Course Description
This course is an exploration of one of the most profound philosophical issues: the meaning of life. While the general focus is philosophical, we will also draw on themes from literature, film, and religion, and findings from psychology and other sciences. The course has two basic components. The first is divided into three general responses to the question of life’s meaning: (1) the theistic response, which claims that the meaning of life is to be found in the existence of a god; (2) the non-theistic alternative, which claims we must create personal meaning within a natural universe; (3) the sceptical response, which criticizes the purported intelligibility of the question ‘What is the meaning of life?’ as well as various assumptions that concern the notions of ‘meaning’, ‘value’, and ‘purpose’. The second component of the course examines a number of key metaphysical ideas that frame and support these responses, such as the nature and origin of the physical world and consciousness, and the relationship between the two.

Student Learning Outcomes
Successful completion of the course provides you with a broad historical overview of how philosophers have traditionally addressed the question of life’s meaning. In particular, you should achieve an understanding of the religious, the naturalistic, and the sceptical perspectives. These outcomes will be measured through in-class quizzes and tests and take-home essay assignments. By the end of the course you will be able to write philosophical essays on the various metaphysical hypothesis concerning the existence of the universe; you will also be able to write critical essays on the three general responses to life’s meaning (as listed above). Ideally, you will develop a richer, more coherent understanding of the nature of existence and the human condition. Since much of our time is spent on close textual analysis, you will also improve your reading comprehension skills and strengthen your abilities to construct logical arguments.

Required Text
2. Readings distributed in class or posted on the course website.
Course Website
To get to the course website, go to the main philosophy page at: http://philosophy.tamu.edu/
Click on the tab “Courses” and you’ll find a link for our course. Note: to fully access the philosophy website, login using your “islander” email account.

Attendance
All materials discussed in lectures and covered in the readings are the potential basis for quiz and test questions. Students are therefore expected to attend all lectures and keep up with assigned readings. Any student who misses classes without a reasonable excuse (e.g. medical) can expect to be penalized (up to a letter grade) on their final grade. If you don’t attend class, don’t expect to pass.

Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage of Final Mark</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Five reading quizzes</td>
<td>Worth 10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description: Short quizzes held at the start of class, usually answerable in a word or sentence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. In class test, September 27</td>
<td>Worth 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description: General test that will cover all materials up to and including September 25 and will take the entire period to write.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Essay, October 16</td>
<td>Worth 25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description: Essay topic and specific instructions to be distributed no later than October 2.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. In class test, November 15</td>
<td>Worth 20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description: General test with the same structure as the first test. Will cover all materials up to and including November 13.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Essay, Due by the end of the exam period.</td>
<td>Worth 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description: Essay topic and specific instructions to be distributed no later than November 29.</td>
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Grading Scale
All grades will be assigned on the standard scale: 90%-100%=A, 80%-89%=B, 70%-79%=C, 60%-69%=D, 59% and below=F.

Missed Test Policy
Students unable to write a test for a medical reason must provide a doctor’s note. If a student is unable to write a test for a similarly serious reason, documentation may be required. Make-up tests will be written at an arranged time under my supervision.
Classroom Etiquette
You are free to ask any question you please about the material. In many cases if you did not understand something, this is because it was not explained clearly to you, so you will be doing your colleagues and yourself a service if you request clarification. You are also free to argue for any philosophical position you find compelling, as long as you provide reasons for your point of view. It is inevitable that during discussions individual points of view will differ. When they do, our reaction will always be to patiently listen to the reasons offered for a particular conclusion and cooperatively evaluate those reasons.

E-etiquette
*Turn off all cell phones before entering the classroom.* If your cell phone rings during class, I will stop the lecture. Any student who disrupts a lecture by using a personal electronic device will be asked to leave.

Advisement
Academic advisors are available to assist students with course selection, degree plans, and other academic matters. Each college has an academic advising center, staffed by full-time, professional advisors. For the College of Liberal Arts the undergraduate advisor is Linda Miller (825-3466; linda.miller@tamucc.edu). The graduate advisor is Rachelle Stanley (825-5896; Rachelle.stanley@tamucc.edu). Both are located on the second floor of Driftwood. Students who have yet to declare a major are advised by the Academic Advising Transition Center. For more information please call (361) 825-5931 or log on to [http://www.tamucc.edu/~aac](http://www.tamucc.edu/~aac).

Notice to Students with Disabilities
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you suspect that you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office, located in Driftwood 101, at 825-5816. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible.

Grade Appeal Process
As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. If the problem cannot be resolved at this level, the student may take the steps below.
1. Presentation of grievance to instructor. (This step must be taken within fourteen calendar days after the beginning of the next term.)
2. Appeal to department chair or area coordinator.
3. Written appeal to the University Academic Standards Grievance Committee.
4. Preliminary review and advising by an ombudsman appointed by the Provost.
5. Submission of file by department chair to the chair of the University Academic Standards Grievance Committee.
6. Review of file by committee chair and submission of case to committee.
7. Proceedings of the University Academic Standards Grievance Committee. (Committee holds hearing, reviews data, presents findings to all parties, and makes recommendation to Provost.)
8. Decision by Provost.
9. Final appeal in writing to the Provost if student or instructor thinks appropriate procedures have not been followed.

For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at: http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.htm. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

**Important Dates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 22</td>
<td>Classes begin</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 29</td>
<td>Last day to register or add a class</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 3</td>
<td>Labor Day Holiday</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 2</td>
<td>Last day to drop a class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 22-23</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Holidays</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 3</td>
<td>Last day to withdraw from the University</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 4</td>
<td>Last day of classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 5,</td>
<td>Last day to apply for May 2013 graduation</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 6-7</td>
<td>Reading Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 10-12</td>
<td>Final examinations</td>
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**The Fine Print**

For all other matters concerning course withdrawal, appeal of grades, academic misconduct, etc, students are strongly advised to consult the rules outlined in the Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Student Handbook and on the web at: http://studentaffairs.tamucc.edu/.

**TOPICS AND READINGS**
*Readings and schedule subject to change*

**Week 1 (Aug. 23):** Introduction & Course Mechanics
*No Readings*

**Week 2 (Aug. 28, 30):** The Theistic Answer  

**Week 3 (Sept. 4, 6):** The Theistic Answer  

**Week 4 (Sept. 11, 13):** The Naturalistic Answer  

**Week 5 (Sept. 18, 20):** The Naturalistic Answer  
*Readings:* Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus".

**Week 6 (Sept. 25, 27):** General Review & Test 1  
*No Readings*

**Week 7 (Oct. 2, 4):** The Riddle of Existence  
*Readings:* Rescher, "On Explaining Existence"; Parfit, "Why Is Reality as It Is?".

**Week 8 (Oct. 9, 11):** The Riddle of Existence  
*Readings:* Leslie, "Immortality Defended" (chapters 1 & 2).

**Week 9 (Oct. 16, 18):** The Riddle of Existence & Naturalism Revisited  
*Readings:* Leslie, "Immortality Defended " (chapter 4); Santayana, "Preface to Realms of Being", "The Indispensable Properties of Substance".

**Week 10 (Oct. 23, 25):** Naturalism Revisited
Readings: Santayana, "The Nature of Spirit".

**Week 11 (Oct. 30, Nov, 1): Naturalism Revisited**
*Readings: Santayana, "Liberation".*

**Week 12 (Nov. 6, 8): Naturalism Revisited**
*Readings: Santayana, “Union”.*

**Week 13 (Nov. 13, 15): General Review & Test 2**
*No Readings*

**Week 14 (Nov. 20): Meaningless Lives?**

**Week 15 (Nov. 27, 29): Meaningless Lives?**

**Week 16 (Dec. 4): General Review**
*No Readings*