apply principles to situations not directly encountered in lecture.

Additional course advice:

Readings: It is expected that you have done the readings before we discuss them. As you read, copy out important points and questions you have onto a separate sheet of paper. (These will help you with your short reflection papers.) You may also want to note problem passages (e.g., with a "?" or "Q.") in your text as you read. These are good points for class discussion. You should come to each class able to discuss the main issues of the reading and you could be asked during class to present the main points to the class. Your well-prepared participation is crucial for a successful class. Please see the *Tips for Understanding Philosophy and for Writing Philosophy Papers* on my home page. See also this page for tips on participating and reading.

Philosophy needs to be re-read. Unlike some fiction, philosophy needs to be read slowly and deliberately. Don't rush through it -- think about issues as they are raised, going back and forth if necessary. And if you're burning

out, take a break. You will find that a text can seem quite different the second time through. Thomas Kuhn, a noted philosopher, wrote:

When reading the works of an important thinker, look first for the apparent absurdities in the text and ask yourself how a sensible person could have written them. When you find an answer, ...when these passages make sense, then you may find that more central passages, ones you previously thought you understood, have changed their meaning. (from *The Essential Tension*, p. xii.)

Getting ready for class: please set aside about 10 minutes shortly before class to look back over (skim-review) the readings and whatever you have written for that day.

Course Requirements/Evaluation: 1000 total points can be accumulated for this course:
670 points for content and 330 points for skills

At a glance (details, below):

| ASSIGNMENT (Skill or Content) | VALUE | DUE DATE |
|--|-------------|--|
| Active Attendance (2 unexcused absences permitted) (Content) | 150 | Throughout semester |
| Visit with Dr. Hildebrand (Skills) | 30 | By end of third week of class. |
| Visit your college academic advisor (by appointment) (Skills) | 40 | Before Nov. 15 |
| Exam 1 (Content) | 150 | October 11th |
| Workshops: your choice of two campus resources, Eg., Library, Counseling Center, online academic ethics workshop, Career Center (Skills); the Writing Center visits our class on Sept. 20 | 90 | 1st workshop done by 9/27. 2nd workshop done by 10/25. Third will be in class. |
| Academic Skills Texts Exercises and Essays (Skills) | 80 | Various dates; see below |
| Short writings 5 papers, 1 page each, worth 20 each (Content) | 100 | 3 must be done by Sept. 27th; 2 more by December 6th |
| Activities paper (documenting three) (Skills) | 90 | December 6th |
| Take home final exam (Content) | 270 | December 11th |
| Course total 670 Content; 330 Skills | 1000 | |

Academic Content: 670 Points

Active Attendance

150 points

“Attendance” requires both (a) physically being in class on time and not leaving early and (b) actively listening and engaging in discussions.

Regarding (a): Attendance will be recorded in a log you will sign. You are permitted two unexcused absences for the semester. For any beyond two, an absence may be excused, exams may be made up, or homework may be turned in late only if (1) the absence has been approved in advance by the professor or (2) the absent student can document illness or emergency. Documents about absence must be brought to professor within one week of returning to class. PLEASE NOTE: Each unexcused absence from required class days will lower your final attendance average by 8 points. [E.g. If you miss 5 classes your attendance grade would be $85 - 40 (8 \times 5) = 45$.]

Regarding (b): Part of attendance is active participation. This means making oral contributions to the collective learning experience of the class as a whole: asking pertinent questions, answering questions correctly or, at least, provocatively, making insightful observations, presentation of your short papers in class, and your participation in any group work. Shyness is not an excuse—oral participation is part of your evaluation. You can also demonstrate “active” participation in other ways: informed dialogue, presentation of your short papers in class, and your participation in any group work.

NOTE: As part of CU Denver's We Care philosophy, this course is participating in a pilot project to examine the relationship between attendance and student achievement. Attendance will be taken and recorded during this course. There is NO PENALTY for non-attendance in relation to this project (though attendance is part of this course's grade). Students with two or more absences simply will receive a Care Call from a student peer mentor to help identify potential issues and ensure awareness of available resources.

**Exams (2) 400
points**

There will be two exams. One is about 6 weeks into the class, the other is a take home exam at the end. Exams will consist of a mixture of short answers, multiple choice, and essay. *No make-up exams will be given without extenuating circumstances and arrangements made prior to the exam. A zero will be given for any missed exam not arranged for in advance.* "Extenuating circumstances" include severe medical problems; talk to me about which other circumstances would count as "excusable."

Short Writings (5 total; 3 by September 27, rest by December 6) 100 points

The purpose of these assignments is to help you clarify your understanding of the readings and to help you think critically about the issues. Follow these instructions carefully, please.

What to write on short/critical reaction papers:

- Short papers should be: one-page, typewritten reactions or questions about some specific issue which you find compelling in the readings. Your paper must not simply sum up the reading or repeat points made there. (I.e., no book reports, please.) Rather, you must try to raise a question or discuss some original insight. You may use these papers to demonstrate your application of a concept/idea in the readings to an experience you have making or experiencing art, but the connection to the reading must be significant (and not a mere "jumping off" point. *See my davidhildebrand.org website link called: "Writing short, critical papers" for further hints about how to write a good paper.*
 - o The first paragraph should state in 1-2 sentences a summary of what the paper is about.
 - o Only papers written on a reading or topic that will be discussed in the class immediately coming up are acceptable.

When to write short papers:

- You must do 5 critical papers total and you may not hand in more than one paper on the same date. THREE papers must be done by the course midpoint, September 27th. Students who have not done 3 papers by this point will only be permitted to do 2 more papers and will get 0 for the one's not done.
- You must come to class for a paper to be accepted.

Grading on short papers

- Grade: This will be a "graded" assignment only in a loose sense; in other words it will be either S-satisfactory (full credit or 20 points) or U-unsatisfactory (half credit or 10 points). A zero (0) will be awarded if nothing (or next to nothing) is turned in on time.
- TWO MAKE-UPS: If you get a Unsatisfactory on up to two papers, you may revise and resubmit them. The old grade will be dropped in favor of the revised paper's grade.

Academic Skills: 330 points

Academic Skills Texts Exercises and Essays

80 points

These will be exercises and/or short essays related to the Skills chapters on the reading schedule. Due dates will be listed on the reading schedule.

Visit with Dr. Hildebrand (Skills) Due: by end of third week of class.

30 points

This will be an informal 10-15 minute “hello” visit. We will share interests, background, and hopes for the class. It’s a chance for you to tell me what you think may be your greatest challenges for adapting to college or things I can expect to help you to develop.

Visit your academic advisor (earlier is better) Due: proof this was done due Nov. 8th

40 points

This will be a typical visit to discuss plans and questions with your assigned advisor. I will require verification that you went to this meeting in order to give credit.

Three on-campus activities (with a write-up for each) Due: December 6

90 points

You will be required to participate in 3 campus activities such as a club, a lecture or other organized event. One of these activities will be a class-sponsored project that the PAL and I will put together. I will keep you apprized of some events but you also need to be looking out for things you want to be involved in. Campus activities are broadly defined as events sponsored by CU Denver Office of Student Life, plays and performances by the College of Arts and Media, all CU Denver sponsored student clubs, tri-institution sponsored lectures or events, and social events developed for FYS courses; but not MSCD sports events. To encourage social engagement, extra credit is available for students who participate in campus activities with other PHIL 1111 students. Verification of activity participation must be presented to Dr. Hildebrand for your grade. **Assignment:** write up 350-450 word descriptions of **each** activity you attend. You will also turn in a form that I will supply for each campus activity.

Three campus “workshops” (with forms turned in for each)

90 points

Due dates: first workshop must be done (form handed in) by September 27. The second must be done by October 25th. The third will be in class.

You will learn about and take advantage of at least **three campus resources**. These could be the career center, the library, the writing center or other similar resources. A visit to your academic adviser is mandatory. One of the workshops will be during class time as either an in-class or at support office workshop.

Assignment: You will turn in a form that I will supply for each resource you use.

Course Grades: I use the plus/minus system. There are 1000 possible points for this class. An "A" will be a body of work achieving at or above 930 points; an "A-" will be 900-929 points; a "B+" is 870-899 points, etc. Values for those letters, as well as the policies regarding other grades such as Incomplete, are available in the CU Academic Policies and Regulations section of the handbook. I have set out my standards of what a grade means on my FAQ section of my website, listed above.

Course Policies

Plagiarism/ Academic Dishonesty Plagiarism is a form of stealing. It occurs when an author uses the words or ideas of others as if they were the author’s own original thought. (It may include word-for-word copying, interspersing one’s own words with another’s, paraphrasing, inventing or counterfeiting sources, submitting

another's work as one's own, neglecting quotation marks on material that is otherwise acknowledged.) Plagiarism is often unintentional. It can be avoided by always acknowledging one's debt to others by citing the exact source of a quotation or paraphrase. Since plagiarism is such a serious violation of academic honesty, the PENALTY for it will be an AUTOMATIC "F" FOR THIS COURSE.

Academic dishonesty is the intentional disregard of course or university rules. This may include (but is not limited to) collaborating with others when rules forbid (such as on exams) or using sources/experts not permitted by an assignment. The CU handbook has a more complete description of plagiarism and academic dishonesty. Anyone caught violating the rules of an exam or an assignment can expect a failing grade for the assignment and possibly the course as well.

Access, Disability, Communication: The University of Colorado Denver is committed to providing reasonable accommodation and access to programs and services to persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities who want academic accommodations must register with Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 177 Arts Building, 303-556-3450, TTY 303-556-4766, FAX 303-556-2074. I will be happy to provide approved accommodations, once you provide me with a copy of DRS's letter. [DRS requires students to provide current and adequate documentation of their disabilities. Once a student has registered with DRS, DRS will review the documentation and assess the student's request for academic accommodations in light of the documentation. DRS will then provide the student with a letter indicating which academic accommodations have been approved.]

Students called for military duty: If you are a student in the military with the potential of being called to military service and /or training during the course of the semester, you are encouraged to contact your school/college Associate Dean or Advising Office immediately.

Course Communication: In addition to announcements made and written handouts distributed in class, I may need to contact you between classes, which I'll do through individual and group email messages. One of the requirements for this course is that you maintain an email address, check it regularly for messages, be sure it is working, and let me know if you change your email address. You are responsible for any messages, including assignments and schedule changes, I send you via email. You also may contact me via email, in addition to seeing me during office hours or calling me.

Civility and Technology: Laptops are not permitted. Turn off beepers and cell phones during class. Text messaging, web surfing, and other electronic distractions may result in expulsion from class and will be counted as an "unexcused absence" from class. Students who are speaking deserve your attention and respect as much as I do. Listen to one another. Adherence to the Student Conduct Code is expected.

Staying in Contact throughout the Semester

Purpose: Your success is very important to me, and I intend to be helpful to you in this class and in your transition to college throughout the semester. Besides any required meetings, I *strongly* encourage you to come by during my office hours. We can talk about the class readings and lectures, exams and papers, your experience in the program, at UCD, or just philosophy in general.

Note: If you are a student with a disability, I will make myself available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations. Before accommodations will be made, you may be required to provide documentation. Students with disabilities will be accommodated. Students with disabilities are required to register disabilities with the UCD Disability Services Office, and are responsible for requesting reasonable accommodations at the beginning of the term.

PLEASE NOTE: ALL COURSE REQUIREMENTS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE INSTRUCTOR.

Fall 2012 CLAS Academic Policies

The following policies pertain to all degree students in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS).

- **Schedule verification:** It is each student's responsibility to verify online that his/her official registration is correct: verify before classes begin and prior to the drop/add deadline. Failure to verify schedule accuracy is not sufficient reason to justify a late add or drop.
- **E-mail:** Students must activate and regularly check their official student e-mail account for CU Denver business: <http://www.ucdenver.edu/student-services/Pages/WebMail.aspx>. Those who forward email must check CU Denver e-mail regularly for messages not automatically forwarded.
- **Waitlists:**
 - Students are not automatically notified if they are added to a class from a waitlist.
 - Students are not automatically dropped from a class if they never attended, stopped attending, or do not make tuition payments.
 - Waitlists are purged after the 1st week of classes, after which a paper Schedule Adjustment Form (SAF or drop/add form) is required. It is the student's responsibility to get the form (online or at the Advising Office, NC 4002), have it signed, deliver it to the Registrar (Annex 100) or the Student Services Center (NC 1003), and verify her/his schedule online.
- **Late adds** (after 5 September) will be approved only when circumstances surrounding the late add are beyond the student's control. This will require a written petition and verifiable documentation. Petition forms are available in NC 4002. The signature of a faculty member on a SAF does not guarantee that a late add petition will be approved.
- **Late drops** (after 5 September) will be approved only when circumstances surrounding the late drop have arisen after the published drop deadline and are beyond the student's control. This will require a written petition and verifiable documentation. The signature of a faculty member does not guarantee that a late drop petition will be approved.
- **Tuition:** Students are responsible for completing arrangements with financial aid, family, scholarships, etc. to pay their tuition prior to Census Date (5 September). Students who drop after that date are (1) financially responsible for tuition and fees, (2) academically responsible and will receive a "W" grade, and (3) are ineligible for a refund of COF hours or tuition.
- **Graduation:**
 - Undergraduate students wishing to graduate in fall 2012 must complete the online Intent to Graduate Form and meet with their academic advisor to obtain a graduation application. This application must be submitted by Census Date (5 September). You can obtain an application only after meeting with your advisor. There are no exceptions to this policy.
 - Graduate students wishing to graduate in fall semester 2012 must complete the online Intent to Graduate form and have a Request for Admissions to Candidacy on file with the CU Denver Graduate School (LSC 1251) no later than 5 PM, September 5, 2012.

Important Dates and Deadlines

- **August 19, 2012:** Last day to withdraw from all classes via UCDAccess and receive a refund of the \$200 advance payment and all tuition.
- **August 20, 2012:** First day of classes.
- **August 26, 2012:** Last day to add or waitlist classes using UCDAccess. After this date, a Schedule Adjustment Form (SAF) is required to change, add, or drop.
- **August 27, 2012:** Last day to drop without a \$100 drop charge. No adds permitted on this day.
- **August 28 - September 5, 2012:**
 - UCDAccess registration is closed; registration now requires a SAF with faculty signature.
 - Verify your registration via UCDAccess. You are not registered for a course unless your name appears on the official roster; conversely, your name may have been added automatically from the waitlist without notification, which means that you will be held responsible.
- **September 3, 2012:** Labor Day (no classes).
- **September 5, 2012: Census date.**
 - **9/5/12, 5 PM:** Last day to add structured courses without a written petition for a late add. This is an absolute deadline and is treated as such. This does not apply to independent studies, internships, project hours, thesis hours, dissertation hours, and modular courses.
 - **9/5/12, 5 PM:** Last day to drop a course or completely withdraw from fall 2012 using a SAF and still receive a tuition refund, minus the drop fee. After this date, tuition is forfeited and a "W" will appear on the transcript. This includes section changes. This is an absolute deadline.
 - **9/5/12, 5 PM:** Last day to request pass/fail or no-credit option for a course.
 - **9/5/12, 5 PM:** Last day for a graduate student to register for a Candidate for Degree.
 - **9/5/12, 5 PM:** Last day for a Ph.D. student to petition for a reduction in hours.
 - **9/5/12, 5 PM:** Last day to apply for fall 2012 graduation. If an undergraduate, you must make an appointment and see your academic advisor to apply. If a graduate student, you must complete the Intent to Graduate and Candidate for Degree forms.
- **September 17-26 (tentative), 2012:** Faculty can use the Early Alert system.
- **October 29, 2012, 5 PM:** Last day for non-CLAS students to drop or withdraw without a petition and special approval from the academic dean. After this date, a dean's signature is required.
- **November 12, 2012, 5 PM:** Last day for CLAS students to drop or withdraw with signatures from the faculty and dean but without a full petition. After this date, all schedule changes require a full petition. Petitions are available in NC 4002 for undergraduates and in the CU Denver Graduate School offices for graduate students.
- **November 19-25, 2012:** Fall break (no classes; campus closed). Be thankful.
- **December 10-15, 2012:** Finals Week. No schedule changes will be granted once finals week has started there are no exceptions to this policy. Commencement is December 15.
- **December 20, 2012:** Due date for faculty submission of grades.
- **December 24, 2012:** Fall final grades available on UCD Access (tentative).

Course Schedule: Readings, Assignments, Focal Questions

Where should I look for the readings? (1) If the schedule says "Trial and Death" then it's from the little Plato book; if it says (2) "ONLINE" then it's on Blackboard. If it says (3) "SUCCESS TEXT" then it's from *Student Success* text you bought from the bookstore.

Note: This is a rough schedule. Subject to revision. I will let you know in each class what is coming up.

| Month and NOTES | Date | Readings (read before class) | Class Theme | Key issues & focal questions |
|---|-------|---|---|---|
| The Meaningful life as the Examined Life | | | | |
| August | 21 TU | No readings | Introduction to class—Philosophy, arguments, and sophistry. How does one make an "argument"? | Mapping the course: what is involved in asking and answering the question, What is the meaning of life? What does it mean to raise the question, "What is the meaning of life?" How does philosophy raise such questions? From where does it get the questions and what can philosophy do with such questions? Is a meaningful life a pleasurable one? A self interested one? What is the relation between self interest and fulfillment or meaningfulness in life? |
| August NOTES: Ch. 2 assignment (10 pts.) out. 'Pre' FYS assessment survey-- about 15 minutes | 23 TR | SUCCESS TEXT: * Chapter 1 "Welcome to the University of Colorado Denver: Providing a Foundation for Student Success" * Chapter 2 – Learning to Learn, "Using Your Personality for Success" "Effective Reading and Text Markup Strategies" from Hildebrand website | Figuring out what college is and what it means to be a "college student." | Why do we go to college? What are the various goods that college can create for us? What might success look like? How do we come to understand who we are as learners? How can we just our self knowledge to connect with our teachers and our fellow students? How do we develop a <i>knowledge trajectory</i> ? |
| August | 28 TU | * Terry Eagleton, Chapter 1 of <i>Meaning of Life, A Short Introduction</i> . ONLINE; | Exploring the question, "What is the meaning of life?" What kind of question is this? What is it asking? What approaches may be used in answering it? | What are some reasons that we ask the meaning of life question? What does the question tell us about who we are, right at the moment of history? To whom or what do people turn for answers to this question? Are people finding answers in religion, art, entertainment, or sensual pleasures? If the meaning of life needs to be constructed—rather than "found"—then what tools are needed to construct it? Or perhaps it's the process of building meaning—if so, what is that process like? How is education relevant to living a meaningful life? |

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| August | 30 TR | The_Meaning_of_Life_Prologue_Nagel.pdf and "The Absurd" by Nagel (both ONLINE) | Can life's meaning be grasped "as a whole"? | Nagel argues that much suffering arises from two different perspectives: we're both engaged agents (striving after purposes or evading pains) and yet we also can "pull back" as reflective critics of our lives, seeing it from a distance. |
| Sept. NOTES: Ch. 2 skills assignment due. | 4 TU | Trial and Death--- <i>Euthyphro</i> WATCH: ONLINE: Video online about Socrates on Blackboard in Audio/Video | Philosophy-in-action. Dialogue as the tool for revealing ignorance and investigating deeper meaning. | Plato's dialogue seeks to show an attempt to define a virtue (the virtue of piety). How does this attempt at definition lead to larger questions about ethics? What does it reveal about Euthyphro's character? Notice that a dialogue can terminate with no "answers" and yet change participants by making them more prepared for further dialogue. |
| Sept. NOTES: Ch. 3 assignment (20 pts.) out. | 6 TR | Trial and Death--- <i>Euthyphro (continued)</i> SUCCESS TEXT: Chapter 3 Critical, Creative, and Practical Thinking: Solving Problems and Making Decisions | What is "critical thinking" and why is it important to being ethical and living a good life? | We see Socrates trying to get Euthyphro to "think critically" in this dialogue. Why does Socrates think that Euthyphro isn't thinking critically enough? What are Euthyphro's blind spots? |
| Sept. | 11 TU | Trial and Death--- <i>Apology</i> | Socrates' mission as a philosopher. | Socrates demonstrates how philosophy can criticize concepts and entire ways of living. He hopes to show how searching for knowledge is different than persuasion. |
| Sept. NOTES: Ch. 3 assignment due | 13 TR | Trial and Death--- <i>Apology</i> | Socrates' project continued. Why it's a way of life worth dying for. | Notice the anger provoked by asking deep questions. In what ways do you think our society would be changed by more critical thinking by (a) the public and (b) our political and cultural leaders? |
| Pleasure and/or Happiness | | | | |
| Sept. NOTE: Guest lecture by ancient philosophy specialist from UCD, Dr. Robert Metcalf. | 18 TU | 185-189 (<i>Pleasure and Desire</i> , an excerpt from Plato's <i>Gorgias</i>) ONLINE SUGGESTED: "On Platos Callicles from White, A_Brief_History_of_Happiness.pdf | We all seek pleasure, but is it the same as happiness? Can it lead to true fulfillment? | In our excerpt from Plato's <i>Gorgias</i> dialogue, we see Callicles claiming that there's no more to happiness than pleasure. What is Socrates' response to this vision of happiness? How does Socrates argue that pleasure is <i>not</i> equivalent to good? |

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| Sept. NOTE: In class writing workshop. | 20 TR | IN CLASS: FYS Workshop in class with the UCD Writing Center GUEST LEADER: Alexis Horst+ 2 Writing Center Consultants. | The focus will be basic writing issues such as how to support a thesis, paragraph organization and development, and revision strategies; topics will include focused small group activities. | What are some top tips for writing a clear and organized paper? What steps can make sure a paper is “ready to hand in”? This in-class session will help you form a “checklist” of writing “must do’s”. |
| Sept. | 25 TU | PART 1/2 FILM: <i>Advertising and the End of the World</i> (in class) READ: Study guide: “Advertising and the End of the World.pdf” | Advertising is an important storyteller about our values. What is advertising’s message about happiness and pleasure? | Socrates and Plato thought that dialogue was THE primary way to criticize and refine a society's views about values, in other words what makes living ethical and meaningful. How does communication about values happen today? Which values are stressed? Which ways of thinking are trained? |
| Sept. | 27 TR | PART 2/2 FILM: <i>Advertising and the End of the World</i> (in class) Reading: Juliet Schor, “The New Politics of Consumption: Why Americans want so much more than they need.” ONLINE | The impact of advertising messages on society, and the environment. | Often, we hear stories told by advertising. How do the patterns of advertising communicate what happiness is? How are those things we take to be beyond our individual pleasure (society, morality) affected by the construction of reality that advertising creates? Is this reality-portrait of advertising ethical? |
| October | 2 TU | 97-109 "The Vanity and Suffering of Life" by Schopenhauer ONLINE | Our destiny is suffering, either through boredom or pleasure. We should come to terms with this as the meaning of life. | Whether one's goal is pleasure or happiness, the result is always the same—suffering, according to Schopenhauer. There might be ways to escape suffering, but they're difficult, Schopenhauer says. What are they? |
| October NOTES: Ch. 5 assignment (10 pts.) out. | 4 TR | SUCCESS TEXT: Chapter 5 – “Time Management” Hildebrand “tips” on DavidHildebrand.org website | Managing Time Studying Effectively | How do we create and achieve realistic goals? How can we manage time in a way that respects our need for spontaneity and excitement? |
| October | 9 TU | Exam review | Covering material from beginning of semester. | Review the readings and bring questions to class. |
| October EXAM | 11 TR | Exam 1 | Covering material from beginning of semester. | |

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| October NOTES: Ch. 4 assignment (20 pts.) and Ch. 6 assignment (10 pts.) out. | 16 TU | SUCCESS TEXT: Chapter 4 – “Reading and Information Literacy” Chapter 6 – “Campus Resources” | What does it take to read with comprehension? What resources on campus can help students do well academically, financially, and personally? | What’s the difference between “careful” and “sloppy” research? Could you direct a new student to the three most important resources on campus? What are they and where are they located? |
| Living Meaningfully with or without God(s) | | | | |
| October | 18 TR | “My Confession” by Tolstoy | How an existential crisis can invade even a successful, purposeful life. The rationale behind turning to religion for purpose. | Sometimes a happy life is not as happy as one thinks; one can be fulfilling one's purposes and out of nowhere an existential crisis can arise. Has you ever experienced this or known anyone who has? What do you think of Tolstoy's reasons for rejecting science and philosophy for answers? |
| October | 23 TU | "Pensées" by Pascal ONLINE | Why God is the best gamble to escape the problem of insignificance in life. The solution of Pascal's wager, which claims to present the rational case for trying religious life. | When one considers how great the universe is, our significance seems small, puny, meaningless. How to cope? For Pascal, we can face our smallness with at least a wager on the existence of God. What are the benefits and costs of believing in God for these reasons? |
| October | 25 TR | DISCUSSION DAY | Extended discussion and review of recent material. Attendance is required. | |
| November | 1 TU | Nietzsche from <i>Gay Science</i> ONLINE LISTEN: online lecture (mp3) from noted Nietzsche scholars Robert Solomon and Kathleen Higgins ONLINE | "God is dead," Nietzsche's character suggest that society no longer lives as if God exists but acts like hypocrites. This spiritual/societal crisis is, he thinks, an opportunity. | Why is the death of God an opportunity, according to Nietzsche? From what perspective should we look at life to imbue it with meaning? From close up, in light of present purposes? From further away, in the grand scheme? If we draw too far back don't we become threatened by insignificance? Can one be happy or have a meaningful life without God? What role does religion play in giving people an overarching sense of meaning in life? What would happen if this was taken away? Would something similar just replace it or would a new, different way of making meaning evolve in its place? |

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| November | 6 TU | "Man Against Darkness" by Stace ONLINE | Stace tries to explain why belief in God has become less and less plausible in a scientific world. | How has our way of explaining the world changed over the centuries? Stace argues this change has created a crisis in human culture and discusses the different ways, better and worse, this void might be filled. |
| November | 8 TR | "The Purpose of Man's Existence" by Baier ONLINE | Does life need one single purpose to be meaningful? Baier argues "no," and claims that religion has confused many people about this. | Does religion make people more or less moral? Baier, like Stace, questions the need for a grand, religious backdrop to give meaning to our lives. He says that the problem of living meaningfully without God is just based on a confusion of two different senses of "purpose." We may have no ultimate purposes but we still have purposes. Besides confusing us, he goes on, religion also induces people to live in a way too child-like to be truly moral. |
| November NOTES: Ch. 4, 6 assignments due. | 13 TU | Discussion Day | Extended discussion and review of recent material. Attendance is required. | Consider the arguments both for believing in God and against the rationality, even the morality, of belief. Which thinkers make persuasive points? Why? |
| Creativity, Play and the Meaning of Life | | | | |
| November | 15 TR | "On the Meaning of Life" by Schlick ONLINE | Only play can give meaning to life-- purposes and goals cannot. | Is play the key to meaning in life? Schlick argues that meaning in life is thought to come from our goals and purposes; but these don't lead to meaning. We should embrace the enthusiasm, creativity, and play we see in youth. |
| November | 20/22 | Thanksgiving | | |
| November | 27 TU | Terry Eagleton, chapter 4 of <i>Meaning of Life, A Short Introduction</i> . ONLINE | The meaning of life is best sought in a way of living that is ethical and aesthetic/ imaginative in nature. | Living creatively, imaginatively, beautifully as a process answer to what meaning of life is. |
| November NOTE: End-of-semester FYS survey; FCQ evaluations | 29 TR | McDermott, "Why Bother?" ONLINE | Life as aesthetic, creative, again. A personal story of a journey from despair to meaning; living a life that is aesthetic in a day to day way. | Responding to the temptation/threat of suicide, McDermott analyzes "life" and "living." He articulates two keys to significant living: amelioration of others' suffering and living in a way that is aesthetically fulfilling. |

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| December | 4 TU | Discussion Day | Extended discussion and review of recent material. Attendance is required. | What do you think of the proposals that life's meaning is to be found in creativity, play, or aesthetic experience? Does this solve the puzzle of the meaning of life? Or at least how to live? |
| December | 6 TR | WRAP UP, REVIEW, TAKE HOME EXAM HANDED OUT | Take home exam given out. Evaluations. Questions reviewed. | |
| December | 12 TU | TAKE HOME EXAM DUE | | |