

Eastern Illinois University
Revised Course Proposal
EIU 4167G, The Meaning of Life

Agenda Item #15-69 Effective Summer 2015

Banner/Catalog Information (Coversheet)

1. New Course or Revision of Existing Course
2. Course prefix and number: _____ EIU 4167G_____
3. Short title: _____ The Meaning of Life_____
4. Long title: _____ The Meaning of Life_____
5. Hours per week: 3_ Class 0_ Lab 3_ Credit
6. Terms: Fall Spring Summer On demand
7. Initial term: Fall Spring Summer Year: 2015_____
8. **Catalog course description:** 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? WI

9. Course attributes:

General education component: _____ Senior Seminar_____

Cultural diversity Honors Writing centered Writing intensive Writing active

10. Instructional delivery

Type of Course:

Lecture Lab Lecture/lab combined Independent study/research

Internship Performance Practicum/clinical Other, specify: _____

Mode(s) of Delivery:

Face to Face Online Study Abroad

Hybrid, specify approximate amount of on-line and face-to-face instruction_____

11. Course(s) to be deleted from the catalog once this course is approved. Previous version of the course_

12. Equivalent course(s): _____ None_____

a. Are students allowed to take equivalent course(s) for credit? Yes No

13. Prerequisite(s): _____ 75 hours_____

a. Can prerequisite be taken concurrently? Yes No

b. Minimum grade required for the prerequisite course(s)? _____

c. Use Banner coding to enforce prerequisite course(s)? Yes No

d. Who may waive prerequisite(s)?

No one Chair Instructor Advisor Other (specify)

14. Co-requisite(s): _____

15. Enrollment restrictions

a. Degrees, colleges, majors, levels, classes which may take the course: All except Philosophy majors

b. Degrees, colleges, majors, levels, classes which may not take the course: Philosophy majors_

16. Repeat status: May not be repeated May be repeated once with credit

17. Enter the limit, if any, on hours which may be applied to a major or minor: _____

18. Grading methods: Standard CR/NC Audit ABC/NC

19. Special grading provisions:

Grade for course will not count in a student's grade point average.

Grade for course will not count in hours toward graduation.

Grade for course will be removed from GPA if student already has credit for or is registered in:

Credit hours for course will be removed from student's hours toward graduation if student already has credit for or is registered in: _____

20. Additional costs to students:

Supplemental Materials or Software _____ None _____

Course Fee No Yes, Explain if yes _____

21. Community college transfer:

A community college course may be judged equivalent.

A community college may not be judged equivalent.

Note: Upper division credit (3000+) will not be granted for a community college course, even if the content is judged to be equivalent.

Rationale, Justifications, and Assurances (Part I)

1. Course is required for the major(s) of _____
 Course is required for the minor(s) of _____
 Course is required for the certificate program(s) of _____
 Course is used as an elective
2. **Rationale for proposal:** To allow the course to be offered online. Students reaching the final years of their studies should have the opportunity to think and reflect about what, in the end, gives their lives meaning. Offering this course online accommodates off-campus and distance students and those with work schedules that might otherwise prevent them from taking the course.

3. Justifications for (answer N/A if not applicable)

Similarity to other courses: None

Prerequisites: 75 hours – university requirement

Co-requisites: N/A

Enrollment restrictions: Philosophy majors are excluded because it is a Senior Seminar

Writing active, intensive, centered: WI – several writing assignments are required and in total constitute at least 35% of the course grade. In addition, at least one assignment is to be revised by the student after it has been read and commented on by the instructor.

4. General education assurances (answer N/A if not applicable)

General education component: Senior Seminar

Curriculum:

- a. This course meets the **Critical Thinking Component** of the Undergraduate Learning Goals by requiring students to read, analyze, and evaluate diverse perspectives on the existence of God, or a similar spiritual being, and the role of religion in a meaningful life. In addition students are asked to interpret and critique classical and contemporary writings on the necessary constituents of a good life, such as happiness, pleasure, family, etc. Finally, students are expected to reflect upon their own beliefs and create defensible arguments of their own. The notion of argument is central in a philosophy class and finding, reconstructing, and evaluating the arguments of others is part of the daily routine. This routine includes providing support for one's strongest opponent and then creating a defensible, independent argument of one's own in response. In order to do this, students must learn not only to recognize the arguments of others, but also to see the implications of their views and of one's own position. (CT-1,3,4,5,6)
- b. This course meets the **Writing and Critical Reading Component** of the Undergraduate Learning Goals by requiring students to write critical and reflective papers responding to both classical and contemporary, western and nonwestern, readings. Students are required to respond to multiple perspectives, to evaluate arguments and to write clearly and coherently. (WR-2,3,4,6,7)
- c. This course meets the **Speaking and Listening Component** of the Undergraduate Learning Goals by requiring students to articulate, discuss and assess different

perspectives on the meaning of life. An oral presentation and in-class participation is required. (SL-1,2,3,4,5,7)

- d. This course meets the **Responsible Citizenship Component** of the Undergraduate Learning Goals by requiring students to reflect upon and evaluate diverse ideas. In addition, they will be challenged to identify the value of living a moral existence. What is the relationship between morality and happiness, for example? A meaningful life is almost always linked to morality and when you examine the role of religion as a source of meaning and purpose its prescription is always tied to some conception of morality. This kind of analysis and interpretation will help students understand the various forces that may cause humans to act as they do and to think about the capacity for morality as a distinctively human trait. Moreover, students are required to evaluate the ethical implications of multiple cultural and religious perspectives and will certainly apply this knowledge beyond the classroom. Citizenship is enhanced when students think deeply about their ethical and religious beliefs and are able to articulate compelling reasons for their personal beliefs. (RC-1,4)

Instruction:

Skills from the CT, W&CR, S&L and RC Learning goals are taught routinely in this course. The focus of the course is the justification of beliefs through the discovery and evaluation of the arguments of others and the formulation and creation of one's own, independent view on the nature and value of meaning in one's life. This requires reading, interpreting and understanding the arguments of others; analyzing those arguments in terms of their implications; and creating and defending one's own position against the view of the strongest opponent. Writing and speaking require articulating and intelligently discussing one's position and producing written work that is both mechanically sound and convincing. It presents the structure and creativity of a good argument. Since religious belief is such an integral part of the lives of people everywhere, a study of its value and meaning in one's life must require engaging with diverse ideas and cultures. Moreover, the ethical justification of these ideas is open to question and argument; the results certainly applied beyond the classroom.

Assessment: Assignments, projects and exams directly assess noted skills from the CT, W&CR, S&L and RC Learning Goals and this assessment determines a student's grade in the course.

5. Online/Hybrid delivery justification & assurances (answer N/A if not applicable)

Online or hybrid delivery justification:

Students reaching the final years of their studies should have the opportunity to think and reflect about what, in the end, gives their lives meaning. Offering this course online accommodates off-campus and distance students and those with work schedules that might otherwise prevent them from taking the course.

Instruction: Course content will be delivered via video or other appropriate platform for readings, etc. Discussion boards will hone critical thinking skills and help students understand the readings. They will also facilitate a learning community so that student interaction is promoted. Appropriate technology will be used to construct videos so that students speaking and listening skills are sharpened. All faculty who deliver this course online are/will be OCDI (or appropriate equivalent) trained.

Integrity: Essay exams will make plagiarism difficult and reinforce analytic and critical thinking skills. Plagiarism software such as Turnitin.com for midterm and final will check for duplication of work. Quizzes and exams will be timed. Students will construct videos for work on verbal expression. Video responses identify students visually.

Interaction: Interaction will be facilitated via email, phone, video, discussion boards or other shared online support as determined by the particular faculty member. As online courses provide learning environments for people mostly unable to attend on-campus courses due to work or distance issues, interaction will probably be asynchronous.

Model Syllabus (Part II)

Please include the following information:

1. Course number and title: EIU 4167G The Meaning of Life
2. **Catalog course description:** This course examines diverse approaches to questions concerning the ultimate value and meaning of human life. Is religious belief necessary to lead a moral life? Is happiness necessary for a good life? What ends ought I pursue to ensure that I live a life of value? WI
3. Learning objectives.

At the end of the course students should be able to:

1. Recognize, analyze, and evaluate abstract philosophical arguments and construct original arguments in written essays and verbal responses. (CT – 1,3,4,5,6, W&CR – 2,3,4,6,7, SL -1,2,3,4,5,7)
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- 2,3,4,6,7, and SL – 1,2,3,4,5,7)
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 – 1,4, CT - 1,3,4,5,6, W&CR - 2,3,4,6,7)
4. Course materials.

Particular materials may vary over time and according to the specialization of the instructor.

Baggini, J., *Atheism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003)

Klemke, E.D., ed., *The Meaning of Life*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000)

Rahula, W., *What the Buddha Taught*, (New York: Grove Press, 1974)

Course packet (readings from public domain)

5. Weekly outline of content.

- Week 1 Introductory reading and discussion on the structure and evaluation of arguments, and on the question of the meaning of life.
- Weeks 2-5 The theistic view. This section of the course involves various readings which assert and defend the view that without the existence of God (or some similar form of spirituality), life is meaningless. Theism is construed broadly and includes some nonwestern conceptions.
- Weeks 6-9 The humanistic alternative. This section of the course involves discussion of arguments that deny what the previous theses assert: that life without the existence of God (or some similar form of spirituality) is meaningless.
- Weeks 10-13 The legitimacy of the question. This section of the course involves discussion of the significance and legitimacy of the question itself. Can a satisfactory answer to such a question be given? The discussion builds on understanding and assessing the alternative positions presented earlier.
- Weeks 14-15 Assessment; writing philosophy papers; oral speaking skills, student collaboration and oral presentations.
- Week 16 Final Exam

6. Assignments and evaluation, including weights for final course grade.
See Part I.4 “Assessment”

7. Grading scale.

- 90-100% = A
80- 89% = B
70-79% = C
60-69% = D
below 60% = Failing

8. Correlation of learning objectives to assignments and evaluation.

Learning Objectives	Weekly Quizzes and/or discussion board assignments (35%)	Midterm Paper (and revision) (35%)	Final Exam (20%)	Presentation (10%)
Students will recognize, interpret, and evaluate the ethical implications of multiple cultural and religious perspectives. (CT - 1,3,4,5,6, W&CR – 2,3,4,6,7, RC – 1,4)	X	X	X	X

Students will implement speaking and listening skills in the articulation and discussion of various perspectives on the meaning of life. (SL – 1,2,3,4,5,7)				X
Students will read, reconstruct, differentiate, and critique arguments concerning the meaning of life from various cultural and religious perspectives. They will also generate their own arguments concerning the value and meaning of life. (CT – 1,3,4,5,6, W&CR – 2,3,4,6,7, SL – 1,2,3,4,5,7, RC – 1,4)	X	X	X	X

Date approved by the department or school: February 20, 2015
Date approved by the college curriculum committee: February 25, 2015
Date approved by the Honors Council (*if this is an honors course*):
Date approved by CAA: March 12, 2015 CGS: Not Applicable