

PHIL 1200 A – The Meaning of Life**Winter 2019****Instructor:** Christopher McGrath**Email:** christopher.mcgrath@carleton.ca**Office Hours:** Wednesday, 16:00-18:00**Office:** 3A56 Paterson Hall**Lectures:** Wednesday and Friday, 14:30-16:00**Classroom:** 301 Azrieli Theatre**Course Description:**

An introduction to concerns expressed by the perennial philosophical question, “What is the meaning of life?” Students will be familiarized with the major philosophical approaches to life’s meaning through a consideration of various contemporary and late modern works in the philosophy of life.

Our approach to this perennial question will divide influential sources for potential answers into three general kinds, from which our course will derive three units: personal sources of meaning, social sources of meaning, and metaphysical sources of meaning. And bookending these three units will be a briefer unit as introduction at the beginning, and a briefer unit on faith and nihilism as a conclusion.

We will begin in the introductory unit by trying to clarify what is at stake in this question about the meaning of life. Then in the first unit, we will explore pleasure or suffering, self-improvement or tragic imperfectibility, and leisure or work as personal sources of meaning. The second unit will focus on social sources of meaning, considering the possibility of finding meaning in the people, in civil society, or in the state. An inquiry into possible metaphysical sources of meaning will constitute the third unit, where we will discuss debates about teleology, consciousness, and God as these pertain to the meaning of life. In the concluding section, we will discuss the possibility of nihilism and two influential responses to it.

Through these investigations, we will try to acquire both a broad exposure to the possible sources in which people have often claimed to find meaning in their lives, as well as to debates about the adequacy of such appeals and the claims underlying them. The goal, then, will not be to answer the question “What is the meaning of life?”, but rather to provide an introduction to engaging this question in an informed, creative, and critical way.

Schedule of the Lectures:

Lecture topics and readings may be adjusted pending our ability to adequately work through the material in class. But the prospective plan is as follows:

#	Date	Topic	Reading
		Introduction	
1	Jan 09	The Significance of “Life”	Aristotle’s <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>
2	Jan 11	The Significance of “Meaning”	Camus’ <i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i>
		Unit I: Personal Sources of Meaning	
3	Jan 16	Life as Pleasure and Liberty	Mill’s <i>Utilitarianism</i> and <i>On Liberty</i>

4	Jan 18	Life as Suffering	Schopenhauer's <i>Perergera and Paralipomena</i>
5	Jan 23	Life as Perfectibility	Kant's <i>Critique of Practical Reason and Metaphysics of Morals</i>
6	Jan 25	Life as Imperfectibility	Nietzsche's <i>Human, All Too Human</i>
7	Jan 30	Life as Leisure	Schlick's <i>On the Meaning of Life</i>
8	Feb 01	Life as Labor, Work, and Action	Arendt's <i>The Human Condition</i>
9	Feb 06	Test #1	
		Unit II: Social Sources of Meaning	
10	Feb 08	Meaning in the People	Fichte's <i>Addresses to the German Nation</i>
11	Feb 13	Meaninglessness in the People	Stirner's <i>The Ego and Its Own</i>
12	Feb 15	Meaning in Civil Society	Marx and Engels' <i>The German Ideology</i>
	Feb 20	No Class – Winter Break	
	Feb 22	No Class – Winter Break	
13	Feb 27	Meaninglessness in Civil Society	Tonnies' <i>Community and Society</i> and MacIntyre's <i>After Virtue</i>
14	Mar 01	Meaning in the State	Hegel's <i>Lectures on the Philosophy of World History</i>
15	Mar 06	Meaninglessness in the State	Popper's <i>The Open Society and Its Enemies</i>
		Unit III: Metaphysical Sources of Meaning	
16	Mar 08	The Teleological Interpretation of Nature	Aristotle's <i>On the Soul</i> and <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> and Aquinas' <i>Summa Theologica</i>
17	Mar 13	Test #2	
18	Mar 15	The Anti-Teleological Interpretation of Nature	Dennett's <i>Darwin's Dangerous Idea</i>
19	Mar 20	The Significance of Consciousness	Nagel's <i>Mind and Cosmos</i>
20	Mar 22	The Insignificance of Consciousness	Dennett's <i>Consciousness Explained</i>
21	Mar 27	Theism and the Meaning of Life	Aquinas' <i>Summa Theologica</i>
22	Mar 29	Atheism and the Meaning of Life	Sartre's <i>Being and Nothingness</i>
		Unit IV: Faith and Nihilism	
23	Apr 03	Faith and the Meaning of Life	Jacobi's <i>Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza</i>
24	Apr 05	Nihilism and the Meaning of Life	Nietzsche's <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i>

Assessment:

(i) Quizzes: There will be two short quizzes, consisting of long answer questions assigned in class. The first quiz will be assigned in class on Jan 16, and will be based on material from the "Introduction". It will be completed outside class hours and handed in, in printed form, no later than in class on Jan 23. The second quiz will be assigned in class on Apr 05, based on the material from "Unit IV", and you will write

and submit your answers as part of the final exam. But since the questions will be given to you prior to the exam, it will be expected that you come into the exam having prepared your answer. Each quiz will be worth 10% of the final mark.

(ii) Tests: There will be three tests, consisting of fill in the blank and short answer questions, and conducted in class or during the final exam period. Each test will be non-cumulative, with the first test covering material from “Unit I”, the second test “Unit II”, and the third test “Unit III”. The first two tests will be held in class on Feb 06 and Mar 13 respectively, while the third test will be held during the final exam period. Each test will be worth 25% of the final mark. Your highest marked test will be worth an additional 5% of the final mark.

Jan 23 – Quiz #1 (10%)

Feb 06 – Test #1 (25%)

Mar 13 – Test #2 (25%)

Exam Period – Quiz #2 (10%)

Exam Period – Test #3 (25%) * Your highest marked test will be worth an additional 5%.

Missed Assessments: Quiz #1 will be accepted late with a 10% penalty per day after the due date, or accepted late for full marks if the lateness is excused on medical or similar grounds. A missed test may be deferred if appropriate evidence of medical or similar grounds is given and excuses the absence. Quiz #2 is treated as part of Test #3 in this regard. Students who have missed or know they will miss an assessment should speak to the professor about the situation as soon as is feasible.

Readings:

Course readings will involve a selection of articles and book chapters assembled for the course, and unless otherwise noted will be available online through the course webpage.

Class Expectations:

To keep up with the class work, students will be expected to attend the lectures and to complete the course readings on their own time, as well as to keep up with relevant information posted to the course webpage. Test and quiz questions will be drawn from the material discussed in class, and students will be directed in what points they need to understand from each lecture, so that they can prepare study notes applicable to the assessments on the basis of their participation in class. Lectures will be based on the readings, so preparation for class should involve completing the relevant reading and bringing to class any questions concerned with understanding it. The more active students are in engaging the material on their own time and contributing to class discussion, the better a learning opportunity class time will be, so students are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning experience by committing to this engagement with the class work.

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2018-19)

Assignments:

Unless specifically told otherwise by their instructors, students:

- Must not use a plastic or cardboard cover or paper clips.
- Must staple the paper (there is a stapler on the essay box).
- Must include the following on the first page: student name and number; course name and number; instructor's name.
- No assignments will be accepted after the last day for handing in term work – see dates below.
- Assignments handed in through the essay box (just inside the glass doors, Paterson Hall, Floor 3A) must be dropped into the box by **4:15** on a regular business day in order to be date-stamped with that day's date. Assignments handed in after 4:15 or on a non-business day will be stamped as having been handed in on the next business day.
- Students are required to keep copies of their assignments. If your paper is lost at any point, you will be considered not to have submitted it if you cannot produce a copy immediately on request.

Evaluation:

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Deferrals for Final Exams:

If you miss a final examination (formally scheduled or take-home) because of circumstances beyond your control, you may apply for a deferral. You must apply within 3 working days after the scheduled date of your formally scheduled exam or within 3 working days after the due date of a take-home exam. Visit the Registrar's Office for more information: <http://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulationsoftheuniversity/acadregsuniv2/#2.5>

Plagiarism:

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of 'plagiarism' as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

Academic Accommodation:

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. carleton.ca/pmc

Pregnancy obligation: write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

Religious obligation: write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

Survivors of Sexual Violence: as a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and is survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support

Accommodation for Student Activities: Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

For more information on academic accommodation, please contact the departmental administrator or visit: students.carleton.ca/course-outline

Important Dates:

Sept. 5	Classes start.
Sept. 18	Last day for registration and course changes for fall term and fall/winter (two-term) courses.
Sept. 30	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from fall term or two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
Oct. 8	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Oct. 22-26	Fall Break – no classes.
Nov. 23	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, before the official examination period.
Dec. 7	Last day of fall term classes. Classes follow a Monday schedule. Last day for academic withdrawal from fall term courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for term work for a fall term course.
Dec. 9-21	Final examinations for fall term courses and mid-term examinations in two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Dec. 21	All take-home examinations are due.
Jan. 7	Classes begin.
Jan. 18	Last day for registration and course changes in the winter term.
Jan. 31	Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter term courses or from the winter portion of two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
Feb. 18	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Feb. 18-22	Winter Break – no classes.
Mar. 26	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in winter term or fall/winter courses before the official examination period.
Apr. 9	Last day of two-term and winter term classes. Last day for academic withdrawal from fall/winter and winter courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for two-term and for winter term courses.
Apr. 12-27	Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Apr. 19-21	Statutory holiday. University closed. No examinations take place.
Apr. 27	All take-home examinations are due on this day.

Addresses:

Department of Philosophy:	3A35 Paterson Hall www.carleton.ca/philosophy 520-2110
Registrar's Office:	300 Tory www.carleton.ca/registrar 520-3500
Academic Advising Centre:	302 Tory www.carleton.ca/academicadvising 520-7850
Writing Services:	4 th Floor, Library http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/ 520-3822
MacOdrum Library	http://www.library.carleton.ca/ 520-2735