I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.

--Thoreau

Course Description

This seminar explores a range of texts that address, to one degree or another, the search for what the Greeks called *eudaemonia*, the Good (or Flourishing) Life. In these texts we discover the potential for mindful, intentional living—what Thoreau calls “The Art of Life”—as well as some of the many forces arrayed against its achievement. By virtue of our shared inquiry, senior students will focus on their own experience of transformative literature, in Kenneth Burke’s phrase, the capacity of literary texts to serve as “equipment for living”—helping us to live our lives consciously and, perhaps, creatively.

Course Goals

Students who successfully complete this course will:

- demonstrate through class discussion, oral presentation, and well-reasoned essays a productive understanding of literature’s capacity to model lives lived well or poorly
- demonstrate through class discussion, oral presentation, and well-reasoned essays a productive understanding of the diversity of literary definitions of the Good Life
- demonstrate through class discussion, oral presentation, and well-reasoned essays a productive understanding literature’s capacity to represent challenges to our ability to realize the Good Life
- demonstrate through class discussion, oral presentation, and well-reasoned essays a productive understanding of literature’s capacity to represent strategies and resources available in the pursuit of the Good Life
- demonstrate through well-reasoned essays the ability to engage in genuine inquiry and effective written communication
- demonstrate through well-reasoned essays an understanding of the rhetorical conventions associated with the discipline of literary study
LIT 494 Requirements

- Regular class attendance and participation, steady preparation
- Good Life Credo I
- Good Life Credo II
- 6 Brief Response Essays
- Equipment for Living Research Project Presentation
- Equipment for Living Research Project Essay

Grading

Good Life Credo I Presentation and Essay 10%
Good Life Credo II Presentation and Essay 10%
Brief Response Essays (6/5% each) 30%
Equipment for Living Research Project Presentation 10%
Equipment for Living Research Project Essay 40%

Course Policies and Procedures, and Unsolicited Advice

- Attendance and Participation: Because I believe you can learn the material covered in this course only by being here, your attendance and ACTIVE participation are required. Your final grade will be dropped one full letter grade after four unexcused absences; a failing grade will be assigned after six unexcused absences. (An excused absence requires a pre-arranged scholastic or athletic commitment or a bona fide and substantiated medical emergency.)
- If you miss a class, please make arrangements with a colleague to get notes. Also, please check with me to see if you missed any handouts or special instructions.
- Texts: The texts under consideration are central to our work in this class, especially during class time. You MUST purchase the texts for this class and you MUST bring the relevant texts to class. No exceptions, no excuses.
- Laptops and tablets may be used for note taking; laptops, tablets, and cellphones used for other purposes will be confiscated and given to wayward children.
- Deadlines: All work is due in class on the assigned date. NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED.
- Presentation: Essays must be printed. Black ink. 10 or 12 pt. font. Arial, Cambria, Times, or Times New Roman are each sufficient. Please, no funky fonts. I would like you to follow the MLA citation and documentation guidelines in this class. Make sure you include on your work your name, the title and draft number, this class and section number, my name, and the date.
- Please make hard copies of all your work and keep them in a safe place.
The instructor and the University reserve the right to modify, amend, or change the syllabus (course requirements, grading policy, etc.) as needed.

Scholarship

All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrase) must be properly documented. Students who plagiarize face serious consequences that may range from receiving a failing grade on a given assignment to failing the course. Students who plagiarize also face additional University sanctions.

Accommodations

If you have a disability (physical or learning) that you think may affect your performance in this class, please see me during the first week of the term so we can discuss whatever accommodations may be necessary.

Required Texts

Epicurus     ”Letter to Menoeceus” (available via Moodle)
Thoreau      Walden
Behn         The Rover and Other Plays
Chopin       The Awakening
Rilke        The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge
Hurston      Their Eyes Were Watching God
Hesse        Narcissus and Goldmund
Steinbeck    The Grapes of Wrath
Norman       Divine Right’s Trip: A Novel of the Counterculture
Satrapi      Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood

Syllabus

9/1  T  Introduction: Eudaemonia
9/3  Th Epicurus “Letter to Menoeceus” [M]
9/8  T  Eudaemonia: Credo Presentation  GOOD LIFE CREDO I DUE
9/10 Th Thoreau “Economy”
9/15 T  Thoreau “Where I Lived . . .” through “Visitors”
9/17 Th Thoreau “The Bean Field” through “House-Warming”
9/22 T  Thoreau “Former Inhabitants . . .” through “Conclusion”
9/24 Th Behn The Rover (Acts 1-3)
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