

Course Outline & Schedule, "The Meaning of Life" (PL274-01/TH149-01), Spring 2012
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class	date	topic	reading
1	1/17	Does life <i>have</i> meaning or is it 'vanity'?	"Ecclesiastes"
2	1/24	Does life have meaning even in Auschwitz?	Frankl, <i>Man's Search for Meaning</i>
3	1/31	What is a "good life"?	Plato, "Gorgias" (Xeroxed handout)
4	2/7	Is human nature our guide?	Aristotle, <i>Ethics</i> (Xeroxed handout)
5	2/21	Chinese wisdom: the way of Nature	Lao Tzu, <i>Tao Te Ching</i>
6	2/28	Jesus and the meaning of life	John's Gospel
7	3/13	The marriage of reason & faith	Aquinas, <i>A Shorter Summa (parts)</i>
8	3/20	Freudian psychology & the meaning of life	Freud, <i>Civilization and its Discontents</i>
9	3/27	Existentialism	Dostoyevski, <i>The Grand Inquisitor</i>
10	4/3	Personalism	Marcel, <i>The Philosophy of Existentialism</i> Ch. 1
11	4/10	Nihilism	Marcel, ch. 2 on Sartre
12	4/24	Various current issues	Kreeft, <i>The Best Things in Life</i>
13	5/1	Modern relativism & its future	C. S. Lewis, <i>The Abolition of Man</i>
14	5/8	final exam	

The class will decide between two possible grading formats, each of which blends subjective essay with objective true-false/multiple choice:

- A. weekly quizzes and a take-home essay exam
- B. a final in-class objective exam and at least ten pages of original, personal, argumentative essays

In any case, more essays for extra credit (no-risk, no-lose) are always welcome (any number, any time, any length, any style, any topics in the course).