

EIU 4167G Meaning of Life (Credits: 3)**Syllabus**

Professor Young S. Lee

Fall 2017

Office: 3532 Coleman Hall

Office Hours: TR 12:15-2:00 & 3:15-4:00 or by appointment

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Catalogue Course Description

(3-0-3) This course examines diverse approaches to questions concerning the ultimate value and meaning of human life. Is religious belief necessary for a life of value? Is happiness necessary for a good life? What ends ought I pursue to ensure that I live a life of value? Philosophy majors are excluded. WI

Course Objectives

Through the course students are expected to:

1. Recognize, analyze, and evaluate abstract philosophical arguments and construct original arguments in written essays and verbal responses. (CT, W&CR, SL)
2. Recognize, identify and articulate diverse values within the context of plural traditions of religious belief and other cultural ideals surrounding life's meaning, both verbally and in writing assignments. (W&CR, SL)
3. Explain and evaluate the role of religious experience in shaping one's view of the value and meaning of life. This involves understanding the ethical implications not only of the views of others, but of one's own view as well. (RC, CT, W&CR)

Texts:

Easwaran, Eknath (trans.), *The Bhagavad Gita*

Gardner, Daniel K. (trans.), *The Four Books*

Kierkegaard, Soren, *The Essential Kierkegaard* (edited by Hong & Hong)

Mair, Victor H. (trans.), *Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching*

Plato, *The Trial and Death of Socrates: Four Dialogues*

Rahula, W, *What the Buddha Taught*

Tillich, Paul, *Dynamics of Faith*

Course Requirements and Grading:

1. Homework assignments - You are expected to prepare for each class by reading the assigned text carefully and participate in class discussion. There will be a homework assignment every class related to the preparation of class. Namely, you have to summarize your thoughtful questions which arise while you're reading the text, and submit it to the instructor before class. Each assignment will not exceed one page (typed in double space with font 12). Late submissions will not be accepted. (10 points for each homework; total 200 points)

2. Conference and draft paper - You will have a discussion with the instructor about your research paper at a conference. You have to turn in the draft version of your paper (typed in double space with font 12) at the time of conference. After receiving feedback from the instructor at the conference, you will revise it and submit the final version of your paper for a grade. Feedback will not include typo or grammatical errors. Each student is responsible for their corrections (100 points for both the conference and the draft paper).
3. Oral presentation and Critiques - You will be required to present a 15-minute oral presentation. You will also be required to critique the presentations of other students. These critiques will be graded and count towards your oral presentation grade. You are certainly encouraged to utilize material from your paper for oral presentation (100 points for both the oral presentation and the critiques).
4. Research paper - You will be required to write one research paper. In your paper, you will formulate and justify your own view of the meaning of life, which must refer to and reflect upon the various philosophical and religious views you've learned in this class. Your paper (typed in double space with font 12) must be six to eight pages long. The instructor will not grade it if this requirement is not met. You will submit this paper to your electronic writing portfolio as well (200 points).
5. The total possible course points: 600 points
 - 540-600 points: A
 - 480-539 points: B
 - 420-479 points: C
 - 360-419 points: D
 - Below 360 points: F

Attendance Policy:

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. Three absences will be permitted. For the fourth and all subsequent absences (**regardless of the justification for the absence**), I will require a 400-word response paper (typed in double space with font 12) to the reading for the missed class. This paper will be due one week after the absence, and failure to turn in the paper on time will result in the lowering of the final class grade one letter. (e.g. from B to C)

Readings:

Week #1

- 8/22 T Introduction
8/24 R Kierkegaard (pp.37-65)

Week #2

- 8/29 T Kierkegaard (pp. 66-83)
8/31 R Kierkegaard (pp. 93-101)

Week #3

- 9/5 T Tillich (chapter 1-3)
9/7 R Buddhism (chapter 1-4)

Week #4

- 9/12 T Buddhism (chapter 5-8)
9/14 R Buddhism (pp.125-135)

Week #5

9/19 T Hinduism (chapter 1-3)

9/21 R Hinduism (chapter 4-8)

Week#6

9/26 T Hinduism (chapter 9-13)

9/28 R Hinduism (chapter 14-18)

Week #710/3 T Confucianism (*The Great Learning*: pp. 3-10)10/5 R Confucianism (*Analects*: pp. 11-30)Week#810/10 T Confucianism (*Analects*: pp. 31-49)10/12 R Confucianism (*Maintaining Perfect Balance*: pp. 107-129)Week#9

10/17 T Taoism (chapter 1-20)

10/19 R Taoism (chapter 21-40)

Week #10

10/24 T Taoism (chapter 41-60)

10/26 R Taoism (chapter 61-81)

Week #1110/31 T Plato (*Apology*: pp. 19-30)11/2 R Plato (*Apology*: pp. 31-41)Week #12

11/7 T Conference on your paper (you have to turn in the draft version of your paper at the conference.)

11/9 R Conference (continued; you have to turn in the draft version of your paper at the conference.)

Week #13

11/14 T Conference (continued; you have to turn in the draft version of your paper at the conference.)

11/16 R Conference (continued; you have to turn in the draft version of your paper at the conference.)

Week #14

11/21 T Thanksgiving Break

11/23 R Thanksgiving Break

Week #15

11/28 T Oral presentation

11/30 R Oral presentation (continued)

Week #16

12/5 T Oral presentation (continued)

12/7 R Oral presentation (continued) /Review of the course / **Paper (final version) Due**

Note:

1. This is a tentative schedule. Changes may be announced in class.
2. I will not accept any e-mail submission of assignments.
- 3. Academic integrity-** Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.
- 4. Students with disabilities-** If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by Ninth Street Hall, Room 2006, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.
- 5. The Student Success Center-** Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (www.eiu.edu/~success) for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.