ETHICS

THE MEANING OF LIFE

Dr. Mirela Oliva
Sullivan Hall, Second Floor
Phone: 713/942-5062
Email: olivam@stthom.edu
Office hours: T Th 9-9:30 am, 12 – 3 pm

A. Description of Course

This course is structured around a central theme: The Meaning of Life. We will examine the various philosophical answers to this question that range from Ancient Greek philosophy through medieval philosophy and ending with modern and contemporary philosophy.

B. Texts:


Further readings are posted on Blackboard (BB).

C. Grade structure

Grade:
a. grade structure:
   - 1/3 class participation (disputation, participation to discussions, team work)
   - 1/3 paper
   - 1/3 final exam

b. penalties
   1. only 2 unexcused absences are allowed. For every additional unexcused absence your class participation grade will be lowered with half letter.
   2. For each time you use the cell phone in class without previous permission (granted only in emergency cases), your class participation grade will be lowered with half letter.
   3. computer use is not allowed: if you use it, you will be asked to leave the room. Computer use can be allowed only in case of special personal needs – please talk to me.
   4. for each task that you miss in class (team work, disputation) your class participation grade will be lowered with one letter.
   5. for each assignment that you do not perform (paper, exam) you will get F.
   6. for an unexcused absence at the final exam your exam grade will be lowered with one letter.
   7. if you come late to class more than 5 times, your class participation grade will be lowered with one letter.

Classroom etiquette:
No computers, no phones, no ipods. No breaks during class (please go to restroom before or after class). No food (only light snacks).

Disability
Any student with a disability requiring accommodations in this course is encouraged to contact me after class or during office hours. Additionally, students will need to contact Counseling and Disability Services in Crooker Center. This office
can be reached at (713) 525-2169 or 6953.

**Blackboard**
Please check your online blackboard regularly.

**E. Schedule of readings**

1. T Jan 13 Introduction

2. Th Jan 15 Is there a meaning of life? Class debate.

**Origins of the question of the meaning of life**


4. Th Jan 22 Ecclesiastes (BB)


6. Th Jan 29 Quinn, *The Meaning of Life According to Christianity* (TB)


8. Th Febr 5 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.1, art. 10

9. T Febr 10 **Team work**

**Meaning of life, purpose and happiness**


**Meaning of life and meaning of the universe**

I. **The absurdity of the universe**


II. **Meaningful universe**

16. Th March 5 Job; Wiesel, *The Messengers of God* (BB)

T March 10, Th March 13 – **Spring break**

17. T March 17 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 103
18. Th March 19  **Team work**

**Looking for the true life: authenticity, death, and *vera vita***

19. T March 24  Heidegger, *Being and Time*, authenticity, totality and death, # 45, 46, 47, 48, 49

20. Th March 26  Heidegger, *Being and Time*, the existential structure of death, #50, 51, 52, 53

21. T March 31  Heidegger, *Being and Time*, the possibility of authenticity, # 54, 55, 56, 57

Th Apr 3 - **Easter**

22. T Apr 7  Heidegger, *Being and Time*, # 58, 59, 60

23. Th Apr 9  Augustine, *Confessions*, Book X  (BB)


**Meaning of life and meaning of history**

25. Th Apr 16  Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, ch. 25  (BB)


**Meaning of life and common sense**


29. Th Apr 30  **Review**