

Philosophy 100

Happiness

COURSE INFORMATION

Class Meeting: Monday, Wednesday, Friday (9:30-10:20); 111 May Hall

Instructor: Professor Lustila, Department of Philosophy (glustila@stonehill.edu)

Office Hours: 12:00-2:00; 240 May Hall

COURSE DESCRIPTION

When someone asks us, “what do you want most in life?” most of us answer: “to be happy.” But what is happiness? Even more importantly, how can we *become* happy? To answer these questions, we have to examine a number of different issues: the relation between morality and happiness; the impact of luck on one’s ability to be happy; the extent to which being happy requires love or attachment to others; whether happiness demands that we are committed to transcendent aims (divine or secular), etc.. In the course of our investigating these questions, we will draw on insights from philosophy, psychology, and film. This journey will take us back in time to Ancient Greece, and around the world; from India, to China, to France, to Japan, and back to the U.S. If all goes well, by the end of this semester you’ll have learned a bit about philosophy, even more about happiness, and a considerable amount about yourself.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The primary objects of the course are to

- Give you familiarity with one of the world’s great philosophical problems
- Refine your ability to carefully read and analyze texts.
- Develop your skills as a writer – learn to produce clear prose and craft well-structured arguments.
- Develop your skills as a communicator – learn to receive feedback on your ideas and writing from your peers and to give helpful feedback to others.
- Spark your natural curiosity for philosophical ideas and questions.

TEXTS

- Jonathan Haidt, *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom* (Basic, 2006)
- Eknath Easwaran, *The Bhagavad Gita*, 2nd Edition (Nilgiri, 2007)
- Albert Camus, *The Plague* (Vintage, 1991)

ASSIGNMENTS

1. 5 reading responses, in response to a reading presented in a text covered that week in class (see schedule below for due dates) – I will provide you with the topic

These papers should be ~500 words and have the following structure

- Present the argument (e.g. Aristotle's argument that we do *not* have complete control over our happiness).
- Raise a response to this argument (e.g. Aristotle overlooks X).

2. Two critical engagement papers, where you put two thinkers we have read in conversation on a particular issue (e.g. *The Bhagavad-Gita* and Camus on attachment)

These papers should be ~1500 words and have the following structure:

- Present thinker 1's position (e.g. *The Bhagavad-Gita*).
- Criticize it using thinker 2's position (e.g. Camus).
- Respond on behalf of thinker 1 (e.g. *The Bhagavad-Gita*).
- Explain: Is this a good response? Why or why not? (i.e., does *The Bhagavad-Gita* have a good reply to Camus or does it strike you as insufficient? Why/why not?).

3. Breakdown of your final grade:

Participation = 10%

Reading Responses (5) = 50%

Critical engagement papers (2) = 40%

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1: The Divided Self; The Happy Self

8/27 Introductory Lecture

8/28 Haidt, *The Happiness Hypothesis*, Ch. 1: "The Divided Self"

8/30 Haidt, *The Happiness Hypothesis*, Ch. 2: "Changing Your Mind"

Week 2: The Divided Self; The Happy Self (cont.)

- 9/2 No Classes – Labor Day
- 9/4 Discussion of the Self
- 9/6 Haidt, *The Happiness Hypothesis*, Ch. 5: “The Pursuit of Happiness” **(Reading Response #1 Due)**

Week 3: Luck and Happiness

- 9/9 Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, “Flow, the Secret to Happiness” (in class)
- 9/11 Haidt, *The Happiness Hypothesis*, Ch. 7: “The Uses of Adversity”
- 9/13 Discussion of Luck, Flow, and Flourishing

Week 4: Peace Within

- 9/16 Epictetus, *Discourses* I.1-4
- 9/18 Epictetus, *Discourses* I.6, 9-10, 12, 14-16
- 9/20 Epictetus, *Discourses* I.18, 20, 26, 28-29 **(Reading Response #2 Due)**

Week 5: Peace in Greater Purpose

- 9/23 Introduction to *The Bhagavad-Gita* (read Chapter 1, “The War Within”)
**I strongly suggest reading the “Introduction,” as it will give you some important background on the text and on Ancient Indian thought more generally.*
- 9/25 *The Upanishads*, “Katha: Death as Teacher”
- 9/27 *The Bhagavad-Gita*, Chapter 2-4

Week 6: Peace in Greater Purpose (cont.)

- 9/30 *The Bhagavad-Gita*, Chapter 5-7, 9, 11
- 10/2 *The Bhagavad-Gita*, Chapter 12-15
- 10/4 *The Bhagavad-Gita*, Chapter 16-18 **(Reading Response #3 Due)**

Week 7: Peace alongside Others

- 10/7 Yasujirō Ozu, *Tokoyo Story*
- 10/9 (cont.)
- 10/11 (cont.)

Week 8: Finding Value

10/14 **No Class – Fall Break Day**

10/16 Valerie Tiberius, *Well-Being as Value-Fulfillment*, Ch. 1, “Introduction”

10/18 Tiberius, *Well-Being*, Ch. 2, “The Value Fulfillment Theory” **(C.R #1 Due)**

Week 9: Fulfilling Value

10/21 Tiberius, *Well-Being*, Ch. 2, (cont.)

10/23 Tiberius, *Well-Being*, Ch. 2, Ch. 3, “What is Value-Fulfillment?”

10/25 Tiberius, *Well-Being*, Ch. 3, (cont.)

Week 10: Value and Friendship

10/28 Tiberius, *Well-Being*, Ch. 4, “Assessing Well-Being”

10/30 Tiberius, *Well-Being*, Ch. 4 (cont.)

11/1 Tiberius, *Well-Being*, Ch. 5, “Being a Good Friend” **(Reading Response #4 Due)**

Week 11: Station and Commitment

11/4 Introduction to Albert Camus’ *The Plague*, 1-30

11/6 Camus, *The Plague*, 31-77

11/8 Camus, *The Plague*, 77-110

Week 12: Station and Commitment (esp.)

11/11 Camus, *The Plague*, 111-164

11/13 Camus, *The Plague*, 165-201

11/15 Camus, *The Plague*, 202-265

Week 13: Making Due with What We Have?

11/18 Finish *The Plague* **(Reading Response #5 Due)**

11/20 Haidt, *The Happiness Hypothesis*, Ch. 10, “Happiness Comes from Between”

11/22 Haidt, *The Happiness Hypothesis*, Ch. 9, “Divinity With or Without God”

Week 14: Transcendence

11/25 Introduction to the *Daodejing*

11/27 **No Class – Thanksgiving Break**

11/29 **No Class – Thanksgiving Break**

Week 15: Transcendence (cont.)

12/2 Laozi, *Daodejing*, Book 1

12/4 Laozi, *Daodejing*, Book 2

12/6 Closing Discussion of Laozi and Camus

Week 16: Closing Comments

12/9 Last Day of Class (**C.R. #2 Due**)