

Philosophy of Happiness
(Scholars Research Seminar)
SCH 150-03

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Office Hours: TTH 1:00-2:00pm and by appointment

Time: 9:00-10:45am

Classroom: Visual Arts

Building, Room 216+

Office: Lamont 308

Course Description

In 2016 the World Happiness Report declared Denmark the happiest country in the world and according to the annual Well-Being Index by Gallup-Healthways Naples, Florida was the happiest city in the USA. Pets make people happier, according to recent studies, whereas having children often makes people less happy. But what is happiness? Is happiness an emotion or a state of mind? How do we measure happiness? Is happiness necessary for a good life? Or is there something more to life than being happy? Every decision we make every single day is aimed at living the best life possible, but what exactly does this mean? In this course we will examine several theories on human happiness and what it takes to live a good and happy life. We will begin with theories from the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers, comparing their answers to those proposed by contemporary philosophers and discuss our own views on happiness and what makes life worth living.

As its name suggests the Scholars Research Seminar focuses on learning research methods. Students are required to write a research paper of 12-18 pages. In preparation for the end of term research paper students will participate in a midterm debate and write a group paper, approximately 3-4 pages. The group paper will serve as preparation for the debate and practice in writing a philosophical thesis and argument. Students will also begin early in the course to form their own research project, receiving instruction and guidance in planning and writing the research paper. Students should learn basic research skills, including, but not limited to, how to frame a research question, construct an argument, create a thesis, identify and analyze secondary and primary sources, use online and other resources in the library, and draw conclusions. To guide students in their research we will visit the library where a librarian will discuss how to locate and evaluate primary and secondary resources relevant to our topic.

Through the research project and written research paper you will:

- **DEVELOP A RESEARCH TOPIC:** Formulate a clear, focused research question or thesis appropriate to the topic of inquiry.
- **FIND EVIDENCE:** Identify and locate evidence appropriate for examining a research question or thesis.
- **EVALUATE EVIDENCE:** Critically and ethically analyze evidence obtained for examination of a research question or thesis.
- **DEVELOP AN EVIDENCE-BASED ARGUMENT:** Develop and organize a logical argument grounded in the analysis of evidence that supports or refutes a research question or thesis.
- **PRESENT RESEARCH FINDINGS:** Present a logical analytical argument supported by evidence in an appropriate written form without errors of grammar, usage, and spelling.
- **PRACTICE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF CITATION:** Incorporate and cite evidence in a manner that meets the professional standards of the discipline most appropriate for the topic of inquiry.

How to Construct a Research Paper

ABSTRACT: a one paragraph summary overview of your paper that introduces the subject matter and your argument. Usually written last.

CONTENT OF PAPER:

I. **Introduction** (approx. 15% of your paper): Your introduction should be approximately 1-3 paragraphs. Your introduction should include a brief overview of the question or puzzle you are trying to solve, why the puzzle is important or problematic, and your primary thesis, which should take the format of “In this paper I argue...because...”.

II. **Body** (approx. 75% of your essay)

A. Give an account of opposing views that you are considering. Explain what you take to be their strengths or weaknesses.

B. Most of this section should be your own original research in the secondary and primary sources. In it you will apply the research training you received to argue for your thesis.

C. Explain the advantages your argument has over other arguments considered earlier in the paper.

D. Consider one or more objections to your own argument and then either address those objections or explain why they are not reason enough to reject your view.

III. **Conclusion** (approx. 10% of your essay)

In this final section you will recap the main arguments in your paper and briefly explain how your argument solves the puzzle you introduced at the beginning of the paper. You should also suggest how your research contributes to the topic in general.

FOOTNOTES and BIBLIOGRAPHY

You are expected to fully and correctly reference all sources in footnotes and a bibliography.

Resources

Writing Center: The Writing Center (second floor of Schaffer Library) provides free one-on-one consultation, both by appointment and as available on a walk-in basis. I encourage you to visit the writing center for any and all writing assignments.

<http://www.union.edu/Resources/Academic/writing/index.php>.

Accommodations: It is the policy of Union College to make reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities. If you have a specific disability that qualifies you for academic accommodations, please bring your accommodation ID card to your instructor’s office hours as soon as possible. Your instructor will then discuss with you any necessary special arrangements. No accommodations will be provided to students who do not have an accommodation ID card from the Office of Student Support Services (x8785).

Required Texts

- Cahn and Vitrano (eds). *Happiness: Classical and Contemporary Readings in Philosophy* (Oxford UP, 2007)
- Russell, Bertrand. *The Conquest of Happiness* (Liveright Publishing Co. 1930/2013)
- Additional papers and readings will be posted on Nexus
- Please note that I reserve the right to assign additional readings that are not on the syllabus.

Assignments

10% Nexus posts

15% Group Debate

10% Group Paper

20% Short Paper

30% Final Research Paper

15% Class Presentation

Participation: This is a discussion-based course. Active student participation will be a central feature of the learning experience. In order to ensure successful participation, it is important that you attend to two main tasks:

- **Reading Assignments:** You should complete the assigned reading prior to the class for which they are assigned in order to contribute meaningfully to class discussion. If you have not read philosophy before, you may find the readings difficult at first. Don't give up! As you read try to identify core claims and arguments. Take notes, jotting down questions or critiques.
- **Class Discussion:** You should contribute to class discussions regularly and in a respectful manner, either by asking questions relating to the topic or contributing your own meaningful insights. Discussion will be based on the reading assignments.

Workshops: The last 20-30 minutes of class will often be dedicated to small group workshops in which students will work together on a specific task related to their debates or papers. For many of the workshops you will be asked to bring part or all of a draft of your paper. Failing to do so will result in your final paper grade being reduced by a third of a letter grade (e.g. A will become an A-)

Description of Assignments

Nexus: In order to get the maximum amount of points you must post **by 10pm** the night **before** class. I will not count posts that are entered after 10pm. There is no way to make up a missed post. If you do not post on the discussion board by 10pm you will not receive any points for that post. You should post at least one paragraph (approx. 5 sentences) in response to the readings for that day. You may respond to other posts on Nexus, but it must be clear from your post that you read the material. Each post is worth 15 points. I will take off points if the post does not attempt to answer the question and if there are numerous spelling and grammar mistakes. Please keep in mind that the discussion board is worth 10% of your grade so it is very important that you keep up with this assignment.

Debate and Group Paper: There is one in-class debate, which will have both a written and oral component. Students will be divided into groups and given a debate question. Each member of the group must speak during the debate in order to get full points. Each group will write a 3-4 page paper based on the debate. I will provide a detailed guide and rubric explaining each step of the assignment and exactly how the assignment is assessed.

Term Papers: There are two papers for the course. The first paper is a short paper (6-7 pages) that is on a topic of your choice. You **MUST** have your topic approved by me by **February 7th**. I will provide you with a grading guideline and a guide to writing philosophy papers, as well as a description of all the requirements you must meet before turning in the paper. The final research paper will be based on your short 6-7 page paper and should be 12-18 pages long. The final research paper should respond to comments I make on your shorter paper and should expand on the ideas in your short paper. Students should include additional sources in the final paper. These additional sources should be approved by no later than **February 28th**.

Class Presentation: Each student will give a 10-15 minute presentation on his/her research paper. Each presenter must have a one-page handout and meet with me to discuss his/her handout and presentation the week before the actual presentation. In your presentation you should lay out the problem/question that you are addressing in your paper. Both the handout and the presentation will be graded on organization and clarity as well as content (see rubric).

Expectations and Classroom Policies

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory and will be taken at the beginning of every class.

Email

- Please feel free to email me any time, but allow me 24 hours to respond.
- If you have questions about the class or the assignments please **check the syllabus** first before emailing.
- If you cannot find the information you need on the syllabus, then send me an email.
- If you have any questions about the content of the class or would simply like to discuss some philosophical thoughts of your own do not hesitate to come to my office hours or set up an appointment.

General Expectations

- Come to class prepared, on time, and with your books.
- Turn off your phone, no texting, no laptops unless absolutely necessary, no newspapers, no talking to one another unless it is part of class discussion, no sleeping.
- You are expected to pay attention and engage respectfully with your classmates.
- If you must use your laptop for note taking, please be aware that you may not use the Internet *for any purpose* during class and you may wish to disable it if you will be otherwise tempted. Failure to abide by this requirement will result in loss of the privilege to use your laptop in class.

Plagiarism

Students are expected to adhere to the Union College Academic Honor Code, which you can access at: www.union.edu/academic_depts/ethics/union/Honor%20Code.php

TOPICS AND READINGS

INTRODUCTION

- January 3: Introduction
Small Group Discussions: What is happiness? Why do we want to be happy?

WHAT MAKES PEOPLE UNHAPPY?

- January 5: Bertrand Russell, *The Conquest of Happiness*, Chapters 1-3, pp. 21-66
January 10: Bertrand Russell, *The Conquest of Happiness*, Chapters 4-, pp. 67-125

ANCIENT THEORIES ON HAPPINESS

- January 12: Plato, Excerpts from *Republic*, (Cahn and Vitrano) pp. 3-18
[Workshop: Introduction to Academic Writing, Read Taylor, pp. 1-18 \(Nexus\)](#)
- January 17: Aristotle, Excerpts from *Nicomachean Ethics*, pp. 19-34
[Workshop: Framing a Research Question, Read Taylor, pp. 21-52 \(Nexus\)](#)
- January 19: Aristotle, Excerpts from *Nicomachean Ethics*, pp. 19-34 (continued)
[Visit to the Library](#)
- January 24: Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus; Leading Doctrines*, pp. 34-40
[Workshop: Debate Prep](#)
- January 26: Seneca, *On the Happy Life* (selections), pp. 41-51
[Workshop: Writing an Introduction and Thesis \(bring a draft of your group's paper to class\)](#)
Draft of Debate Group Paper Due by Midnight via Nexus
- January 31: Seneca, *On the Happy Life* (selections), pp. 41-51 (continued)
[Workshop: Debate Prep](#)
- February 2: **Debates**
- February 7: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (selections), pp. 68-77
Group Papers Due by Midnight via Nexus
- February 9: Joseph Butler, *Upon the Love of our Neighbor* (selections), pp. 77-86
[Workshop: Constructing an Argument \(bring draft of first paper to class\)](#)

CONTEMPORARY THEORIES ON HAPPINESS

- February 14: *Happiness and Immorality*, pp. 261-272
First Papers Due via Nexus (TurnItIn)
- February 16: Wayne Davis, *Pleasure and Happiness* pp. 163-172
[Workshop: Identifying and Analyzing Secondary and Primary Sources](#)
- February 21: Daniel Haybron, *Why Hedonism is False*, pp. 173-179
[Workshop: How to Organize Your Paper \(Bring Papers to Class\)](#)
- February 23: John Kekes, *Attitudinal and Episodic Happiness*, pp. 179-193
[Workshop: Citations and Bibliographies \(Bring Papers to Class\)](#)
- February 28: Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz, *Happiness and Time*, pp. 193-201
[Workshop: Handouts for Oral Presentation \(Bring Handouts to Class\)](#)
- March 2: Robert Nozick, *The Experience Machine*; Julia Annas, *Happiness as Achievement*, pp. 236-245
[Workshop: Practice Presentations \(Split up into pairs to practice\)](#)
- March 7: In Class Presentations
- Week 9: In Class Presentations

March 14th Papers Due at Midnight via Nexus (TurnItIn)