What is it that makes life meaningful? Psychologists and others have been asking this question throughout the ages, and yet simple answers are illusive. This course will take a scholarly and practical approach to answering this question for each class participant. The course will blend psychological exploration with practical exercises and journaling – to review the question at a broad level as well as at an individual level.

Objectives of this Class:
1) Increase understanding of personal meaning
2) Understand various methods of psychological and philosophical inquiry into existential meaning
3) Discover a variety of ways that individuals discover meaning in their lives
4) Learn practical skills of meaning discovery and personal meaning evaluation.

Philosophy of Education: A Community of learners – leading to transformation.

The most effective learning happens in the context of a community. Interactive and interpersonal aspects of learning are vital in educational growth. Learning is NOT simply adding more information to that already acquired, it’s purpose is to develop more complex, compassionate and discerning human beings.

Experiential Exercises – in addition to lecture and discussion, each class will have an experiential exercise designed explore personal aspects of meaning. Students will write about these experiences as well as outside of class experiences in their journals The purpose of these exercises is increased understanding, not the elicitation of strong emotion. We will discuss ways to engage the exercises appropriately.

Learning Group – in the belief that learning is a social enterprise, we will divide the class into learning groups. These groups will be the center of small group discussion and activities,

Required Reading:
Frankl, V. E. (2006) Man’s Search for Meaning

Other readings may be assigned
# The Search for Meaning – Lesson Plan (subject to change)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Readings and Assignments</th>
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<tr>
<td>Aug 26</td>
<td>Introductions</td>
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<td>Class overview</td>
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<td>What is Meaning?</td>
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<td>Sept 2</td>
<td>Viktor Frankl’s Life</td>
<td>Man’s Search For Meaning part 1</td>
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<td>Man’s Search for Meaning book review</td>
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<td>Sept 9</td>
<td>Dimensional Ontology</td>
<td>Man’s Search for Meaning part 2</td>
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<td>Philosophy and Meaning</td>
<td>Fabry – Chapter 1 &amp; 2</td>
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<td>Sept 16</td>
<td>Avenues to Meaning</td>
<td>Fabry – Chapter 3</td>
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<td><em>Group Film Review Due</em></td>
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<td>Sept 23</td>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Fabry – Chapter 4</td>
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<td><em>Research Paper Plan Due</em></td>
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<td>Sept 30</td>
<td>Freedom, Responsibility, Choice and Meaning</td>
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<td>Oct 7</td>
<td>Changing Culture and the Development of Meaning</td>
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<td><em>Journal 1 Due</em></td>
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<td>Oct 14</td>
<td>NO CLASS – Fall Break</td>
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<td>Oct 21</td>
<td>Meaning and Relationships</td>
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<td>Meaning and Death</td>
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<td>Oct 28</td>
<td>Happiness vs Meaning</td>
<td>Fabry -Chapter 6</td>
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<td>Some Key differences between a happy life and a meaningful life.</td>
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<td>Nov 4</td>
<td>Student Presentations – Model of Meaning</td>
<td><em>Written materials for Model of Meaning</em></td>
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<td><em>Due at same time as presentation.</em></td>
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<td>Nov 11</td>
<td>Student Presentations – Model of Meaning</td>
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<td>Nov 18</td>
<td>Student Presentations – Model of Meaning</td>
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<td>Nov 25</td>
<td>Student Presentations – Model of Meaning</td>
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<td>Dec 2</td>
<td>Course Review - Summary</td>
<td>Fabry - Chapter 10</td>
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<td><em>Journal 2 due</em></td>
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<td>Dec 9</td>
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<td><em>Final Paper due</em></td>
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Assignments and Grading (detailed descriptions and rubrics will be given well in advance of due date and will be discussed extensively in class)

Point total

5  Group Movie Review: 4 – 6 page paper submitted by your group reviewing a movie from the list provided. Details of the assignment will be provided and discussed in class.

10  Research paper plan – This will include your proposed title, thesis, overview paragraph, and general outline of paper (major topics covered), and at least three references related to your topic.

20  (10 points each) Meaning Journals – each student will maintain a journal related to their self discovery of life meaning – and more importantly what they are learning about their own and others meaning. Suggested topics and in-class exercises will be.

20  Attendance and participation: as this course is interactive in nature, attendance and participation are vital. Participation does not necessarily mean that you talk frequently in class, but that you participate actively in small group discussions, and at least somewhat in full class discussions. Attendance is worth 10 points – each class missed will subtract 1 point, Tardiness of more than 15 or 20 minutes = - ½ point.

10  Book Review – a 3 – 5 page review of a book with a meaning theme to be chosen form the list provided. This will be an individual assignment.

15  Model of Meaning Presentation – each class member will choose someone they personally know who exemplifies living a meaningful life. Each student will present the model of meaning to the class and complete a documentation of the

20  Final research paper: the culmination of your research for the semester. 12 – 15 pages. Students may use this paper to fulfill the capstone requirement in the MLA program. Please inform the instructor if you wish to use this assignment to fulfill the capstone requirement. You are responsible for picking up the graded paper from the instructor and submitting it to the Director of the MLA Program.

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<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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<td>87-89</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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Course Policies

Policy on Late Work
If unable to submit assigned work on time due to medical or serious family circumstances, the student must contact the professor promptly via email, or telephone and provide a description of the circumstances (faculty confirmation receipt reply required). The professor’s decision based on merits of request will be communicated to students via email. If an extension has not been granted by the professor, late work is subject to the following penalties:

1) One point within the first 24-hour period.
2) An additional one point for the period after 24 hours late and prior to the end of the seventh day late.
3) After a total of seven days late (including weekends), the required assignment will not be accepted and a "0" will be assigned for that assignment.

University of St. Thomas: Policy on Disabilities
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) 525-6953.

University of St. Thomas: Policy on Academic Honesty
Every offense against academic honesty seriously undermines the teaching-learning process for which the University exists, and such offenses will be dealt with expeditiously according to the following criteria.

Definition: Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to:

1. Cheating on an examination or test, for example by copying from another’s paper or by using unauthorized materials before or during the test; or by divulging the contents of an exam to students who still must take the exam;
2. Plagiarism, which represents as one’s own work the work of another, whether published or not, without acknowledging the precise source;
3. Knowing participation in the academic dishonesty of another student even though one’s own work is not directly affected;
4. Any conduct which reasonable persons in similar circumstances would recognize as dishonest in an academic setting.

Penalty: The penalty for an incident of academic dishonesty is, at the discretion of the professor, either a mark of zero for the work in question or the grade of “F” for the course.

Absence/Lateness Since this is an evening class, traffic may be an issue for some of you trying to get here. If bad traffic is the norm, please adjust your schedule to allow you to arrive to class on time. The rare occasion when traffic is a nightmare or work responsibilities arise unexpectedly will be understood.
Movie List for Movie Review

About Schmidt
Antonia’s Line
Babette’s Feast
Flight From Death: The Quest for Immortality (Documentary) *
Freedom Writers
Gattaca
Groundhog Day
Harvey
Ikiru (Japanese with English subtitles from 1952) *
Iris
It’s a Wonderful Life
The Joy Luck Club
Life as a House

Life is Beautiful
The Lunchbox (Hindi with English Subtitles)
Mindwalk
My Dinner with Andre
Once Were Warriors (WARNING: extreme violence and sexual violence depicted)
Persona (I. Bergman)
Schindler’s List
Shadowlands
The Shawshank Redemption
Shirley Valentine
Sliding Doors
Wit

Book List for Book Review

The Art of Happiness (Interview with the Dali Lama)
The Art of Loving by Eric Fromm
The Autobiography of Helen Keller
The Diving Bell and the Butterfly: A Memoir of Life in Death by Jean-Dominique Bauby
The Happiness Project by Gretchen Rubin
Have a little Faith by Mitch Albom
The Last Lecture by Randy Pausch
The Little Prince
The Myth of Sisyphus and other Essays by Albert Camus
Pay it Forward by Catherine Ryan Hyde
When Bad Things Happen to Good People
What I Learned When I Almost Died: How a Maniac TV Producer Put Down His Blackberry and Started to Live His Life by Chris Licht
What Should I Do with My Life?: The True Story of People Who Answered the Ultimate Question by Po Bronson
Overcoming Life’s Disappointments by Harold S. Kushner
The Year of Magical Thinking by Joan Didion
Zorba the Greek by Nikos Kazantzakis
Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry Into Values by Robert M. Pirsig
It’s Not About The Bike by Lance Armstrong
Making Sense: The meaning of a life by Joseph Fabry
Sidharrtha by Herman Hesse
Stages of Faith by James W. Fowler
Necessary Losses by Judith Viorst
The Five People you meet in Heaven by Mitch Ablom
The Meaning of Life and Death by Elizabeth Kubler Ross
Meaning of Life by Will Durant
Tuesday’s with Morrie by Mitch Albom