**PHILOSOPHY AS A WAY OF LIFE**

**PHIL 3975, Fall 2020**

Monday/Thursday 4:00-5:15, Freeman Hall 103 (or Zoom)

**Professor: Dr. Stephen Grimm**

Office: Collins 113

Office Hours: Friday 2:00-4:00 p.m., and by appointment

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**Course Description**

In the Ancient world, helping people to live well was taken to be one of the central tasks of philosophy. Epicurus, for example, claimed that if a philosophy did not help others navigate through life, it was not worth having. "Vain is the word of that philosopher," he claimed, "that does not heal any suffering of man."

But what does it take to live well, or to flourish as a human being? In this course we will take up this question, along with others of fundamental importance. For example, which things are really valuable or worth having in life? How might we go about achieving them, and what sorts of obstacles are we likely to encounter? How could philosophy, or philosophical reflection, help us to achieve these goals, and what are the limits of philosophy?

By the end of the course, you will have learned what several major philosophical and religious traditions have to say about these questions, as well as cultivated your own answers.

**Format**

This is intended to be a hybrid class, meeting partly in person, and partly online. Managing this new format will require flexibility on our part. For one thing, it will involve separating the class into two groups, in order to social distance properly and to respect everyone's schedule. For another, it will involve gaining fluency with both the "asynchronous" and "synchronous" components of the class.

The *asynchronous* components will include class readings, Blackboard Discussion posts and responses, and lecture videos.

The *synchronous* components will be live, and will focus on class discussion, dialogue, and debate. With respect to this element, I will meet with **Group A** in person for 35 minutes at the beginning of each Monday and Thursday class. So, from 4:00-4:35 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays. I will meet then with **Group B** soon afterwards, live via Zoom, from 4:40-5:15 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays.

In our first Zoom meeting, on 8/27, I will say more about how the groups will be divided.

This blend of elements will take some getting used to, but my prediction is that after a few weeks it will seem normal, and we will begin to see the benefits of mixing the asynchronous and synchronous elements.

**Texts**

Required texts:

[A Guide to the Good Life: The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy,](https://www.amazon.com/Guide-Good-Life-Ancient-Stoic/dp/0195374614/ref=sr_1_2?dchild=1&keywords=A+Guide+to+the+Good+Life%3A+The+Ancient+Art+of+Stoic+Joy&qid=1595536560&s=books&sr=1-2) by William Irvine, ISBN: 0195374614  
[Seeing Clearly: A Buddhist Guide to Life](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0190887508?pf_rd_r=E3KY6RZGK3PRFE1C0VT1&pf_rd_p=edaba0ee-c2fe-4124-9f5d-b31d6b1bfbee), by Nicolas Bommarito, ISBN: 0190887508  
[Lost in Thought: The Hidden Pleasures of an Intellectual Life](https://www.amazon.com/Lost-Thought-Hidden-Pleasures-Intellectual/dp/0691178712/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=Lost+in+Thought%3A+The+Hidden+Pleasures+of+an+Intellectual+Life&qid=1595536529&s=books&sr=1-1), by Zena Hitz, ISBN: 0691178712  
[Hellenistic Philosophy: Introductory Readings](https://www.amazon.com/Hellenistic-Philosophy-Hackett-Classics-Inwood/dp/0872203786/ref=sr_1_3?dchild=1&keywords=Hellenistic+Philosophy%3A+Introductory+Readings%2C&qid=1595536497&s=books&sr=1-3), trans. by Brad Inwood and Lloyd Gerson, ISBN: 0872203786

Additional articles will be available via Blackboard

**Grading**

ADA posts on Blackboard=20%

Responses to classmates's ADA posts = 10%

Weekly quizzes=20%

First Impressions Assignment=5%

Paper #1=15%

Paper #2=15%

Final Impressions Assignment=5%

In-class/Zoom Attendance=5%

In-class/Zoom Participation=5%

Your grades for the semester will be posted on Blackboard as the course progresses.

**Requirements for the Course**

**ADA Posts (= "Agree, Disagree, Ask" Posts) on Blackboard**

By 8 p.m. on the evening before each class, you will need to submit a post on BB's "Discussion Board" feature that addresses the following points regarding the assigned reading for the next day.

***Agree***: Briefly describe something about the reading that you found particularly plausible or insightful or interesting, and say why.

***Disagree***: Briefly describe something you found implausible or incorrect or misleading about the reading, and say why.

***Ask***: What question or questions were you left with from the reading? If something was unclear, say why you thought it was unclear. If the reading left you with a bigger, unanswered question, articulate the question.

In terms of grading, you will receive a 1 or 0 for each assignment. 1 = completed/ good/on time. 0 = not complete/seriously deficient content/not on time

**Responses to Classmates's ADA Posts**

By 12 p.m. on the day of each class, review the ADA posts from your classmates, and respond to one of the posts. Can you try to answer the final question posed by your classmate? Can you imagine how the author of the reading might be able to respond to the objection posed, or disagreement offered?

In terms of grading, you will receive a 1 or 0 for each response. 1 = completed/ good/on time. 0 = not complete/seriously deficient content/not on time. Make a point not simply to respond to the same person or cluster of people each time; ideally, try to respond to a different classmate each time.

**Weekly Quizzes**

On Friday of every week--starting on 9/4, and with the exception of Thanksgiving week--a short, multiple choice, five-question quiz will be posted on Blackboard. You will have six minutes to complete the quiz. In keeping with Fordham's honor code, you should of course not share the questions with other members of the class.

The quiz will cover the assigned readings for that week, plus material covered in course videos or class discussions for the week.

**First Impressions Assignment**

A short “first impressions” paper should be turned into Blackboard by the beginning of class on 9/3. I will distribute the assignment a week before the due date.

**Papers #1 and #2**

Both of these papers will involve analyzing the material we have studied to that point. They will both be roughly 4-5 pages in length. Paper #1 will be due approximately 1/3 of the way through the semester, and Paper #2 around 2/3 of the way through the semester. I will distribute prompts for both papers at least a week before the due date.

**Final Impressions Assignment**

A short “final impressions” paper should be turned into Blackboard by a designated date at the end of the term. I will distribute the assignment two weeks before the due date.

**Late Papers**

Penalty for lateness isa third of a letter grade per day, including weekends (A- becomes B+, C becomes C-, etc.). The clock starts immediately after the turn-in time of the paper, and the change is rounded up (that is, if you hand it in 1 hour late, or 10 minutes late, that counts as 1 day late; 25 hours after it’s due, 2 days late, and so on).

**Attendance**

Attendance counts for 5% of your grade, and grades will range from 5 (highest) to 0 (lowest). Everyone will start with a 5, and I will allow two unexcused absences. After that, you will lose a point for each discussion section missed. Being late for class, or leaving early, will also result in attendance points lost. Note that being on time is *especially* important in our hybrid framework, where there will be two groups in the class.

**Participation**

Participation counts for 5% of your grade, and grades will range from 5 (highest) to 0 (lowest). Everyone will start with a zero, and gain points by engaging in discussion during class. Asking questions, raising objections, expressing puzzlement, etc. are all good forms of participation. Note that the attendance and participation grades are the easiest places to do well in this class, so make a point of participating regularly!

At the same time, no one should try to dominate the discussion, so if you’ve already participated once or twice during a class it is a good idea to take a step back to give others room to talk.

**Classroom Courtesy**

Cellphones should be turned off for the duration of the class, and texting during class is not permitted. Because of their tendency to distract other students, I would also prefer that if you are in person, you take notes with a notebook rather than a laptop. If you have a special reason to use a laptop please see me and I will try to accommodate you.

**Academic Integrity**

The most common form of cheating in academic situations is plagiarism. This occurs when you present someone else’s work or ideas as your own, whether it is intentional or not. There are extremely good reasons for thinking that plagiarism is unethical. Further, it is a sign of poor scholarship and in professional environments can result in litigation. It is your responsibility to know and understand Fordham’s position on plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct as it is stated in the Student Handbook. If you are caught plagiarizing in a paper or exam, you will, at minimum, receive a 0 for the assignment, and at maximum, fail the course. If you are in doubt about whether something constitutes plagiarism or not, ask me.

**Tentative Schedule**

August 27: Welcome and Introduction; Grimm and Cohoe reading [entire class will meet via Zoom]

August 30: ADA post on next day's reading, by 8 p.m. on Blackboard

August 31: Respond to a classmate's ADA post by noon on Blackboard

August 31: Plato (or: Plato?), *Alcibiades* [BB]

September 2: ADA post on next day's reading, by 8 p.m. on Blackboard

September 3: Respond to a classmate's ADA post by noon on Blackboard

September 3: Coles, "The Disparity Between Intellect and Character"; Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, selections [BB]

September 4: Quiz 1, available all day on BB

September 7 [Closed: Labor Day]

September 9: ADA post on next day's reading, by 8 p.m. on Blackboard

September 10: Respond to a classmate's ADA post by noon on Blackboard

September 10: Stoicism, Irvine, chs. 1-3 (pp. 1-61)

September 11: Quiz 2, available all day on BB

September 13: ADA post on next day's reading, by 8 p.m. on Blackboard

September 14: Respond to a classmate's ADA post by noon on Blackboard

September 14: Stoicism, Irvine, chs. 4-7 (pp. 65-118)

September 16: ADA post on next day's reading, by 8 p.m. on Blackboard

September 17: Respond to a classmate's ADA post by noon on Blackboard

September 17: Stoicism, Irvine, chs. 9-13 (127-165)

September 18: Quiz 3, available all day on BB

September 20: ADA post on next day's reading, by 8 p.m. on Blackboard

September 21: Respond to a classmate's ADA post by noon on Blackboard

September 21: Kotva, Simone Weil chapter [BB]

September 23: ADA post on next day's reading, by 8 p.m. on Blackboard

September 24: Respond to a classmate's ADA post by noon on Blackboard

September 24: Epicurus, Letter to Menoeceaus & Maxims, pp. 28-40 (Hackett volume)

September 25: Quiz 4, available all day on BB

September 27: ADA post on next day's reading, by 8 p.m. on Blackboard

September 28: Respond to a classmate's ADA post by noon on Blackboard

September 28: Scepticism, General Principles, pp. 302-325 (Hackett volume)

September 30: ADA post on next day's reading, by 8 p.m. on Blackboard

October 1: Respond to a classmate's ADA post by noon on Blackboard

October 1: Buddhism, Bommarito, pp. 1-43

October 2: Quiz 5, available all day on BB

October 4: ADA post on next day's reading, by 8 p.m. on Blackboard

October 5: Respond to a classmate's ADA post by noon on Blackboard

October 5: Buddhism, Bommarito, pp. 44-72

October 7: ADA post on next day's reading, by 8 p.m. on Blackboard

October 8: Respond to a classmate's ADA post by noon on Blackboard

October 8: Buddhism, Bommarito, pp. 73-118

October 9: Quiz 6, available all day on BB

October 12 [Closed: Columbus Day]

October 13: ADA post on next day's reading, by 8 p.m. on Blackboard

October 14: Respond to a classmate's ADA post by noon on Blackboard

October 14 [classes follow Monday schedule]: Buddhism, Bommarito, Part 2, selections

October 15: No class: SRG at conference

October 16: Quiz 7, available all day on BB

October 18: ADA post on next day's reading, by 8 p.m. on Blackboard

October 19: Respond to a classmate's ADA post by noon on Blackboard

October 19: Angle, Confucianism as a Way of Life [BB]

October 21: ADA post on next day's reading, by 8 p.m. on Blackboard

October 22: Respond to a classmate's ADA post by noon on Blackboard

October 22: MLK, "The Three Dimensions of a Complete Life" [BB]

October 23: Quiz 8, available all day on BB

October 25: ADA post on next day's reading, by 8 p.m. on Blackboard

October 26: Respond to a classmate's ADA post by noon on Blackboard

October 26: James Baldwin, "Letter From a Region in My Mind," first part [BB]

October 28: ADA post on next day's reading, by 8 p.m. on Blackboard

October 29: Respond to a classmate's ADA post by noon on Blackboard

October 29: James Baldwin, "Letter From a Region in My Mind," second part [BB]

October 30: Quiz 9, available all day on BB

November 1: ADA post on next day's reading, by 8 p.m. on Blackboard

November 2: Respond to a classmate's ADA post by noon on Blackboard

November 2: Hitz, *Lost in Thought*, pp. 1-49

November 4: ADA post on next day's reading, by 8 p.m. on Blackboard

November 5: Respond to a classmate's ADA post by noon on Blackboard

November 5: Hitz, *Lost in Thought*, pp. 50-112

November 6: Quiz 10, available all day on BB

November 8: ADA post on next day's reading, by 8 p.m. on Blackboard

November 9: Respond to a classmate's ADA post by noon on Blackboard

November 9: Hitz, *Lost in Thought*, pp. 113-161

November 11: ADA post on next day's reading, by 8 p.m. on Blackboard

November 12: Respond to a classmate's ADA post by noon on Blackboard

November 12: Hitz, *Lost in Thought*, pp. 162-207

November 13: Quiz 11, available all day on BB

November 15: ADA post on next day's reading, by 8 p.m. on Blackboard

November 16: Respond to a classmate's ADA post by noon on Blackboard

November 16: Wong, Daoism [BB]

November 17: Quiz 12, available all day on BB

November 18: ADA post on next day's reading, by 8 p.m. on Blackboard

November 19: Respond to a classmate's ADA post by noon on Blackboard

November 19: David Foster Wallace, Kenyon College Address [BB]

November 20: Quiz 13, available all day on BB

November 22: ADA post on next day's reading, by 8 p.m. on Blackboard

November 23: Respond to a classmate's ADA post by noon on Blackboard

November 23: Jennifer Gosetti-Ferencei, Existentialism as a Way of Life [BB]

November 26 [Thanksgiving; no quiz this week]

November 29: ADA post on next day's reading, by 8 p.m. on Blackboard

November 30: Respond to a classmate's ADA post by noon on Blackboard

November 30: Class Choice

December 2: ADA post on next day's reading, by 8 p.m. on Blackboard

December 3: Respond to a classmate's ADA post by noon on Blackboard

December 3: Class Choice

November 4: Quiz 14, available all day on BB

December 7: Final Class

Final Assignment due date: TDB