



PHIL 1200: The meaning of life
Fall 2012
Tuesdays & Thursdays 1:05-2:25 p.m.
Kailash Mital Theatre, Southam Hall

Instructor information

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 Office hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays,
 2:35-3:35 p.m.

Description & objectives

What makes for a meaningful life is one of the most important and enduring philosophical questions. The primary objective of this course is to inspire you to reflect about your own answer to the question by familiarizing you with a range of relevant philosophical views. We will begin by considering a line of thought—"the nihilist's worry"—that challenges the very possibility of a meaningful life. We will then consider "transcendentalist" responses to the nihilist's worry that tie the meaning of life to something outside of it, before going on to look at alternative, "immanentist" responses that tie the meaning of life to what lies within it.

A secondary objective of the course is to introduce you to some elementary aspects of expressing your views on such matters in a philosophy essay.

Text & readings

All but two of the assigned readings will be drawn from the following text, available at the Carleton University Bookstore:

Klemke, E.D. & S.M. Cahn, eds. 2008. *The meaning of life: A reader*, 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The two readings not drawn from the course text are the following, available freely from the noted on-line sources:

Horban, P. 1993. Writing a philosophy paper.
<http://www.sfu.ca/~horban/writing1.htm>

Nietzsche, F. 1891. *Thus spake Zarathustra*, trans. Thomas Common.
<http://philosophy.eserver.org/nietzsche-zarathustra.txt>

Evaluation

Quizzes. (30% of overall grade.) There will be three in-class quizzes during the term (September 13, October 11, and November 8). These will be very brief, taking only about five minutes each to complete, and involve multiple-choice questions related to the lectures and readings of the previous weeks. Each quiz will be worth 10% of your overall grade.

Reasoning sketches. (30% of overall grade.) You will also be expected to complete three "reasoning sketches" throughout the term (September 27, October 25, and November 22), in which you succinctly state a

thesis about some aspect of the material discussed in class and sketch a line of reasoning in support of that thesis. The first of these sketches is required, but not assigned a grade. The second sketch is worth 10% of your overall grade. The third sketch is worth 20% of your overall grade.

End-of-term essay. (40% of overall grade.) In lieu of sitting a formally scheduled final examination, you will be expected to write a philosophical essay (approximately five to six double-spaced, typed pages, or 1,500 to 1,800 words in length) on an assigned topic. The quizzes and argument sketches will have helped prepare you for this task. The essay will be due on the final day of the fall term's examination period, December 19.

Calendar

Sept 6	Introduction	
Sept 11 & 13	The nihilist's worry Quiz 1	Tolstoy, "My confession" Camus, "The myth of Sisyphus"
Sept 18 & 20		Schopenhauer, "On the sufferings of the world" Nagel, "The absurd" Horban, "Writing a philosophy paper"
Sept 25 & 27	Transcendentalist responses Reasoning sketch 1	Pojman, "Religion gives meaning to life" Fackenheim, "Judaism and the meaning of life"
Oct 2 & 4		Quinn, "The meaning of life according to Christianity" Nozick, "Philosophy and the meaning of life"
Oct 9 & 11	Immanentist responses Quiz 2	Baier, "The meaning of life"
Oct 16 & 18		Taylor, "The meaning of life"
Oct 23 & 25	Reasoning sketch 2	Feinberg, "Absurd self-fulfillment"
Oct 30 & Nov 1		Klemke, "Living without appeal"
Nov 6 & 8	Quiz 3	Wolf, "Meaning in life" Cahn, "Meaningless lives?"
Nov 13 & 15		Russell, "A free man's worship"
Nov 20 & 22	Reasoning sketch 3	Schlick, "On the meaning of life"
Nov 27 & 29		Nietzsche, <i>Thus spake Zarathustra</i> , "Prologue," §§1-7
Dec 6-19 (examination period)	End-of-term essay	

Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (2012-13)

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 in the lower right corner of the cover sheet:
 - student name
 - student number
 - course number and section
 - instructor's name
- The Philosophy Department does not accept assignments by FAX. You may send them by courier, if necessary.
- No assignments will be accepted after the last day for handing in term work – see dates in next column.
- 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.

Deferrals for term work

If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a final assignment by the due date because of circumstances beyond your control, you may apply for a deferral of examination/assignment. For deferred examinations, you must apply within 5 working days after the scheduled date of your exam. To apply for deferral of a final assignment, you must apply within 5 working days of the last scheduled day of classes. Visit the Registrar's Office for more information.

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. (Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations, section 14.3, or <http://www4.carleton.ca/calendars//ugrad/current/regulations/acadregsuniv14.html#14.3>)

Academic accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term because of disability, pregnancy or religious obligations. Please review the course outline promptly and write to me 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.

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Documented disabilities could include but are not limited to mobility/physical impairments, specific Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and chronic medical conditions. Registered PMC students are required to contact the PMC, 613-520-6608, every term to ensure that your instructor receives your Letter of Accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations. If you only require accommodations for your formally scheduled exam(s) in

this course, please submit your request for accommodations to PMC by Nov. 9, 2012 for the Fall term and March 8, 2013 for the Winter term.

You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at <http://carleton.ca/equity/accommodation>.

Important dates

Sept. 6	Classes start (after Orientation events).
Sept. 19	Last day for registration and course changes in Fall and Fall/Winter courses.
Sept. 30	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from Fall term or two-term courses.
Oct. 5	University Day – no classes.
Oct. 8	Thanksgiving Day – university closed.
Nov. 19	Last day for tests or examinations in courses below 4000-level before the Final Examination period.
Dec. 3	Last day of classes, Fall term. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for Fall term courses.
Dec. 3	Last day to withdraw from Fall term courses (academic purposes only).
Dec. 4-5	No classes take place. Review classes may be held, but no new material may be introduced.
Dec. 6-19	Final examinations for Fall courses, mid-terms for Fall/Winter courses.
Jan. 7	Winter term classes begin.
Jan. 18	Last day for registration and course changes in Winter term classes.
Jan. 31	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter courses or winter portion of two-term courses.
Feb. 18	Family Day – university closed
Feb. 18-22	Winter Break, classes suspended.
Mar. 27	Last day for tests or examinations in courses below 4000-level before the Final Examination period.
Mar. 29	Good Friday – university closed
Apr. 10	Last day of Fall/Winter and Winter term classes. 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 Fall/Winter and Winter term courses. NOTE: On this day all classes follow a Friday schedule.
Apr. 10	Last day to withdraw from Fall/Winter and Winter term courses (academic purposes only).
Apr. 11-12	No classes take place. Review classes may be held, but no new material may be introduced.
Apr. 13-27	Final Examinations.

Addresses

Department of Philosophy:	3A46 Paterson Hall www.carleton.ca/philosophy 520-2110
Registrar's Office:	300 Tory www.carleton.ca/registrar 520-3500
Student Academic Success Centre:	302 Tory www.carleton.ca/sasc 520-7850
Paul Menton Centre:	500 University Centre www.carleton.ca/pmc 520-6608
Writing Tutorial Service:	4 th Floor, Library www.carleton.ca/wts 520-6632
MacOdrum Library	http://www.library.carleton.ca/ 520-2735