

# Fun and The Meaning of Life

Philosophy 490 – CRN 26123

Spring Term 2023 – Purdue University

Instructor: Daniel Kelly

Preceptors: Lillian Millspaugh and Edward Null

<https://purdue.brightspace.com/d2l/home/712099>

## Syllabus

### 1. Course Description

Philosophic discussion of what gives a life meaning or makes it worth living tend to veer into heavy, sometimes morose territory pretty quickly. In this class we'll go in the opposite direction. We'll explore the nature of fun, the metaphysics and value of games, and a host of related topics like play, humor, awesomeness, and happiness. We'll think about how these are related to each other, to some of the less paradigmatically fun elements of life like work, morality, striving, and idleness, and how they each might best contribute a life worth living.

### 2. Class Meetings

Class lectures meet Tuesday and Thursday from 12:00 – 1:15pm, Room 1230 of Beering Hall.

### 3. Office Hours and Contact Information

Daniel Kelly

Office: 7126 Beering Hall

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Office Hours: 10:00am – 12:00noon Mondays, or by (zoom or irl) appointment

Office Hours Zoom link: <https://purdue-edu.zoom.us/j/99740121818?pwd=bmY0cm1ITnBwdTJmSUhGVnBZNC9rUT09>

Lillian Millspaugh

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Edward Null

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### 4. Materials

All readings for this course are posted in electronic format on [Brightspace](#). The one exception the required text of *The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia* (Third Edition) by Bernard Suits. It should be available at campus bookstores for this class and can be easily purchased through online vendors as well.

### 5. Topics and Reading Schedule

Here is a tentative schedule of topics and readings. Depending how fast we are going, amendments and alterations will be announced in class as we go, and the readings for the next class will always be announced in lecture. Make sure you check the course Brightspace page on a fairly regular basis.

1. Tuesday 1/10 Introduction
  - Required (During Class)
    - Bailey, But How Do I Participate?
    - Wallace, The Nature of the Fun
2. Thursday 1/12 Some Preliminaries: Fun and Games
  - Required
    - Price, *The Power of Fun* (Preface, Chapter 1, Conclusion)
    - Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (sections 66-71)\*
  - Suggested / Background / Elaboration
    - Price, [Ted Talk Why Having Fun is the Secret to a Healthier Life](#)
    - Kee, On the Same Wavelength
3. Tuesday 1/17 Games, Life and Utopia
  - Required
    - Suits, *The Grasshopper*, Chapters 1-4 (pages 4-51)
  - Suggested / Background / Elaboration
    - Hurka, Introduction to *The Grasshopper* (pages ix-xxiii)\*
    - Suits, Preface to *The Grasshopper* (pages 1-2)
4. Thursday 1/19 Games, Life and Utopia
  - Required
    - Suits, *The Grasshopper*, Chapters 5-8 (pages 53-92)
5. Tuesday 1/24 Games, Life and Utopia
  - Required
    - Suits, *The Grasshopper*, Chapters 9-12 (pages 96-150)
6. Thursday 1/26 Games, Life and Utopia
  - Required
    - Suits, *The Grasshopper*, Chapters 13-15 (pages 154-196)
  - Suggested / Background / Elaboration
    - Suits, Three Appendices to *The Grasshopper*

**Position Paper #1 Due Sunday by Midnight**
7. Tuesday 1/31 Play
  - Required
    - Ridge, Why So Serious? The Nature and Value of Play\*
  - Suggested / Background / Elaboration
    - Chu and Schulz, Play Curiosity, and Cognition\*
    - Eberle, The Elements of Play: Toward a Philosophy and a Definition of Play\*
    - Gray, The Play Deficit\*
8. Thursday 2/2 Guest Lecture by [Elizabeth Lonsdorf](#) on play in Non-human animals
  - Required
    - Palagi et al, The Naturalistic Approach to Laughter in Humans and Other Animals: Towards a Unified Theory\*
  - Suggested / Background / Elaboration
    - Clark and Lonsdorf, [Learning from our Closest Relatives: Primatologist Elizabeth Lonsdorf Follows in the footsteps of Jane Goodall](#)

**Outline #1 Due Sunday by Midnight**
9. Tuesday 2/7 Making Room for Fun, Part 1: Work
  - Required
    - Thompson, Workism is Making Americans Miserable\*
  - Suggested / Background / Elaboration
    - Burke, Work and Play\*
    - Lepore, What's Wrong with the Way We Work?

- Altman, Moore's Law for Everything (also a [podcast](#))
10. Thursday 2/9 Making Room for Fun, Part 1: Work
- Required
    - Petersen, How Millennials Became the Burnout Generation\*
    - Podcast, Klein, Petersen, and Thompson [Work as Identity, Burnout as Lifestyle](#)
  - Suggested / Background / Elaboration
    - Lussier, The Dark Shadow in The Injunction To 'Do What You Love'
    - Taggart, If Work Dominated Your Every Moment Would Life Be Worth Living?
    - Tolentino, The Gig Economy Celebrates Working Yourself to Death
    - Illing, Interview with Anne Helen Petersen on Millennial Burnout
- Position Paper #2 Due Sunday by Midnight**
11. Tuesday 2/14 Making Room for Fun, Part 2: Morality
- Required
    - Wolf, Moral Saints\*
  - Suggested / Background / Elaboration
    - Williams, Morality, the Peculiar Institution\*
- Thursday 2/16 No Class (Traveling)**
12. Tuesday 2/21 The Meaning of Life
- Required
    - Millgram, Who is a Meaning of Life For?\*
    - Peanalto, [Meaning in Life: What Makes Our Lives Meaningful?](#)
    - Podcast Talisse and Millgram, [New Books in Philosophy: John Stuart Mill and the Meaning of Life](#)
  - Suggested / Background / Elaboration
    - Calhoun, Geographies of Meaningful Living\*
    - King and Hicks, The Science of Meaning in Life\*
    - Schlick, On the Meaning of Life\*
    - Velleman, Well-being and Time\*
    - Wiggins, Truth, Invention, and the Meaning of Life\*
13. Thursday 2/23 The Meaning of Life
- Required
    - Setiya, Don't Treat Your Life Like a Project\*
  - Suggested / Background / Elaboration
    - Setiya, The Midlife Crisis\*
    - McAdams "'First we invented stories, then they changed us": The Evolution of Narrative Identity'\*
- Outline #2 Due Sunday by Midnight**
14. Tuesday 2/28 The Meaning of Life
- Required
    - Nagel, Secular Philosophy and the Religious Temperament\*
  - Suggested / Background / Elaboration
    - Van Aken, [Camus on The Absurd: The Myth of Sisyphus](#)
15. Thursday 3/2 The Meaning of Life
- Required
    - Nagel, The Absurd\*
    - Wallace, Good Old Neon
  - Suggested / Background / Elaboration
    - Wallace, This is Water / [Kenyon Commencement Address](#)
    - Kelly, David Foster Wallace as American Hedgehog\*

### Position Paper #3 Due Sunday by Midnight

16. Tuesday 3/7 Some Fun Social Goods
  - Required
    - Riggle, High Five! Awesomeness as the Imperative of our Time\*
  - Suggested / Background / Elaboration
    - Riggle, How to Be Awesome
17. Thursday 3/9 Some Fun Social Goods
  - Required
    - Slingerland, [Drinking for 10,000 Years: Intoxication and Civilization](#)
  - Suggested / Background / Elaboration
    - Podcast, [Getting Drunk \(with Ted Slingerland\)](#)
- Tuesday 3/14 No Class (Spring Break)**
- Thursday 3/16 No Class (Spring Break)**
18. Tuesday 3/21 To Strive or Not to Strive?
  - Required
    - Duckworth, Ted Talk [Grit: The Power and Passion of Perseverance](#)
    - Morton and Paul, Grit\*
  - Suggested / Background / Elaboration
    - Denby, The Limits of Grit
    - Biss, Why Doing Your Best Is Sometimes the Worst Thing You Can Do
19. Thursday 3/23 To Strive or Not to Strive?
  - Required
    - Russell, In Praise of Idleness
    - Russell, Idleness as Play and Leisure\*
  - Suggested / Background / Elaboration
    - Russell, Idleness would be preferred over game playing as an ideal in Suits' Utopia\*
    - Shippen, Review of O'Connor's *Idleness: A Philosophical Essay*
    - Schwartz, Why efficiency is dangerous and slowing down makes life better
- Outline #3 Due Sunday by Midnight**
20. Tuesday 3/28 To Strive or Not to Strive?
  - Required
    - Russell, Striving, Entropy, Meaning\*
  - Suggested / Background / Elaboration
    - Podcast, Karma and Ridgeway, [We Build Civilizations on Status, But We Barely Understand It](#)
- Thursday 3/30 No Class (Traveling)**
21. Tuesday 4/4 Some Fun Social Goods
  - Required
    - Alfano and Astola, A sense of humour – even a dark one – is a moral virtue
    - Haybron, Happiness and its Discontents
    - Moran, The Delights of Mischief
  - Suggested / Background / Elaboration
    - Alfano et al, Having a Sense of Humor as a Virtue\*
    - Olin, The Comic Stance\*
22. Thursday 4/6 Embodied Fun: Ritual and Dance—Guest Lecture by Purdue Philosophy Department post-doctoral researcher [Marta Caravà](#)
  - Required
    - Mingon and Sutton, Why robots can't haka: skilled performance and embodied knowledge in the Māori haka?\*

- Suggested / Background / Elaboration
    - Noë, Entanglement and Ecstasy in Dance, Music, and Philosophy\*
    - Rowlands, *The New Science of the Mind* chapter 3, The Mind Embodied, Embedded, Enacted, Extended\*
    - Medlock, The Body Is the Missing Link for Truly Intelligent Machines  
**Position Paper #4 Due Sunday by Midnight**
23. Tuesday 4/11 Games and the Creation of Agents and Values
- Required
    - Nguyen, Games and the Art of Agency\*
  - Suggested / Background / Elaboration
    - Ridge, Games and the Good Life\*
    - Podcast, Klein and Nguyen [Are We Measuring Our Lives In All The Wrong Ways?](#)
    - Podcast, Carroll and Nguyen [Games, Art, Values, and Agency](#)
24. Thursday 4/13 Creating Your Own Life Worth Living
- Required
    - Ismael, Why (Study) the Humanities? The View from Science\*
  - Suggested / Background / Elaboration
    - Ismael and Lombrozo, NPR Interview: Embracing the Humanities  
**Outline #4 Due Sunday by Midnight**
25. Tuesday 4/18 In-class presentations
26. Thursday 4/20 In-class presentations
27. Tuesday 4/25 In-class presentations
28. Thursday 4/27 In-class presentations

**Last Day of Class: Thursday 4/27**

**Book Review Due: Friday 5/1**

**Extra Credit Due: Friday 5/1**

#### 6. Course Requirements, Assignments and Grading

Final course grades will be assigned on the standard 0-100 point grading scale:

100-98:	A+
97-93:	A
92-90:	A-
89-87:	B+
86-83:	B
82-80:	B-
79-77:	C+
76-73:	C
72-70:	C-
69-67:	D+
66-63:	D
62-60:	D-
59-0:	F

Final course grades will be determined by the following assignments:

1) Participation: In Class Discussion and Recall Exercises	10%
2) Participation: Packback (10 weekly contributions)	10%

3) Two Idea Spotlighting Exercises (1 pre class, 1 post class)	10%
4) Outlines (4)	20%
5) Short Position Papers (4)	20%
6) End of Semester In-Class Presentation	15%
7) Written Book Review	15%

### 7. Assignment Schedule

All assignments will be submitted electronically via Brightspace. They will be due by the end of the day (11:59pm) on the day they are due. If a student misses that deadline, they have one week to turn in the assignment **late**, and it will only get half credit. After that week, the assignment will not be accepted, and the student will receive a 0.

#### **Outlines and Position Papers**

- 1) Sunday 1/29 Position Paper #1 (On Suits)
- 2) Sunday 2/5 Outline # 1
- 3) Sunday 2/12 Position Paper #2
- 4) Sunday 2/26 Outline #2
- 5) Sunday 3/5 Position Paper #3
- 6) Sunday 3/26 Outline #3
- 7) Sunday 4/9 Position Paper #4
- 8) Sunday 4/16 Outline #4

**In class Presentations:** Tuesday 4/18, Thursday 4/20, Tuesday 4/25, Thursday 4/27

**Last Day of Class:** Thursday 4/27

**Written Book Review Due:** Friday 5/5

**Extra Credit Due:** Friday 5/5

### 8. Instructions for Different Assignments

#### **Recall Exercises**

- At some point during every class, I'll pass around index cards. You'll write your name and date on top, and then take a couple of minutes to write down what you most remember from the last class session. What did you take away from it, and which ideas or arguments will stick with you going forward?
- I'll use these to keep track of attendance.
- These aren't graded per se; credit for doing them is folded into your participation score.

#### **Idea Spotlighting Exercises**

- These will be graded out of 20 points.
- The basic idea:
  - Put a spotlight on, and write up, a few of the key ideas from the reading and our class discussion of it.
  - Two students will be on duty for each class session. One will submit their write up before class meets, based on the reading(s). The other will submit their write up after class meets, based on the discussion.
  - A sign-up sheet will be circulated for slots; first come, first serve.

- More detail: feel free to go over if need be, but between one and two pages is the target. There is value in concision here. Extract the conceptual core and say it cleanly. Take the opportunity to shape how we're going to discuss the material in class. Here is your structure:
  - Interesting ideas:
    - 1) **Identify and express it:** Articulate two (2) distinct concepts or points that you find most interesting and conversation worthy. For this step, use the terminology in the reading and provide as much of context as necessary to get its significance across. You are encouraged but not required to use a verbatim quote from the text in this step. If it's illustrated with some vivid image or beautiful turn of phrase or killer example that made the idea pop out and stick in your head, tell me about that too.
    - 2) **Explain it:** Unpack each idea or point in your own words, explaining a little more of the context. Try to say why the author uses the idea and what they are using it to do. If the idea or point plays a key role in some larger argument or line of thought, try to articulate a nutshell version of that. Here you can think of yourself as explaining the idea or point to a smart, interested friend/parent/co-worker/stranger who isn't in this class. (I like to think of them sitting next to me on a barstool or across a campfire.)
    - 3) **Explain why you found it interesting:** Say why this idea or point leapt out at you at first or stuck with you after you did the reading. What about it grabbed you? How did it connect to your lived experience? How will you weave it into your own thinking and best conversations going forward?
  - Confusing ideas:
    - 1) **Identify what's confusing you:** Pinpoint the source of your confusion. You are encouraged but not required to use a verbatim quote from the text in this step as well. Try to choose an idea that appears to be fairly central, is suggestive or interesting, but that you didn't quite grasp.
    - 2) **Articulate your confusion:** Try to say why it's confusing you, or what about it isn't clear or made it hard to grasp. Neither of these two things is particularly easy to do, I realize. Providing some context might help. But work at it. I have found that being honest about and comfortable with ignorance and confusion is a big part of epistemic humility, which is a virtue and maybe the most important thing philosophy has taught me. More practically, being able to locate and navigate around your own points of confusion and ignorance is another one of those invaluable all-too-rare skills that will be useful everywhere in your life, and for all of it.
  - Skepticism:
    - 1) **Channel your Inner Socrates:** Identify and briefly write down a point or two from the reading that you're skeptical about, that you understand but don't or aren't ready to accept.
  - Logistics:
    - All enrolled students will do two Idea Spotlight Exercises, one pre-class session and one post-class session. Submitted via Brightspace via the Assignment Portal
      - Pre-class spotlights should be submitted no later than 48 hours before class.
      - Post-class spotlights should be submitted no later than 48 hours after class.
      - A sign-up sheet for specific readings and dates will be circulated in class, and eventually posted on the Brightspace page

### Outline Exercises

- You have four of these, and each will be graded out of 10 points.

- You can do Outline Exercises on any of, but only, the readings in the syllabus that have an asterisk(\*) next to them in Section 7 Topics and Reading Schedule below.
- You can turn in an Outline Exercise before or after we talk about the reading in class (though it will help you your comprehension to stay close to where we are in the semester).
- There are Two Steps to these exercises. The main one is writing up a one-page, single spaced, outline of a paper, pulling out its “bird’s eye view” structure—sections, main claims of sections, basic arguments offered in support of those claims. Hence the name. But wait, there’s more.
  - How to do it? Two Steps:
    - **Step 1:** Create a one-page outline of the reading using the standard capital Roman numerals>capital letters>Arabic numerals>small letters>small Roman numerals system to mark different “levels” of indentation in your outline
      - Most word processors will do this kind of indentation formatting and number/lettering for you automatically
      - If you’ve never done an outline before
        - This is a good helpful overview: <https://libguides.gatech.edu/c.php?g=54271&p=350394>
        - You can also look at this for a helpful model: <https://web.ics.purdue.edu/~drkelly/KellyOutlineIsmaelOnDennett2018.pdf>
    - **Step 2:** Then on a second page in the same document, separate from your outline, do these three things:
      - 1) Formulate in your *own words* the main question you take the paper to be addressing
      - 2) Identify a sentence or two *from the paper* (i.e. quoted verbatim from the text itself) that best states the answer the author gives to the main question you just identified and formulated. This will be usually also be the thesis of the paper, its main point, its Take Home Message
      - 3) Finally, pose a question *of your own* that the paper provoked
    - Comments:
      - The outline part of this, Step 1, should fill a full page
      - But also try to keep that outline part to just a single page. Though you can spill over a little if need be; you’ll get docked points for an outline that is too short, but not for one that is a little too long. Why? Because being concise and getting better able to distinguish the forest through the trees, the signal through the noise, is a large part of the point of the exercise
  - Why? (Learning Outcome Alert!) Here are the skills you are working on:
    - To synthesize a large number of ideas, information, and often dense prose, then organize it, think systematically about what’s important and what’s peripheral
    - To develop the ability to identify and pull out the thesis of an article, and to distinguish the main claims and most important premises from the mere opinions, editorial asides, or ancillary supporting details
    - To be able to summarize an argument as a whole, and thus to conceptualize, at a general level, the line of reasoning that an article is putting forth, and to understand it in its entirety as a single thing
    - Then, once you’ve understood the line of reasoning on its own terms, to take the time and effort to formulate an explicit question about it



- This is an important first step in developing your own sophisticated opinion about it
- Articulating questions helps to redirect and focus attention on what *you* think about the issue and argument, once you have come to grips with what *the author* thinks about it
- All of this helps you to not just organize, synthesize, and comprehend a body of information, but to also evaluate it, to make a judgment about it
- All of these elements make up one of those Big Picture abilities you can work on, hone, sharpen, and refine with practice, and it is one that will benefit you in any domain and for the rest of your life. This is getting in the kind of repetitions that will help with the turbocharging of your bullshit detector stuff, right here.

### Position Papers

- You have four of these, and each will be graded out of 10 points.
- For these, you can focus on a single reading, or you can open that up and address an issue that is taken up in several papers, and that we discuss in class lectures.
- Write a short essay about that addresses the issue, and in which you lay out your position on that issue. Give the reasons why you find that position convincing and are not persuaded by the objections and alternatives to the position you have taken.
- Here is one format it can take, if you choose to focus on a single paper
  - 1) In the first paragraph:
    - 1) Begin by stating the thesis or main claim of the paper you choose; this can be a verbatim quotation from the reading, or you can express it in your own words.
    - 2) Then articulate the argument—the reasons—the author of the paper gives in support of their thesis or main claim.
  - 2) Next, state your position on the thesis in a single sentence. You can agree, disagree, kind of agree, but tell me where you stand on the issue right up front. Then, the rest of the essay is you defending your position, providing reasons for it, explaining where you think the author's argument goes wrong, imagining what a skeptic who isn't convinced by your position might say, and responding to them, trying to persuade them you're right, etc.
- Ideal length here is between about 800 –1000 words, roughly 2-3 pages. What you turn in shouldn't be much less, but feel free to go over if you've feeling particularly engaged by the reading and have a lot to say. But also! Don't ramble on and on! Say your piece and points strongly and compactly. Refining those and stating them clearly and forcefully is part of the process of [writing and revision](#), but [the effort is worth it](#).
- A central aim of these exercises is to help you engage with the issues and readings more, and to give you a forum to work out what you think about some of the ideas therein. And so: feel free/encouraged to write in the first person.
- Do not just summarize a paper. Let's repeat that: *do not just summarize a paper*. Mere summaries will not receive full credit for the assignment.
- You do need not bring in any external sources. You may if you want, however, and that's great. if you do, be sure to cite them.
- These exercises are obviously less structured than the outlines, so you have more leeway on how you put these together. That said:

- 1) Some Things You Should Definitely Do: Your Position Paper should be on topic, which means it should be about the subject matter and arguments made in the paper(s) you choose. It should be proofread, so that it contains grammatical sentences, correct punctuation and spelling, etc. It should clearly express your own point of view about some of the main claims made in the reading(s), and (this is important!) it should give reasons supporting that point of view. Take a position! Defend it! Make an argument!
  - 2) Some Things You Should Avoid Doing
    - Summarizing a whole paper. Did I say that already? Don't do this.
    - Free associating some random things that the paper made you think of
    - "Ever since the dawn of time humans have wondered..."
      - Please no
      - Stuff like this doesn't add anything of value, but is quite effective in putting professors and graders in a sour state of mind when they begin reading, largely because it's über-clichéd but also because it feels like padding
    - Asking rhetorical questions
      - When tempted to ask one, do this instead: write out what you take to be the obviously correct answer in the form of a declarative statement, and then explicitly state the reasons you think that statement is obviously correct. Rhetorical questions themselves don't make good or convincing arguments. Moreover, when you are in a philosophical debate, the answer you take to be obviously correct will often be rejected by those arguing the other side of the issue.
  - 3) Some Things You Can Do
    - Develop and explain a connection to the issues and key questions we talked about in class from other readings in the class.
    - Once you have decided where you stand w/r/t to the issue you're considering, you can proceed by
      - If you disagree, raise and develop your own skeptical objection to what you have decided to focus on. But also! Consider what someone on the other side of the issue would say in response to your objection, and say why you would reject that response
      - If you agree, articulate and consider the best skeptical objection you can think of, and say why you do not find that skeptical objection convincing
    - Explicitly draw out and explore an implication of the position you've taken that is not spelled out in any of the readings. Assess that implication: what do you think about it? Why?
- The Learning Outcomes here are similar to those for the Outline Exercise, but with a couple of differences in emphasis:
    - These provide more of an opportunity for students to develop their own analytic abilities, and to express the results in prose and essay form. This, in turn, also gives students a little bit more creative leeway on how and what they can philosophize about.
    - These are also designed to introduce students to how the types of venerable philosophical concepts and questions we will read about in the Core Readings manifest in contemporary settings and animate discussions about much more current debates.

## Packback

- Participation is a requirement for this course, and the Packback Questions platform will be used for online discussion about class topics. Packback Questions is an online community where you can be fearlessly curious and ask open-ended questions to build on top of what we are covering in class and relate topics to real-world applications.
- Packback Requirements:
  - Your participation on Packback will count toward 10% of your overall course grade.
  - There will be a Weekly Wednesday at 11:59PM EST deadline for submissions. In order to receive full credit, you should submit the following per each deadline period:
    - 1 open-ended Question every week with a minimum Curiosity Score of 60, worth 33.33% of each assignment grade
    - 2 Responses every week with a minimum Curiosity Score of 60, worth 66.67% of each assignment grade
      - Half credit will be provided for questions and responses that do not meet the minimum curiosity score.
- How to Register on Packback:
  - Click the Packback assignment link within Brightspace to access the community
  - Follow the instructions on your screen to finish your registration.
  - In order for your grade to be visible in Brightspace, make sure to register only through the Brightspace link
  - Packback may require a paid subscription. Refer to [www.packback.co/product/pricing](http://www.packback.co/product/pricing) for more information.
- How to Get Help from the Packback Team:
  - If you have any questions or concerns about Packback throughout the semester, please read their FAQ at [help.packback.co](http://help.packback.co). If you need more help, contact their customer support team directly at [help@packback.co](mailto:help@packback.co).
- For a brief introduction to Packback Questions and why we are using it in class, watch this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OV7QmikrD68>

## Two-Pronged Book Project

Each student will choose one of these books, with a limit to two students per book. We'll hold an in-class draft for people to choose books, with a lottery beforehand to establish selection order. Once you've got a book, you will then read it on your own, in preparation for two interrelated projects based on it that will be due at the end of the semester.

- 1) Burton, *Strange Rites: New Religions for a Godless World*
- 2) Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*
- 3) Deresiewicz, *Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite & the Way to a Meaningful Life*
- 4) Diamond, *Why is Sex Fun? The Evolution of Human Sexuality*
- 5) Dreyfus & Kelly, *All Things Shining: Reading the Western Classics to Find Meaning in a Secular Age*
- 6) Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*
- 7) Haybron, *Happiness: A Very Short Introduction*
- 8) Hurley et al., *Inside Jokes: Using Humor to Reverse Engineer the Mind*
- 9) Millgram, *John Stuart Mill and the Meaning of Life*
- 10) Nguyen, *Games: Agency as Art*
- 11) O'Connor, *Idleness: A Philosophical Essay*
- 12) Price, *The Power of Fun: How to Feel Alive Again*
- 13) Riggle, *On Being Awesome: A Unified Theory of How Not to Suck*

- 14) Senior, *All Joy and No Fun: The Paradox of Modern Parenthood*
- 15) Setiya, *Midlife: A Philosophical Guide*
- 16) Slingerland, *Drunk: How We Sipped, Danced, and Stumbled Our Way to Civilization*
- 17) Suits et al, *Return of the Grasshopper, Games, Leisure and the Good Life in the Third Millennium*
- 18) Tolstoy, *A Confession*

### In-Class Presentation

- The last two weeks of class will be devoted to in-class presentations. These should be 10 minutes each. Each student will give an overview of their book, its main ideas, points, and arguments. Say what you thought was most interesting, most controversial/unconvincing, give an overall summary of what you think the main takeaway points should be. Develop a connection between the book's subject matter and the idea of fun we have been working with. Develop another connection between the book's subject matter and the topic of the meaning of life or what makes a life worth living.
- Your presentation should use PowerPoint slides or some analogous AV presentation tool.
- Also, before you give your presentation in class, you should schedule an appointment at the [Purdue Presentation Center](#) and workshop it with them. They will provide you with documentation of your session with them; turn in that documentation to me (email is fine).

### Written Book Review

- Write a 1500-2000 word review of your book. In general, you should use any and/or all of the skills you've been building up over the course of the semester in the other assignments: identifying thesis statements, summarizing arguments, making suggestions, formulating skeptical objections, locating points of confusion or lack of clarity, drawing out implications, connecting to other issues and topics we've discussed over the semester. You should also articulate (briefly in the introductory paragraph and reiterated and deepened in the closing paragraphs) an overall judgment about the strengths and weaknesses of the book.
- In addition to these standard features of a book review, also pull out a couple of the most interesting claims, points, or examples from the book, that you think would be a good idea to incorporate into the future Big Lecture version of this class. Make an argument for why they should get some of the limited airtime available when it is transformed and scaled up.

### Extra Credit

For up to 3 points on your final grade, choose and complete one of these:

- **Single Syllable Challenge:** Pick 6 of the positions we will discuss this semester, and express them as clearly as you can in 75-150 words, but only using words that have a single syllable. Run by me what 6 positions you're intending to do first, just to make sure.
- **Memes:** Put together 10 memes, each of which expresses ideas or themes we've talked about over the course of the semester.
- **Curated End of Semester Playlist:** Put together a playlist of 10 songs that connect to one of the ideas or themes we've talked about over the course of the semester. Write up an accompanying document that gives the title, artist, year of release, and (where relevant) album of each song, along 100-200 words about each one explaining why you like it and how you see it connecting up to the theme or idea from the course.

- Pitch me **another idea** – something creative, something fun!

## 2. Course Policies

**Readings:** Do them; it will pay off, and is a necessary ingredient to good class discussions, arguments, conversations, debates. A recent book's introduction says it well: "Patience is a primary virtue in philosophy. Genuine understanding is a rare and valuable commodity, not to be obtained on the cheap. One cannot reap philosophy's rewards breathlessly, or by looking for the intellectual equivalents of sound bites. Very large claims are at issue here, claims that bear on understanding some of the matters most important to being human. Understanding requires investing time, close reading, and reflection."

**Class sessions:** Please come on time. This will be a discussion centric-course, so your presence, attention, and contributions will be key to its success. I will also try to begin on time, and will usually go right up until the end of the class session. Do not pack up your materials until class has been dismissed. Talking out of turn during lectures is a bummer, and distracting; please don't. Repeat offenders will be asked to leave.

**Screens:** Bold proposal: dare to give yourself a break from the internet and [free will sapping technology of distraction](#) for 75 minutes! I would prefer that you exercise enough self-restraint to keep from texting or looking at your smartphone for the 75 minutes that class is in session, but since a formal prohibition would be too difficult to enforce, this remains a preference. Use of laptop computers and iPads during lectures will not be allowed, however. There's a [very good case](#) for this. Although I am not inflexible: talk to me if you have special needs or circumstances.

**Attendance:** Starting the Thursday, January 12th, attendance will be taken in class. You are allowed 3 unexcused absences without consequence, and then subsequent absences are penalized: 3 points on the 100 point grading scale will be deducted from your **Final Grade** for each class over 3 that you have missed. For example, you will lose 3 points if you miss 5 classes, 6 points if you miss 6 classes, 9 points if you miss 7 classes, and so on.

**COVID Caveat:** If you've got it, or are in quarantine, those missed classes will not count towards your 3. Also, lectures will be recorded via BoilerCast, but will not be made generally available. I will issue links to lecture recordings on a case-by-case basis, for students who miss them due to documented illness, forced quarantine, etc. Email me if/when you qualify to get a link to the lecture(s) you missed.

**In class participation:** I realize that not everyone is equally outgoing or talkative in class. However, participation in class discussion almost always helps in learning philosophy, and the quality of the discussion depends on everyone collectively. This course in particular is designed to be discussion based, so participation will be important. It is relatively small, and 400 level, so we should all be well-versed at engaging in the frank discussion of ideas. We will have many in class exercises which give people a chance to find their footing and voice in class as well. Bailey's reading for the first week is useful for guidance on different forms that class participation can take.

**Emergencies:** (See end of Syllabus for full Purdue attachment on Emergency Procedures and COVID guidelines; also available in the Brightspace page). In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances. Information about emergencies changes in the course can be gotten by contacting either

instructor via email or phone, or by consulting the course website (see above for that information). Purdue's Emergency Procedures Handbook and other important emergency planning information is available online at

[http://www.purdue.edu/emergency\\_preparedness/](http://www.purdue.edu/emergency_preparedness/)

To obtain updates regarding an ongoing emergency, and to sign up for Purdue Alert text messages, go to

<http://www.purdue.edu/emergency/>

For the full document of the WALC Building Emergency Plan

[https://www.purdue.edu/chps/emergency\\_preparedness/bep/WALC-bep.html](https://www.purdue.edu/chps/emergency_preparedness/bep/WALC-bep.html)

**Plagiarism:** With the advent of the internet, plagiarism has become an increasingly serious problem at universities around the country, particularly in classes like this one, where papers determine a substantial part of the grade.

In order to avoid plagiarizing from a source, both direct quotations and paraphrases or summaries of material found in traditional print media or on the internet must be acknowledged. If you have any questions about how this definition will be interpreted, please do not hesitate to discuss the matter with me or your TA.

Plagiarism and cheating on exams undermines the integrity of the academic community. When undetected, it gives the perpetrator an unfair advantage over students who are graded on the basis of their own work. In this class we will do our best to detect plagiarism and cheating. Students who are aware of violations by others should bring this to my attention. This is the right thing to do. It is also in your own self-interest.

There will be zero tolerance for plagiarism in this course. Plagiarized papers will receive a 0, the student will automatically fail the course, and their name will be handed over to the university authorities. For more on the Purdue University policy on plagiarism, see the following websites:

[http://www.purdue.edu/univregs/pages/stu\\_conduct/stu\\_regulations.html](http://www.purdue.edu/univregs/pages/stu_conduct/stu_regulations.html)

<https://www.purdue.edu/innovativelearning/teaching-remotely/integrity.aspx>

With each assignment, a handful of students may be selected at random to submit their work to iThenticate, an online service that maintains an enormous database of papers that it uses to check for instances of plagiarism.

[Purdue's Online Writing Lab](#) is an excellent resource in general, and has some useful guidelines for the issue of plagiarism in particular. With each paper assignment, a handful of students may be selected at random to submit their papers to TurnItIn, an online service that maintains an enormous database of papers that it uses to check for instances of plagiarism.

**Nondiscrimination Statement:** Purdue University is committed to maintaining a community which recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among its members; and encourages

each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. In pursuit of its goal of academic excellence, the University seeks to develop and nurture diversity. The University believes that diversity among its many members strengthens the institution, stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and enriches campus life. Purdue's nondiscrimination policy can be found at [http://www.purdue.edu/purdue/ea\\_eou\\_statement.html](http://www.purdue.edu/purdue/ea_eou_statement.html).

**Students with disabilities:** Purdue University strives to make learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability, you are welcome to let me know so that we can discuss options. You are also encouraged to contact the Disability Resource Center at: [drc@purdue.edu](mailto:drc@purdue.edu), by phone: 765-494-1247, or at the website: <https://www.purdue.edu/drc/students/index.html>

External Sources: Using sources not listed on the syllabus in researching and writing your papers is fine, as long as they are both to the point, and are properly cited. And at all times, when in doubt, *cite your sources!* It is the best way to avoid being accused of plagiarism.

This is probably the best place to make this point, too: Wikipedia can be valuable for getting a very broad grasp of positions and debates, but when it gets into details, especially on philosophic topics, it is very often horrible – sketchy, convoluted, misinformed, and often simply wrong. If you wish to consult online resources, I suggest you use some of the other, much better sites. [Most prestigious and prominent](#) of the straight up professional level philosophy sites is the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, but others are useful as well:

[Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#)  
[The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#)





### COVID RELEVANT INFORMATION

#### University General Attendance Guidelines:

“Students are expected to attend all classes in-person unless they are ill or otherwise unable to attend class. If they feel ill, have any symptoms associated with COVID-19, or suspect they have been exposed to the virus, students should stay home and contact the Protect Purdue Health Center (496-INFO).

In the current context of COVID-19, in-person attendance cannot be a factor in the final grades. However, timely completion of alternative assessments can certainly be part of the final grade. Students need to inform the instructor of any conflict that can be anticipated and will affect the timely submission of an assignment or the ability to take an exam.

Classroom engagement is extremely important and associated with your overall success in the course. The importance and value of course engagement and ways in which you can engage with the course content even if you are in quarantine or isolation, will be discussed at the beginning of the semester. Student survey data from Fall 2020 emphasized students’ views of in-person course opportunities as critical to their learning, engagement with faculty/TAs, and ability to interact with peers.

Only the instructor can excuse a student from a course requirement or responsibility. When conflicts can be anticipated, such as for many University-sponsored activities and religious observations, the student should inform the instructor of the situation as far in advance as possible. For unanticipated or emergency conflicts, when advance notification to an instructor is not possible, the student should contact the instructor/instructional team as soon as possible by email, through Brightspace, or by phone. In cases of bereavement, quarantine, or isolation, the student or the student’s representative should contact the Office of the Dean of Students via [email](#) or phone at 765-494-1747. Our course Brightspace includes a link to the Dean of Students under ‘Campus Resources.’”

#### Academic Guidance in the Event a Student is Quarantined/Isolated:

“If you must quarantine or isolate at any point in time during the semester, please reach out to me via email so that we can communicate about how you can continue to learn remotely. Work with the Protect Purdue Health Center (PPHC) to get documentation and support, including access to an Academic Case Manager who can provide you with



general guidelines/resources around communicating with your instructors, be available for academic support, and offer suggestions for how to be successful when learning remotely. Your Academic Case Manager can be reached at [acmq@purdue.edu](mailto:acmq@purdue.edu). Importantly, if you find yourself too sick to progress in the course, notify your academic case manager and notify me via email or Brightspace. We will make arrangements based on your particular situation.”

#### Protect Purdue Classroom Guidelines

“The [Protect Purdue Plan](#), which includes the [Protect Purdue Pledge](#), is campus policy and as such all members of the Purdue community must comply with the required health and safety guidelines. Required behaviors in this class include: staying home and contacting the Protect Purdue Health Center (496-INFO) if you feel ill or know you have been exposed to the virus, properly wearing a mask [in classrooms and campus building](#), at all times (e.g., mask covers nose and mouth, no eating/drinking in the classroom), disinfecting desk/workspace before and after use, maintaining appropriate social distancing with peers and instructors (including when entering/exiting classrooms), refraining from moving furniture, avoiding shared use of personal items, maintaining robust hygiene (e.g., handwashing, disposal of tissues) prior to, during and after class, and following all safety directions from the instructor.

Students who are not engaging in these behaviors (e.g., wearing a mask) will be offered the opportunity to comply. If non-compliance continues, possible results include instructors asking the student to leave class and instructors dismissing the whole class. Students who do not comply with the required health behaviors are violating the University Code of Conduct and will be reported to the Dean of Students Office with sanctions ranging from educational requirements to dismissal from the university.

Any student who has substantial reason to believe that another person in a campus room (e.g., classroom) is threatening the safety of others by not complying (e.g., not properly wearing a mask) may leave the room without consequence. The student is encouraged to report the behavior to and discuss the next steps with their instructor. Students also have the option of reporting the behavior to the [Office of the Student Rights and Responsibilities](#). See also [Purdue University Bill of Student Rights](#).”

## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS SYLLABUS ATTACHMENT

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES are based on a simple concept – if you hear a fire alarm inside, proceed outside. If you hear a siren outside, proceed inside.

- Indoor Fire Alarms mean to stop class or research and immediately evacuate the building.
  - Proceed to your Emergency Assembly Area away from building doors. Remain outside until police, fire, or other emergency response personnel provide additional guidance or tell you it is safe to leave.
- All Hazards Outdoor Emergency Warning Sirens mean to immediately seek shelter (Shelter in Place) in a safe location within the closest building.
- “Shelter in place” means seeking immediate shelter inside a building or University residence. This course of action may need to be taken during a tornado, a civil disturbance including a shooting or release of hazardous materials in the outside air. Once safely inside, find out more details about the emergency\*. Remain in place until police, fire, or other emergency response personnel provide additional guidance or tell you it is safe to leave.

*\*In both cases, you should seek additional clarifying information by all means possible...Purdue Home page, email alert, TV, radio, etc...review the Purdue Emergency Warning Notification System multi- communication layers at [http://www.purdue.edu/ehps/emergency\\_preparedness/warning-system.html](http://www.purdue.edu/ehps/emergency_preparedness/warning-system.html)*

### EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROCEDURES:

- Review the Emergency Procedures Guidelines  
[https://www.purdue.edu/emergency\\_preparedness/flipchart/index.html](https://www.purdue.edu/emergency_preparedness/flipchart/index.html)

### EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AWARENESS VIDEOS

- "Run. Hide. Fight." is a 6-minute active shooter awareness video that illustrates what to look for and how to prepare and react to this type of incident. See:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5mzI\\_5aj4Vs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5mzI_5aj4Vs) (Link is also located on the EP website)

### MORE INFORMATION

Reference the Emergency Preparedness web site for additional information:

[http://www.purdue.edu/emergency\\_preparedness](http://www.purdue.edu/emergency_preparedness)