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Syllabus of Record: PHIL 240: Philosophy and the Good Life

I. Catalog Description

PHIL 240: Philosophy and the Good Life

3 class hours, 0 lab hours,
3 credits (3c- 01-3cr)

Prerequisite: None

Objective 3:

Analyze diverse conceptions of the good life and articulate their own conception of the good life.

Expected Student Learning Outcomes 2 and 3

Empowered and Responsible Learners

Rationale:

Short writings assignments (and where possible, exam questions) will require students to defend their own positions and raise objections to views they disagree with. This will be in service of enhancing critical thinking skills, which is the hallmark of philosophy. The focus on critical thinking skills is particularly emphasized in our introductory level courses, where students are

appropriate to what kind of argument is being used) and how to assess such reasoning/arguments. (EUSLO 2)

This course combines theoretical and practical concerns about how one should act and what type of person one should strive to be. Writing assignments and class discussions will get students to evaluate various understandings of the good life and lead them to reflect on, and perhaps revise, their own conceptions of the good life. (EUSLO 3)

III. Sample Course Outline

- c. Pojman and James
 - i. Pragmatic benefits of Christian belief

III. *Existentialist views*

(5 Hours) [27]

- 1. Nietzsche
 - a. Creation of oneself and one's values
- 2. De Beauvoir
 - a. Creation of oneself and one's values while still maintaining moral respect for others
- 3. Camus
 - a. Acting with awareness of the fundamental absurdity of existence

Exam 2

(1 Hour) [28]

IV. *Social interaction and the good life*

(4 Hours) [32]

- 1. Rousseau
 - a. Society and education as impediments to happiness
- 2. Russell
 - a. Importance of external activities for happiness
- 3. Noddings
 - a. Caring for others

V. *Work and the good life*

(4 Hours) [36]

- 1. Marx
 - a. Alienated labor in the modern, capitalist era
- 2. Schlick
 - a. Importance of play (intrinsically enjoyable activities)

VI. *Current philosophical and empirical research on happiness*

(6 Hours) [42]

Final Exam

(2 Hours)

IV. **Evaluation Methods**

Evaluation methods will vary among instructors. A sample Evaluation Methods follows for the syllabus above:

Short in-class writings and quizzes: 10%

VII. Possible Required and Supplemental Texts:

Examples of required texts:

Cahn, Steven M. and Christine Vitrano, editors. *Happiness: Classic and Contemporary Readings in Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Guignon, Charles, editor. *The Good Life*, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1999.

Klemke, F.D. and Steven Cahn editors. *The Meaning of Life: A Reader*, Oxford: Oxford

University Press, 2007.

Westphal, Jonathan and Carl Levenson, editors. *Life and Death*, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993.

Examples of supplemental texts:

Thomas Merton, "Philosophical Method in Mysticism," in *The Way of Zen*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957.

Cahn, Steven M. and Christine Vitrano, editors. *Happiness: Classic and Contemporary Readings in Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, New York: Vintage, 1991.

Plato. *Republic*, translated by C.D.C. Reeve, Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Emile: Or, On Education* translated by Allen Bloom. New York: Basic

Russell, Bertrand. *The Conquest of Happiness*, New York: Routledge, 2012.

Singer, Edward. *Confucius: A Selects*, Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002.

Virtanen, Christine. *The Nature and Value of Happiness*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2014.

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Basic idea: Find some relatively recent news article or report that can be used to make a connection between some of the more abstract philosophical ideas discussed in class to more concrete issues/examples. Write a short paper in which you summarize the main points of the article and explain how the issues discussed in the article can be assessed from the point of view

of one or more of the philosophical perspectives on the good life that we have discussed in class.

Types of acceptable articles: You should look for articles that provide examples of a certain lifestyle that can be evaluated using the thoughts of one of the philosophers we discuss or contain explicit thoughts about how to live well that can be evaluated using the thoughts of one of the

Demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the chosen philosophical view(s) of the

good life.

- Clearly demonstrate the ability to make connections between abstract philosophical conceptions of the good life and current, concrete examples of certain lifestyles.

Choice of a clearly relevant and fitting news article/report

B papers generally meet the following criteria:

- Demonstrate a basic understanding of the chosen philosophical view(s) of the good life
- Demonstrate a basic ability to make connections between abstract philosophical conceptions of the good life and current, concrete examples of certain lifestyles.
- Choice of a clearly relevant and fitting news article/report.
- Are well-written, with only a few writing mistakes.

C papers generally:

- Are not clearly organized.

Answers to Liberal Studies Questions

1. Typically there will be several sections offered per academic year, with different faculty

and discussions about the goals of our lower-level, introductory type courses, we will be able to ensure that a similar range of topics are being taught, and that all who teach this class will share in the same objectives and learning outcomes. This is a practice we already have in place to

COURSE ANALYSIS QUESTIONNAIRE

A. Details of the Course

A1. The course will be open to all IUP students.

A2. This course does not require changes in any existing Philosophy department courses.

A3. This course has not been offered on a trial basis.

A4. This is not a dual-level course.

A5. This course may not be taken for variable credit.

A6. Philosophy departments around the country are starting to offer courses like this one with increasing frequency, presumably in order to highlight the continued practical relevance of philosophy. The following are representative:

St. Louis University: Philosophy 335: Philosophy and the Good Life

<http://www.slu.edu/departments-of-philosophy/undergraduate-program/course-offerings>

Haverford College: Philosophy 109: Philosophy and the Good Life

C1. The department can work this course into its rotation of courses. In semesters when 1-3 sections of PHIL 240 are taught, 1-3 fewer sections of PHIL 100 will be taught.

C2. No additional space, equipment, supplies, or library materials are needed.

C3. None of the resources for this course are based on a grant.

C4. The course will usually be offered one semester per academic year.

C5. We expect to offer between one and three sections each semester the course is offered.

C6. The department has a limited number of sections of PHIL 100 and PHIL 240.

approximately 55 students.

C7. The American Philosophical Association does not recommend maximum enrollments for this type of course.

C8. This is not being offered as a distance education course.