

PHL 455
Authenticity and the Meaning of Life

(1) INTENT OF THE COURSE

The intent of the course is to provide students with an understanding of the forces that have unsettled contemporary life and to explore the question whether authenticity can serve as an anchor for the meaning of life.

(2) TEXTS

Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*.

Martin Seligman, *Authentic Happiness*.

Dreyfus and Kelly, *All Things Shining*.

We will spend roughly four weeks each on Taylor and Seligman and six weeks on Dreyfus and Kelly.

(3) REQUIREMENTS

a. Classroom Participation (two thirds of course grade)

1. Toward the end of every other Tuesday, and on the day of the final, Monday, December 18 at 10:10 AM, there will be a twenty minute test of three brief questions on the material covered in the preceding two weeks (not including the material of the Tuesday on which the test is given). You can make up a missed test prior to the next test. Otherwise you receive an F. The first test is on September 12.

2. You can raise (but not lower) the overall test grade through class participation, asking for clarifications, asking questions of any kind, and offering objections or comments.

b. Term Paper (one third of course grade)

The term paper should confront a topic of personal and general significance that involves both ethics and contemporary culture. Please formulate a topic of your own and submit an outline by October 17. I will be glad to assist in the selection and formulation of the topic.

Undergraduates should aim at a paper of roughly 2500 words (10 pp.). Secondary material is neither required nor encouraged. The emphasis must be on independent reflection.

Graduates should write a paper of about 3000 words (12 pp.). Here too the emphasis is on original reflection. But there should also be consideration of some pieces of scholarship on ethics and contemporary culture: one or more books, chapters of a book, or articles.

The paper must be double-spaced, paginated, paper-clipped, the notes at the end of the paper; no outline or bibliography. Follow any of the standard styles or formats.

Outline due: October 17.

Paper due: November 28.

(4) NOTE

There's more information on Moodle.

Office Hours: TWR, 10:00-10:30 AM, and by appointment in LA 149.

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If you have a disability, please let me know so that we can provide accommodations.