

University of Houston-Downtown

Course Prefix, Number, and Title: PHIL 2310: The Meaning of Life

Credits/Lecture/Lab Hours: 3/3/0

Foundational Component Area: Language, Philosophy and Culture

Prerequisites: Enrollment in, or completion of, ENG 1302.

Co-requisites: None

Course Description: This course will investigate one of the most popular and enduring philosophical questions. Students will consider the meaning of life generally, asking what it means to be alive, as well as what it means to have meaning. Students will then consider the question particularly, asking how it is possible (if it is) for an individual to lead a meaningful life. Students will also consider the relevance of cultural and personal attitudes toward life and death and the effect these attitudes have on the meaningfulness of life.

TCCNS Number:

Demonstration of Core Objectives within the Course:

Assigned Core Objective	Learning Outcome Students will be able to:	Instructional strategy or content used to achieve the outcome*	Method by which students' mastery of this outcome will be evaluated
Critical Thinking Communication Social Responsibility	Describe how ideas, values, beliefs and other aspects of culture express and affect human experience.	Reading and discussion (oral and written) of the ways in which philosophical representatives of various Western cultures have addressed the meaning and/or meaninglessness of life.	Short writing assignments, class participation, oral presentation or structured discussion (or other form of assessable oral communication).
Critical Thinking Communication Social Responsibility	Analyze fundamental ideas that foster intellectual and aesthetic creation across human cultures.	Reading, analysis, and criticism of key texts in the history of Western philosophy concerned with the meaning and/or meaninglessness of life.	First paper, second paper.
Critical Thinking Communication	Evaluate assumptions, concepts, and language to develop defensible conclusions based on analysis of information relevant to course content.	Written argumentation.	Second paper.
Critical Thinking	Synthesize and deliver well-	Oral argumentation and	Short writing

Communication	constructed analyses and arguments about course content using multiple modalities (including written, oral, and visual formats).	discussion in class, as well as instruction in philosophical writing.	assignments, class participation, oral presentation or structured discussion (or other form of assessable oral communication).
Social Responsibility Personal Responsibility	Identify appropriate behaviors or uses of language in response to analyses of cultural similarities and differences.	Reading and discussion of the significance of ethics in philosophical considerations of the meaning and/or meaninglessness of life.	Short writing assignments, class participation, oral presentation or structured discussion (or other form of assessable oral communication).
Social Responsibility Personal Responsibility	Connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making through the analysis of ethical dilemmas.	Reading and discussion of the significance of ethics in philosophical considerations of the meaning and/or meaninglessness of life.	First paper.

Additional Course Outcomes:

When students have completed this course they will be able to:

- Analyze some of the most important works in the history of philosophy,
- Identify the basic principles relevant to considerations of the meaning of life,
- Evaluate the role of philosophical considerations of the meaning of life in the living of a meaningful life,
- Compare the different approaches to the question of the meaning of life in the history of western philosophy, both religious and non-religious,
- Construct one’s own approach to living a life aware of its potential for meaning, and
- Write and argue philosophically.

Course Outline:

- Introduction to the Meaning of Life
- Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*
- Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*
- Buber, *I and Thou*
- Film showing: *Crimes and Misdemeanors*
- Film showing and discussion: *Crimes and Misdemeanors*
- Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*
- Unamuno, *Abel Sanchez and Other Stories*
- Film showing: *Whatever Works*

Grading/Course Content which Demonstrates Student Achievement of Core Objectives:

Grading Scale: 90-100 = A; 89-80 = B; 79-70 = C; 69-60 = D; 59 and below = F

Summary of Course Exams, Quizzes, Assignments and Final	
Explications (Short Writing Assignments)	24%
4-6 Page Paper	20%
6-8 Page Paper	30%
Oral Presentation	16%
Class Participation	10%
	100%