

Syllabus for the Capstone Course (29 August 2020)
UNCP 551901, PHIL 541901: A Life Well Lived!
Prof. Deborah De Chiara-Quenzer

Zoom Meeting Link: <https://bccte.zoom.us/j/6366841855> (Links to an external site.) This link also appears on the side column of Canvas and the home page of Canvas.

Zoom Office Hours: Wednesdays 3:30-5:30 & by appointment (use email). You should sign-up for my regular Zoom Office Hours on Wednesdays through the google link below. To make an appointment outside of regular office hours, please email me and we will arrange a time.

<https://calendar.google.com/calendar/selfsched?sstoken=UUFxLU94T2ZISEFJ6fGRIZmF1bHR8NGFjODlmMDkyMzBhOGIzOGRkYTI1MDNjY2E0NWQ5YTk>

Overview

A Capstone Course broadly speaking is asking you to look backwards and also to look forwards. In looking backwards it is asking you to reflect on your previous formative experiences with special attention given to your years at BC.¹ The expectation is that by doing this you will benefit from insights about yourself (which includes insights about your academic, moral, and spiritual life), about yourself in relations to others, and about yourself in relation to different wider communities of people with which you have engaged. This kind of discernment will not only help you understand yourself better at this point in your life, but will also be of significant benefit to you as you move forward in your life. When we know how we are shaped by our past and who we are in our present, we are more free to choose the paths that will lead us to what we want our future life to be? As part of this course, we will look forward and discuss our aspirations, goals, hopes, realistic expectations, and what kind of life we may seek to live that will lead us to happiness. Since failure and loss are part of life, we will also discuss how these have affected us and how we can learn from them and move forward positively in light of them.

General Nature & Style of The Course

This is a course for students who want to engage in serious reflection and in active classroom discussions of important issues in pursuing a life well lived. It is a course for students who enjoy reading and reflection. It is a course for students who enjoy participating in meaningful discussion in every class. It is a course that will allow you to focus on yourself as an individual, yourself in relation to others, and yourself and your relationship to greater circles of community.

¹ For example, looking over your years at BC, what are some of your successes you experienced while at BC? What have you learned from these successes? How do you imagine the successes you experienced and your reflections on them will help you as you go forward into the next phases of your life? What are some of the disappointments, setbacks, failures you experienced at BC because of your own choices during your first three years here? What have you learned from these disappointments, setbacks, failures? Are there ways in which these disappointments, setbacks, and failures can be of help to you as you move forward into the next phases of your life?

This discussion based course deals with issues relevant to students who will be transitioning from college to the next phases of their life. As mentioned above, this course will be engaged with reflecting on what has occurred in your life up to this point, and to consider what may unfold for you as you move forward.

This course will be taught as a seminar. It will involve extensive reading, reflection, and classroom discussion. In order to benefit the most from the course, and to do well in the course, you will need to be fully committed to all aspects of the course. This will include reading the material with care, reflecting on the material, being actively engaged with your classmates in meaningful conversations in every class, writing thoughtfully about the serious matters that we will be discussing, and participating in a few activities outside the classroom. Careful preparation, reflection, and participation along with the written components and a few non-classroom activities of the course are necessary in order for you to flourish in the course.

Main Areas of Focus in the Course

These topics and types of questions will be considered as we move through the course.

I. One's Family and How It has Influenced You

Looking back on when you were completing high school, how would you describe your role in the family? How did your family influence you? Over the course of your first two years at BC, in what ways did your family affect you? In what ways, have you become more independent from the influences/pressures of your family? How? As a senior, in what ways are you happy with how have grown as a person? In what areas of your life is there more work to be done?

II. One's Educational/Academic Formation at Boston College

How did you select your courses at BC, what were you aiming to achieve? To what extent did your academic goals change through your years at BC? How has your academic experiences at BC affected you as a person? How satisfied are you with your academic education? What has this Jesuit education meant to you?

III. One's Friendships

What do you consider to be a relationship that is a friendship? What are the different types of friendships you have in your life? How do you find friends, build friendships, and maintain friendships? What friendships did you establish before coming to BC that have continued to remain in your life? What friendships have you developed while a member of the BC community? How have friendships added to the quality of your life? Which friendships have served you well and which ones have not? Why? Which of your friendships that you have now are likely to be only for this season of your life and which friendships do you anticipate remaining with you as you advance into your twenties, etc.? Where do your family members stand with respect to friendships?

IV. One's Moral Choices and Moral Life

How have you lived morally or failed to live morally through your early adulthood? What weaknesses do you believe you have as a person? To what extent do you need to address them in order to have a more content life? How do you think you will go about addressing them? What responsibility do you have to yourself? What responsibility do you have towards others? In what ways have you been satisfied with your choices and actions? Where have you been disappointed in yourself. What do you want to continue to do? If there are changes you want to make, what steps do think you might take to bring about those changes? How have your moral choices affected the lives of others around you? How do you anticipate living morally in your personal, professional, and public life?

V. Other Meaningful Long Term Relationships, such as marriage

What kind of commitment, care, and attention will having such a relationship require of you? When will you be ready and willing to engage in such a relationship? How much sacrifice and work will such a relationship require of you? What might you anticipate as the satisfactions and the disappointments that will arise from this relationship? How will you go about communicating effectively in the relationship? What do you bring to the relationship that will nurture or enhance it? What do you bring to the relationship that will impede it? How will you go about making adjustments and changes?

VI. One's Spiritual and Community Life

What place has your spiritual life had on you as a person? How has it helped to center you? How has it challenged you? How would you like to grow in your spiritual life? How do you expect growth to take place? What has your past engagement in community life been? How has it served you well? How has it not? What kind of engagement in community life do you envision for yourself in the near and distant future? What do you see as your duty, responsibility, or commitment to the wider community?

VII. Vocational and/or Professional Life

To what extent at this time do you have a clear sense of what your vocation or professional life will entail? To what extent are you unsure of what your vocation or professional life will be? In both of those cases, how are you feeling about your future in terms of your vocation or professional life? Are you prepared for possible changes in your vocational or professional life? What are you expecting that will need to be present so that your vocation or professional life is satisfying?

VIII. What are you seeking in the next ten and twenty years of your life?

To what extent will you be fulfilling your passions? To what extent will this be beneficial to you, and to what extent will your pursuits be beneficial to others? How will your life include others?

Required Readings

Celeste Ng, *Everything I Never Told You* (Penguin, 2015), 9780143127550 (entire)
 BC Publication, “The Journey into Adulthood”
 Drew Faust, “Scholarship & The Role of the University: Remarks at the BC Sesquicentennial”
 David Brooks, *The Road to Character* (Random House, 2015), 9780812983418, (selections)
 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Ross, rev. ed. 2009 (OUP) 9780199213610 (selections)
 Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving*, 2006 ed., (Harper Collins), 9780061129735 (selections)
 Jane Austen, *Persuasion*, ed. James Kinsley (OUP, 2008), 9780199535552 (entire)
 Gregory Boyle, *Tattoos on the Heart*, (Free Press, 2011), 9781439153154 (selections)
 Mitch Albom, *Tuesdays With Morrie*, (Broadway Books, 2002), 9780767905923 (entire)

Course Requirements and Grading²

1. Class attendance and punctuality are required; these will not raise your overall grade, but poor attendance and tardiness will diminish it. In light of our situation with Covid-19, to the extent that you miss class because of concern that you might have the virus, or because you have the virus, you will not be penalized in any way (this counts as an excused absence). Your health and the health of others around you is of the utmost importance. If, however, you are absent and this is unrelated to Covid-19, you can miss up to two classes with no questions asked. However, for whatever reason you may miss a class, I ask that out of courtesy to me you email me and let me know about your absence.³

2. Class preparedness and class participation. These will constitute 20% of the overall grade (see the rubrics for preparedness and participation).⁴ The grade will reflect how well you are consistently well prepared for class discussions, and how often you participate and contribute meaningfully in class discussions.

3. Other Intellectual Activities. These will constitute 15 % of the overall grade; these will include other activities (e.g., Emmaus Walks, reflections, and attending other activities outside of class time).

² The percentages for each of the course requirements listed below are subject to slight changes should I need to make minor adjustments to the requirements in the course as the course unfolds.

³ The general policy on missed classes **unrelated** to Covid-19 is as follows: you may have two **unexcused absences** without it affecting your overall grade (although it is strongly suggested that you avoid missing any classes since they are essential to the discussion of the material). More than two unexcused missed classes will likely to cause me to speak with you, and possibly your advisor and/or the associate dean. Of course, if there are special circumstances in regard to your unexcused absences, these will be dealt with on an individual basis.

⁴ Occasionally circumstances arise in a student's life such that he/she has not been able to prepare sufficiently the material for discussion and so cannot adequately engage in class discussion. If a student finds him/herself in this situation, prior to the beginning of class, please notify me of your situation and I will avoid calling on you during that class. This situation can occur two times in a semester without it negatively impacting a student's grade in the course. Otherwise, a student should expect that he/she may be called on to participate in class discussions.

4. Quizzes. These will constitute 20% of the overall grade; these are meant to assist you in reading and reflecting on the texts carefully. They are also a gauge on how well you are reading the material. Some of these will be in-class and others submitted through Canvas. If you are not scoring high grades on the quizzes, then you need to make adjustments to how you are studying and reflecting on the assigned material for the course.

5. Formal Writing Assignments: Papers/Take-Home Exams (Three to Four). These will constitute 45% of the overall grade.

Weekly Class Meetings⁵

Week 1: Introduction to the Course. Discussion of the nature, expectations, and requirements of the course along with discussion of some initial reflective questions.

- Students will be discussing a number of opening reflective questions about how they are feeling about themselves at this point in their lives.

Week 2: Family Dynamics & Its Influences on Your Life

Assigned Reading, *Celeste Ng's Everything I Never Told You*, Chapters 1-6, pp. 1-157

- Discussion of Celeste Ng's work *Everything I Never Told You* to be used as a stepping stone for students to consider their own family dynamics and how these may have influenced them positively and negatively.
- How has your family influenced your life?

Week 3: Family Dynamics and Its Influences on Your Life

Assigned Reading Class 1: *Celeste Ng's Everything I Never Told You*, Chapters 7-8, pp. 158-216

Assigned Reading Class 2: *Celeste Ng's Everything I Never Told You*, Chapters 9-12, pp. 217-292

- Continued discussion of Celeste Ng's work *Everything I Never Told You*.
- How have your family dynamics influenced you positively and negatively, and how have you responded to these influences?

⁵ Listed under each week, you will find the general topics we will be discussing. You can expect during each class discussion that we will delve into more specifics with regard to each of these topics. In addition, you will find in Canvas study guides that raise many more questions about what we are reading and on which we will be reflecting. Please give proper attention to those study guides.

- To what degree have you gained autonomy from your family pressures?

First Formal Reflection Paper Assigned on Family Influences & One's Responses to Them

Week 4: (1) Family Dynamics and Its Influences, and (2) transition into a discussion of One's Educational Choices & Experiences at BC

Assigned Reading 1: Selections from "The Journal into Adulthood: Understanding Human Adulthood," a Boston College Publication.

Assigned Reading Class 2: Watch or read Drew Faust's speech, "Scholarship & The Role of the University: Remarks at the Boston College Sesquicentennial"

- Discussion of how one's family dynamics may or may not have influenced one's initial academic choices at BC.
- What other influences affected you in your initial educational choices when you first came to BC? What responsibility did you take for these choices?
- How over your years at BC have you shaped your education? What guided you in your choices?
- What have been your reasons for choosing your major (s) minor (s) at BC and other courses. What changes have you made in your educational journey at BC? Why?
- What missteps have you made along the way? What did you learn from them? What do you consider your successes along the way? Why do you consider them successes.

Week 5: What Has Your Jesuit Education Meant to You?

Assigned Reading Class 1: David Brooks *The Road to Character*, Introduction, Chapter 1, Chapter 2, and Chapter 10

- How has your college education affected you in ways you had and had not anticipated? How has it shaped you? What do you value from it? What disappointments do you have in light of it?
- How has your Jesuit education helped you in your personal development, in your social interactions, in your spiritual life, in your care of others?
- If you could start over academically with the experience and knowledge you have now, how would you approach your academic life and choices?

Week 6: What has your Jesuit Education Meant to You?

Assignment: Watch President John F. Kennedy's speech at BC's Centennial Celebration (20 April 2020)

- Reflections on your Jesuit Education as you move beyond BC.

Week 7: Friendships

Assigned Readings for Classes 1 & 2: Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (see the specific selections on the reading list)

- Discussion of Aristotle's views on the different types of friendship, and the extent that you have found them in your life.
- Looking back on your friendships before you arrived at BC, what were they like? Which ones have remained with you, and why? Which ones no longer are a part of your life? Why?
- What friendships have you developed while at BC. How would you describe their quality?

Week 8 : Continued Discussion of Friendships

Assigned Readings for Class 1: Selected readings from Erich Fromm, *The Art of Living* (see reading list)

Assigned Readings for Classes 1 & 2: Review the specific readings on friendship from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books VIII-IX on Friendship

- Continued discussion of the nature and importance of friendships in one's life
- What are you looking for in a friendship at this time in your life?
- Which friendships are most meaningful to you now? Why? What will it require to maintain these meaningful friendships in the future?
- When will it be time to let some of these friendships go? Why? Which ones will you maintain? Why? How will you maintain them

Second Formal Reflection Paper Assigned on Friendship

Week 9: Jane Austen's *Persuasion*

Assignment 1: Part I, Chapters I-XI

Assignment 2: Part I Chapter XII & Part II Chapters I-IV

- As you are becoming familiar with the characters and their interactions with others, how would you evaluate some of those relationships according to Aristotle's view of friendships?
- How would you evaluate some of those relationships according to your view of friendships?
- What are the influences/affects/pressures Anne Elliot experiences from her family and extended family (e.g., Sir Walter, Elizabeth, Mary, Lady Russell, her brother-in-law Charles, his parents, Louisa and Henrietta)?
- Over the ten years that have passed since Anne broke off her engagement to Captain Wentworth, to what extent has she matured?

Week 10: Jane Austen's *Persuasion*

Assignment 1: Part II Chapters V-VIII

Assignment 2: Part II Chapters IX – XII

- What do you think of Anne Elliot's and Captain Wentworth's views of each other and their ultimate decisions?
- Whom of the characters in *Persuasion* might you want to have as a friend? Why? Whom would you be wary of as having as a friend? Why?
- What qualities are you looking for in another person in a long term relationship? Which qualities are negotiable, which ones not?
- What positive and negative qualities do you bring to a long-term relationship?
- When will you know this is the right relationship for you or when will you know you need to walk away from it?

Week 11: Discussion of Living a Moral, Authentic, and Principled life.

Assigned Readings for Class 1: Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, selections from Book II

Assigned Readings for Class 2: Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, selections from Book III-IV

- We will begin this discussion by considering Aristotle's views, and see how they resonate in your own lives.
- What is the difference between performing a virtuous action and being virtuous?

- What does it mean to live a moral, authentic, and /or a principled life?
- To what extent have you lived a moral, authentic, and /or principled life up to this point in your life? Where are your areas of challenge?
- Whom in *Persuasion* do you consider to have lived such a life? Why? Whom do you believe has not lived such a life? Why?

Week 12: Continued Discussion of Living a Moral, Authentic, and Principled life.

Assigned Readings for Class 1, David Brooks *The Road to Character* (read three chapters of your own choosing)

Assigned Readings for Class 2, Gregory Boyle, *Tattoos on the Heart* (see reading list)

- Which stories in Brook's *The Road to Character* affected you in terms of living a moral, authentic, and /or principled life? Why?
- What do you see are the challenges in continuing to live a moral, authentic, and/or principled life as you go forward?
- What is your reaction to Father Boyle's discussion of jurisdiction and kinship?
- What is your reaction to how Father Boyle practices his vocation?
- Third Formal Reflection Paper Assigned on living a moral, authentic, and /or principled life.

Week 13: Love, Passion, and a Satisfied Life

Assigned Reading 1, Mitch Albom's *Tuesdays with Morrie* "The Curriculum" to "The Second Tuesday" pp. 1-61

Assigned Reading 2, *Tuesdays with Morrie* "The Third Tuesday" to "The Seventh Tuesday" pp. 62-121

- A Reflection on Morrie Schwartz's ideas
- How and where do we find meaning and satisfaction – a retrospection?
- How and where do we find meaning and satisfaction – an introspection?
- What does Morrie Schwartz have to say about love, meaning, and a satisfied life?

Take-Home Final Essay Exam Assigned

Week 14: Love, Passion, and a Satisfied Life

Assigned Reading 1, *Tuesdays with Morrie* “The Eighth Tuesday” to “The Audiovisual, Part Three” 122-163

Assigned Reading 2, *Tuesdays with Morrie* “The Twelfth Tuesday” to “Conclusion,” pp. 164-192

- A Reflection on Morrie Schwartz’s ideas
- How and where do we find meaning and satisfaction – an introspection & a projection?

Specific Reading List

Celeste Ng, *Everything I Never Told You*

Reading Assignment 1: Chapters 1-6, pp. 1-157

Reading Assignment 2, Chapters 7-8, pp. 158-216

Reading Assignment 3, Chapters 9-12, pp. 217-292

On Intellectual/Moral Formation

Reading Assignment 1: “The Journal into Adulthood ” (a Boston College publication);

Reading Assignment 2: Drew Faust speech, “Scholarship & The Role of the University: Remarks at the Boston College Sesquicentennial” (PDF document);

Reading Assignment 3: David Brooks *The Road to Character*, Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, & 10

Assignment 4: You Tube Video, President John F. Kennedy’s speech at BC’s Centennial Celebration (20 April 2020)

Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*: On Friendship

Complete in One Reading Assignment

Book VIII Chapter 1, 1155a3-1155b16 – Friendships are necessary, yet there are contrary views

Book VIII Chapter 2, 1155b17-1156a5 – The three lovable things

Book VIII Chapter 3, 1156a6-1157a37 – Aristotle’s division of friendships into three types

Book IX Chapter 5, 1166b30-1167a21 – Goodwill is a preliminary to friendship

Book IX Chapter 3, 1165a36-1165b36 – Factors that can cause friendships to end

Book IX Chapter 10, 1170b20-1171a20 – How many friends should we have?

Eric Fromm, *The Art of Loving*

Complete in One Reading Assignment : (1) “Is Love an Art,” pp. 1-6; (2) “The Theory of Love,” pp. 24-30 – what a healthy love for another person requires of oneself (care, responsibility, respect, knowledge); (3) “The Theory of Love,” pp. 36-58 – different types of love (love between parent & child, brotherly love, motherly love, erotic love, self-love).

Jane Austen, *Persuasion*

Reading Assignment 1: Part I, Chapters I-XI

Reading Assignment 2: Part I Chapter XII & Part II Chapters I-IV

Reading Assignment 3: Part II Chapters V-VIII

Reading Assignment 4: Part II Chapters IX – XII

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*: On Ethical Virtue

Reading Assignment 1: How to Acquire an Ethical Virtue

1. Book II, Chapter 1 & 2, 1103a14-1104b3 – Becoming ethically virtuous begins with developing the right habits, and developing the right habits begins with doing intermediate (mean) actions between excess and deficiency
2. Book II, Chapter 6, 1106a26-1106b7 – Intermediate/mean actions & passions are relative to us
3. Book II, Chapter 9, 1109a20-1109b26 – Practical advice about seeking the intermediate/mean relative to us
3. Book II, Chapter 4, 1105a17-1105b18 – To be ethically virtuous goes beyond doing the right actions; it involves knowledge, choice/decision, aiming for the right end (the noble), having a stable disposition (and usually feeling pleasure or at least not pain).

Reading Assignment 2: A Few Specific Ethical Virtues

Book IV, Chapter 5, 1125b26-1126b10 – The virtue of good-temper (calmness)

Book IV, Chapter 6, 1126b11-1127a12 – The virtue of friendliness

Book IV, Chapter 1, 1119b19-1121a7 – The virtue of generosity/liberality

Book III, Chapter 10, 1118a23-1118b8 – Temperance has to do with three pleasures of the body

Book III, Chapter 11, 1118b21-1119a20 – The virtue of temperance, and the vices of insensibility and intemperance (self-indulgence)

Father Gregory Boyle, *Tattoos on the Heart*

Complete in One Reading Assignment: Preface, Introduction, Chapter 1 (Father Boyle's Vocation), Chapter 3 (Compassion), Chapter 6 (Jurisdiction), Chapter 9 (Kinship)

Mitch Albom, *Tuesdays with Morrie*

Reading Assignment 1, "The Curriculum" to "The Second Tuesday" pp. 1-61

Reading Assignment 2, "The Third Tuesday" to "The Seventh Tuesday" pp. 62-121

Reading Assignment 3, "The Eighth Tuesday" to "The Audiovisual, Part Three" 122-163

Reading Assignment 4, "The Twelfth Tuesday" to "Conclusion," pp. 164-1

Class Preparedness & Participation Rubric

These are the general guidelines for the grading on class preparedness & participation. There may be other considerations that arise, not mentioned in these guidelines, that affect your overall class preparedness & participation grade.

60-69, Poor Preparedness & Participation – A student who falls into this category is very weak in one or more important dimensions of the classroom experience. For example, (1) a student's preparation for class may be noticeably insufficient on many days, and as a consequence the student is unable to offer any meaningful interpretation, evaluations, or reflections on the readings that have been assigned. (2) And/or student may participate very little in class discussions. (3) And/or when a student does participate, it becomes clear that his/her contributions are not informed by the readings. (4) And/or a student's comportment or attitude in class does not enhance the atmosphere in the class.

70 – 79, Weak Preparedness & Participation – A student who falls into this category is weak in one or more important dimensions of the classroom experience. For example, (1) a student's preparation for class may be spotty (sometimes you are prepared and other times not), and the views you are offering in class reflect this serious weakness. (2) And/or a student has read the material, but not with adequate care and the views he/she offers in class reflect this weak preparation. (3) And/or a student chooses not to participate in class discussions enough. (4) A student may need to be encouraged to participate in class discussions or may need to have prepared the material better so that his/her discussion of the material is more informed or reflective.

80 – 89, Fair Preparedness & Participation – A student who falls into this category is fair to good in all the important dimensions of the classroom experience. For example, (1) the student who falls into this category comes to each class having read the material with care, and is ready to talk in an informed way because of his/her good preparation. (2) And this student regularly engages in class participation. He/she shares explanations, insights, or personal reflections that show the student has been thinking meaningfully about the material under discussion. (3) And this student listens thoughtfully to what their classmates say and responds to that thoughtfully. (4) And this student needs little encouragement to participate in classroom discussion and consistently initiates being a participant in the discussion.

90 – 100, Good to Excellent Preparedness & Participation – A student who falls into this category is good to excellent in all the important dimensions of the classroom experience. For example, (1) the student who falls into this category comes to each class having read the material with care, is willing to engage in active discussions and is ready to talk in an informed way in class because of his/her excellent preparation. (2) And this student takes the initiative to offer explanations, and insights, and personal reflections that show he/she has been thinking deeply about the material under discussion. (3) And this student listens thoughtfully to what his/her classmate or I have said and responds to that thoughtfully. (4) And a student who receives this grade has actively engaged in discussions and does not need to be persuaded by me to be drawn into them. (5) A student has met these criteria consistently throughout the semester.