

# SYLLABUS

## **PHIL 4850 M01**

### ***Philosophy and the Meaning of Life***

Spring 2017

3 Credits

M, W: 16:00-17:15

Padre Rubio Hall, Room 3

Prerequisites: PHIL 1050; PHIL 2050

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Rm. 311, San Ignacio Hall

Office Hours:

M, W: 10:15-10:45; 14:00-

15:45; F: 10:15-10:45;

13:00-14:00; & by appointment.

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**Description:** A survey of the theoretical and conceptual issues arising from philosophical reflection on the meaning of life.

**Objectives:** To acquaint students with some of the main topics, themes, problems and debates characterizing philosophical reflection on the meaning of life. To develop students' ability to use the tools and techniques of philosophy for the clarification and analysis of these topics, themes, problems and debates. To furnish students with the conceptual tools that will enable them to undertake further and more advanced work in both this and other areas of philosophy.

After successfully completing PHIL 4850, a student will i) understand and ii) be able to explain (for the purposes of exposition or analysis):

- the most influential philosophical conceptions of "the absurd";
- the essential differences between theistic and non-theistic conceptions of "meaningfulness";
- various non-theistic conceptions of "a meaningful life";
- the "asymmetry problem" concerning death and some of the proposed solutions to this problem;
- the conceptual difficulties that arise in connection with the notion of immortality; and
- the fundamental considerations bearing on the moral assessment of suicide.

**Required texts:** E. D. Klemke and Steven M. Cahn (eds.), *The Meaning of Life*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), and a *course reader* consisting of supplementary readings. Both of these texts can be purchased at the campus bookstore. Students may also be expected to read additional short texts distributed as photocopies in class. Aside from these required texts, some supplementary on-line resources may also be suggested during the course of the semester. In addition, students might find it useful to consult two general interest philosophy journals available in the University library: *Philosophy Now* and *The Philosophers' Magazine*.

**Course requirements:** Besides the regular reading assignments drawn from *The Meaning of Life* and the course reader, the course requirements are as follows: two exams (a midterm and final); one short paper (approximately 7-8 pages); occasional in-class exercises (e.g., quizzes); regular attendance; and participation in class discussions. With regard to participation, it will be assumed that students have completed reading assignments before class, and will be prepared to participate in class discussions. To this end, each student should prepare for class by bringing questions based on the assigned readings.

### **Grading:**

>The final course grade will be based on four partial scores: two exam grades, a grade for the paper, and one for in-class work (including participation). These four grades will be weighed as follows:

In-class work	=	15 %
Midterm exam	=	25%
Paper	=	30%
Final exam	=	30%

Please bear in mind that *poor attendance will adversely affect a student's grade for attendance and participation*. In addition, only two unexcused absences are permitted; for each additional unexcused absence the final course grade may be lowered by one-third.

The grading scale is as follows:

93 and above	=	A
90-92	=	A-
87-89	=	B+
83-86	=	B
80-82	=	B-
77-79	=	C+
73-76	=	C
70-72	=	C-
60-69	=	D
0 -59	=	F

### **Tentative Course Outline / Schedule**

Reading assignments should be completed by the date listed. (For example, Tolstoy's "My Confession" should be read *before* our meeting on January 25.) All readings can be found in either *The Meaning of Life*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, or the course reader. Assignments drawn from the course reader have been indicated as such.

Please bear in mind that this schedule is subject to modification.

## **January**

11 Introduction

16 Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus"

18 Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus" (cont.); Nagel, "The Absurd"

23 Nagel, "The Absurd" (cont.); Westphal and Cherry, "Is Life Absurd?" (reader);

24 **Last day to drop a class without a grade W and /or add a class**

**Last day to choose Audit (AU) or Pass/No Pass (P/NP) options**

25 Tolstoy, "My Confession"

30 Stace, "Man Against Darkness" (reader)

## **February**

1 Stace, "Man Against Darkness" (cont.); Pojman, "Religion Gives Meaning to Life"

6 Pojman, "Religion Gives Meaning to Life" (cont.); Quinn, "The Meaning of Life  
According to Christianity"

8 Quinn, "The Meaning of Life According to Christianity" (cont.)

13 Klemke, "Living Without Appeal: An Affirmative Philosophy of Life"

15 Schopenhauer, "On the Sufferings of the World"

**Registration for Summer 2017  
sessions begins**

20 Schopenhauer, "On the Sufferings of the World" (cont.); Russell, "A Free Man's  
Worship"

22 Russell, "A Free Man's Worship" (cont.); Nietzsche, "The Madman" and "Eternal  
Recurrence" (reader)

**27 MIDTERM EXAM**

## **March**

1 Taylor, "The Meaning of Life"

6 Joske, "Philosophy and the Meaning of Life" (reader)

8 Singer, "The Good Life" (reader)

**10 Last day to drop a class and receive a grade of W**

13 Schlick, "On the Meaning of Life"

15 Wolf, "Meaning in Life"; Cahn, "Meaningless Lives?"

20 **Holiday** (University closed)  
22 Nagel, "Death" (reader)

27 Brueckner and Fischer, "Why Is Death Bad?" (reader)  
29 Jantzen, "Do We Need Immortality?" (reader) **Registration for Fall 2017 semester begins**

## **April**

3 Williams, "The Makropulos Case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality" (reader)  
5 Glover, "The Sanctity of Life" (reader) **>PAPER DUE**

10 **No class** (Spring Vacation)  
12 **No class** (Spring Vacation)

17 Hume, "Of Suicide" (reader)  
19 Glover, "Suicide and Gambling with Life" (reader)

24 Schopenhauer, "On Suicide" (reader)  
26 Wisdom, "The Meanings of the Questions of Life"

## **May**

1 **Holiday** (University closed)  
3 Nozick, "Philosophy and the Meaning of Life"

5 **FINAL EXAM—15:30**

### **Additional Information**

\*\*The use of cell (mobile) phones will not be permitted during class.

\*\*Papers are due at the *beginning* of class on April 5; any paper received after this time will be considered late. The grade for a paper submitted after the deadline may be lowered by 1/3 for each day late. (Papers submitted on April 5 but after the beginning of class may be considered one day late.)

\*\*Academic Accommodations and Learning Resources:

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

- Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.
- University-level support (e.g., tutoring/writing services, Disability Services) by visiting the Academic Dean's Office (San Ignacio Hall) or by going to <http://www.slu.edu/madrid/learning-resources>.

Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations **must** contact Disability Services to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Once successfully registered, the student also **must** notify the course instructor that they wish to access accommodations in the course. Please contact Disability Services at [disabilityservices-madrid@slu.edu](mailto:disabilityservices-madrid@slu.edu) or +915 54 58 58, ext. 230 for an appointment. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Once approved, information about the student's eligibility for academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors via email from Disability Services. For more information about academic accommodations, see "Student Resources" on the SLU-Madrid webpage. Note: Students who do not have a documented disability but who think they may have one are encouraged to contact Disability Services.

*\*\*Academic integrity is honest, truthful and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors.* The mission of Saint Louis University is "the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity." Accordingly, all acts of falsehood demean and compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research, health care and community service via which SLU embodies its mission. The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity, and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern.

The governing University-level Academic Integrity Policy can be accessed on the Provost's Office website at:

[http://www.slu.edu/Documents/provost/academic\\_affairs/University-wide%20Academic%20Integrity%20Policy%20FINAL%20%206-26-15.pdf](http://www.slu.edu/Documents/provost/academic_affairs/University-wide%20Academic%20Integrity%20Policy%20FINAL%20%206-26-15.pdf). Additionally, SLU-Madrid has posted its academic integrity policy online:

<http://www.slu.edu/madrid/academics>. As a member of the University community, you are expected to know and abide by these policies, which detail definitions of violations, processes for reporting violations, sanctions and appeals.

Any work (assignment, exercise, exam, etc.) involving a violation of this policy will receive an F. All violations of academic integrity will be reported to the chair. In consultation with the professor, the chair will write a report, which will then be sent to the Madrid Campus Committee on Academic Honesty.

The professor will review these matters during the first weeks of the term. Please direct questions about any facet of academic integrity to your faculty, the chair of the department of your academic program or the Academic Dean of the Madrid Campus

*\*\*Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form of sexual misconduct (e.g. sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic or dating violence), we encourage you to report this to the University. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident of misconduct, that faculty member must notify SLU's Title IX deputy coordinator, Marta Maruri, whose office is located on the ground floor of Padre Rubio Hall, Avenida del Valle, 28 ([mmaruri@slu.edu](mailto:mmaruri@slu.edu); 915-54-5858, ext. 213) and share the basic fact of your experience*

with her. The Title IX deputy coordinator will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off campus.

If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the SLU-Madrid's Counseling Services on the third floor of San Ignacio Hall (counselingcenter-madrid@slu.edu; 915-54-5858, ext. 230) or Sinews Multipletherapy Institute, the off-campus provider of counseling services for SLU-Madrid (www.sinews.es; 917-00-1979). To view SLU-Madrid's sexual misconduct policy and for resources, please visit the following web address:<http://www.slu.edu/Documents/Madrid/campus-life/SLUMadridSexualMisconductPolicy.pdf>.

\*\*In order to maintain quality academic offerings and to conform to accreditation requirements, SLU-Madrid regularly assesses its teaching, services and programs for evidence of student learning. For this purpose, SLU-Madrid keeps representative examples of student work from all courses and programs on file, including assignments, papers, exams, portfolios and results from student surveys, focus groups and reflective exercises. Copies of your work for this course may be kept on file for institutional research, assessment and accreditation purposes. If you prefer SLU-Madrid not to retain your work for this purpose, you must communicate this decision in writing to your professor.