

Philosophy for Living

Spring 2022

Syllabus

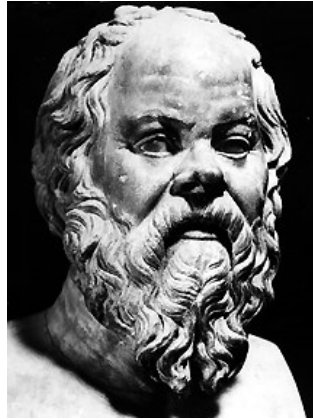
Course Description

Russian author Leo Tolstoy famously said that the most important question for us is this: “What shall we do and how shall we live?”

Are some ways of living better than others, or are all ways of living equally good? If there is a good life (or a range of good lives), what is it like? Is it the happiest life? The one where you get what you desire? Or is it the one where you learn to control your desires? Is a good life a free life, a virtuous life, or something else?

The question “What is the good life?” was asked by the earliest philosophers. You might wonder what a bunch of people who lived thousands of years ago have to say about the good life for you—someone who lives here, now, in the 21st Century. That is one of the things we will explore in this class.

You also probably already have a variety of *pre-*



“The unexamined life is not worth living.” - Socrates

theoretical or unexamined ideas about what the good life is. These are things you already believe, but haven’t yet articulated or examined. One of the goals this semester will be for you to articulate and examine ideas about the good life in a way that informs and enriches your own experience in the world.

In this course, we will discuss some of the philosophical views that have, in many ways, created our modern-day world. But in addition to learning *about* philosophy, we will also focus on learning to *do* philosophy.

As with any other skill, it will require careful attention and practice. The skills you will develop include critical thinking, argument analysis, and good communication.

You will also be encouraged to cultivate an appreciation for your own intellectual history. But most importantly, the study of philosophy aids the development of independence of mind.

Disclaimer: Although we will be studying many different ideas about the good life, this course isn’t guaranteed to improve *your* life.

That is up to you.

(Or is it?)

PHIL 1301

CRN 34032
MWF, 11-11:50am
Irby Hall 316

CRN 34033
MWF, 12-12:50pm
Irby Hall 316

Instructor:

Dr. Sharon Mason

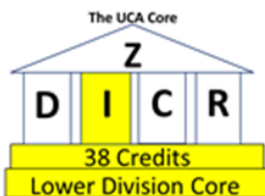
Contact Info:

- Office: Irby 118d
- Virtual Office Hours: T/Th 10-10:50am, **and by appointment**
- Email: smason@uca.edu

UCA Core

Critical Inquiry (I)

This course is part of the Critical Inquiry component of the Lower-Division Core.



Critical Inquiry courses promote the ability to analyze new problems and situations to formulate informed opinions and conclusions. For more information, go to <http://uca.edu/core>

Course Objectives

- * to understand and critically examine key philosophical ideas in Epicureanism, Stoicism, Existentialism, Confucianism, Daoism, and African ethnophilosophy
- * to develop the intellectual virtues of curiosity, openmindedness, intellectual autonomy, intellectual humility, and intellectual tenacity
- * to understand diverse philosophical ideas and to appreciate their influence in the contemporary world





Course Texts

- This course introduces students to both classic philosophical texts and cutting-edge scholarship. Many of the classic texts are already available in an open access format online. This class also uses videos and other content from contemporary researchers that use non-traditional forms of content delivery. Therefore, instead of asking students to purchase a text, I have curated a collection of readings and videos for each module of the course.
- Links to all course content (readings, videos, content modules, blog posts, etc.) will be posted on Blackboard. There are no textbooks to purchase for this course.

Grading Scheme

In this class, we will be using a grading method known as *specifications grading*. (If you're interested, you can read more about it here: <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2016/01/19/new-ways-grade-more-effectively-essay>)

In this method of grading, if you meet the specifications for a particular assignment, you will get credit for that assignment. If you don't meet the specifications for the assignment, however, you won't receive credit. Any assignment that falls below the specifications for the assignment may be revised and resubmitted once for a second attempt. There are no points given and no partial credit. **Your final grade for the class will be determined by the number and type of assignments you successfully complete.**

This format frees students from much of stress associated with grades, and it frees me up to spend more of my time interacting meaningfully with students about their work (i.e. talking to students about philosophy, rather than rubrics, partial credit, extra credit, etc.). It also means that in order to pass this class, a student must achieve minimal competency with the material. However, note that students get many opportunities to improve along the way. It is not where you start out in the course, but where you end up that matters. Finally, it gives students primary control over what level of achievement they wish to pursue in this course.

I expect that it may take some getting used to, as it is quite different from usual points grading systems. If I could emphasize anything at all, it would be that **I want you to engage this material deeply and take responsibility for your own learning. Do that, and you will succeed in this class.**

This chart provides an overview of what you need to complete to meet each grade level.

Details for each assignment follow.

Final Grade	Class Attendance/ Participation	Module Quizzes	Engage Projects	Lived Philosophy Experiments
A	90%	7/7 AND <u>at least 4</u> at the "E" level	6/6 AND <u>at least 3</u> at the "E" level	1/1, A-Level
B	80%	6/7 OR 7/7 with less than 4 at the "E" level	5/6 OR 6/6 with less than 3 at the "E" level	1/1, B-Level
C	70%	5/7	4/6	1/1, C-Level
D	60%	4/7	3/6	1/1, D-Level

IMPORTANT NOTE: ALL specs must be met in order to achieve each grade level. If, for instance, you achieve some of the specs for a B and some for an A, your course grade will be a B.

Class Attendance/Participation

Philosophy is a collaborative endeavor. We think better when we are articulating ideas to each other, getting feedback about those ideas, and hearing other perspectives. Being able to come to your own conclusion is important, but it is also crucial to be able to effectively communicate those ideas to others—to test them in the sphere of public discourse. It is also important to learn to talk about important issues in productive, respectful, and meaningful ways.

This course emphasizes the collaborative nature of philosophy by requiring active in-class discussion. Attendance requirements vary depending on which grade pathway you are pursuing for this course (see chart on p. 2). I will also be tracking attendance in order to comply with UCA guidelines and to have data for contact tracing, financial aid, etc.

In case a student needs to quarantine or cannot attend in person, students may ask for an alternative assignment to earn attendance and participation points for the days of class they miss.

If you stop actively participating in the course (defined as: no attendance, no assignment submissions, no Blackboard log-in, no contact for 1 week), I will send you an email to see if you need support. You will have one week to respond. If you do not respond (2 weeks no contact), I will administratively withdraw you from the course for non-attendance, no exceptions.

It is important to let me know right away if there is a problem so that we can solve it together.



Confucius 550-470BC

Module Quizzes

Each module will conclude with an online quiz that will be designed to show your comprehension of the material from that module. The format for these assessments will generally include several short-answer/short essay questions, as well as matching, multiple choice questions, and fill-in the blank questions. The module quizzes will be open book and open notes, but they will also be timed, and they will require you to write thoughtfully about the material covered in the module. I will generally post questions in advance, to give you time to think about what you write. I will help you as you develop your writing skills this semester, and by the end of the course you should expect to find academic writing easier and more engaging.

There are seven total modules. You must complete a module at a passing level (M or E) in order to receive credit for it. For an A-level grade, you must pass all 7 modules, with at least 4/7 at the E level. (See chart on p. 2.) All module quizzes may be revised and resubmitted, as long as they are resubmitted before the end of the next module. So, for example, you can revise and resubmit questions for Module 2 until the end of Module 3. After the Module 3 quiz closes, you can no longer go back and revise anything from Module 2.

Engage Projects

Engage reports provide an opportunity for you to interact with philosophy in creative ways. Engage projects are due every other week (off weeks from module quizzes). They will generally involve a 1-2 page reflective writing component. Each project is listed below; and detailed instructions for each project are available on Blackboard.

- Engage Project: Pleasure Experiment
- Engage Project: Rationality Experiment
- Engage Project: Autonomy Experiment
- Engage Project: Rituals Experiment
- Engage Project: Pop Culture Blog Post
- Engage Project: Character Reflection

SEROTONIN & DOPAMINE



Technically, the only two things
you enjoy



Lived Philosophy Experiments

The theories of the good life we study this semester aren't mere abstract theoretical exercises. They are meant to be practiced.

This experiment invites you to "try on" one of the philosophical theories we study this semester by adopting it as your own life philosophy for 3 days.

This project is an important part of the course, and you should expect to spend a good deal of time working on it.

More detailed instructions about the project are available on Blackboard, but general grade-level requirements are listed below.



Grade Level	Requirements
A-level	original research, summary of theory, project plan, reflective journal entries, critical analysis, peer reviews, culminating presentation
B-level	summary of theory, project plan, reflective journal entries, critical analysis, peer reviews, culminating presentation
C-level	summary of theory, project plan, reflective journal entries, critical analysis, culminating presentation
D-level	summary of theory, project plan, reflective journal entries, critical analysis

Office Hours

I will hold drop-in office hours each week. Office hours are a time that I set aside in my schedule specifically for visiting with students outside of class. During my office hours, I am available in our virtual Zoom classroom to discuss your ideas, clarify or add additional context to one of the course topics, give feedback on your work, and answer any questions you might have. Please drop in! If my office hours don't fit your schedule, I am more than happy to schedule an appointment for a different time.

Late Work

All material should be completed by the due date, and you should stay current with each module. Each person has two late passes that give you a 72 hour extension on any assignment. You must let me know in advance of the deadline that you are going to use your passes (email same day or before is fine). **Once your two late passes have been used, no late work will be accepted.**

If you are sick or have a family emergency that disrupts your participation in this class for an extended period of time, I can also work with you to readjust your due dates. The important thing is to let me know right away so that we can make other arrangements.

Classroom Conduct Statement

In this course, you will be encouraged to think deeply about controversial issues, and as we go along you will almost certainly encounter viewpoints that challenge your own beliefs. I encourage you to view these challenges as opportunities to learn about perspectives that may differ widely from your own and to practice the skill of interacting respectfully and sympathetically with someone, despite the fact that you may strongly disagree with their point of view. Although debate and critical analysis are encouraged, it should be clear that we will not discriminate against or criticize members of this classroom community based on gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, or religion. **Everyone is welcome here.**



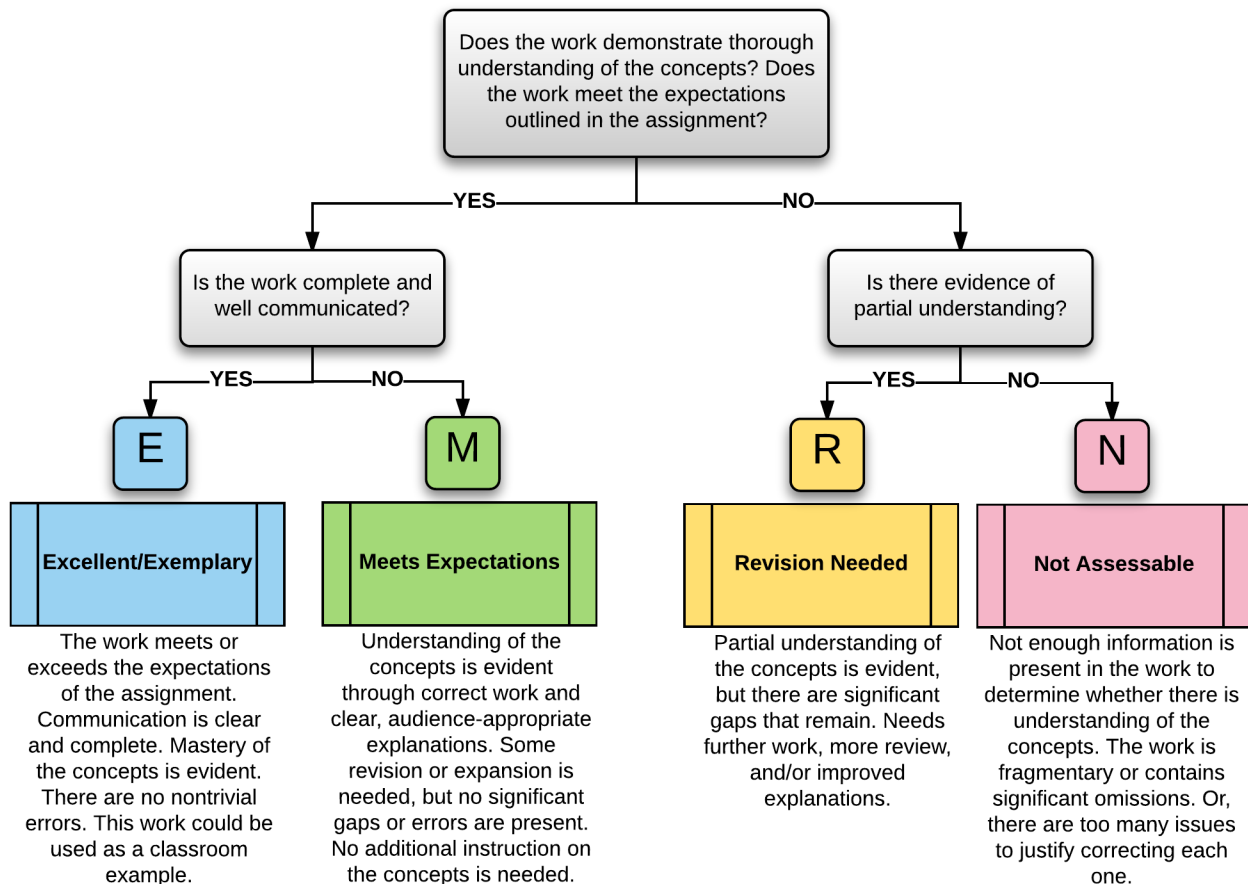
Feedback on Assignments—EMRN Rubric

The specifications grading scheme does not involve giving points or letter grades to particular assignments. Instead, I will be giving you feedback according to the EMRN rubric. Please note that the four labels below do not correspond to any letter grades.

Here is how to read the rubric:

- If you receive an E or an M on an assignment, you will receive credit for that assignment.
- If you receive an R or and N on an assignment, you will not receive credit for the assignment, but you will be able to resubmit it for reassessment. (You may also revise and resubmit an assignment marked M, if you wish to see if you can get an E.)

The letters EMRN are the starting point of a conversation that we can have regarding the material you are working on. An “E” means you have mastered the material. An “M” means you have met the specifications for that assignment, and I will give you feedback about things you can continue to work on. An “R” means you have not met the specifications for that assignment, and I will give you feedback about what you need to do to meet these specifications. An “N” means your submission is not assessable, and we will need to meet to ensure you understand the requirements for the assignment.





The instructor may adjust the schedule as necessary. All changes will be announced on Blackboard.

Spring 2022 Schedule

1/14: Prior to our first class meeting, please complete Module 0: Getting Started

1/17: MLK Holiday, No Class

1/18 - 1/23: Module 1: Philosophy and the Examined Life; **Module 1 Quiz Due 1/23**

1/24 - 1/30: Module 2: Hedonism - The Happy Life, *Part I*; *Engage Project: Pleasure Experiment Due 1/30*

1/31 - 2/6: Module 2: Hedonism - The Happy Life, *Part II*; **Module 2 Quiz Due 2/6**

2/7 - 2/13: Module 3: Stoicism - The Rational, Virtuous, and Tranquil Life, *Part I*; *Engage Project: Rationality Experiment Due 2/13*

2/14 - 2/20: Module 3: Stoicism - The Rational, Virtuous, and Tranquil Life, *Part II*; **Module 3 Quiz Due 2/20**

2/21 - 2/27: Module 4: Existentialism - The Free and Authentic Life, *Part I*; *Engage Project: Autonomy Experiment Due 2/27*

2/28 - 3/6: Module 4: Existentialism - The Free and Authentic Life, *Part II*; **Module 4 Quiz Due 3/6**

3/7 - 3/13: Module 5: Confucianism - The Harmonious and Appropriate Life, *Part I*; *Engage Project: Rituals Experiment Due 3/13*

3/14 - 3/20: Module 5: Confucianism - The Harmonious and Appropriate Life, *Part II*; **Module 5 Quiz Due 3/20**

3/21 - 3/25: SPRING BREAK!

3/28 - 4/3: Module 6: Daoism, Native American Philosophy; *Engage Project: Pop Culture Blog Post Due 4/3*

4/4 - 4/10: Module 6: African Philosophies; **Module 6 Quiz Due 4/10**

4/11 - 4/17: Module 7: Cultivating Intellectual Virtue; *Engage Project: Character Reflection Due 4/17*

4/18 - 4/24: Module 7: Cultivating Intellectual Virtue; **Module 7 Quiz Due 4/24**

4/25 - 5/1: Final Week of Classes; **Lived Philosophy Experiment Portfolios rough drafts due on Monday, 4/25 for in-class peer review; Group work on presentations will be in class on 4/27**

4/29: **STUDY DAY—No classes or office hours**

5/2-5/6: Final Exam Week: **Lived Philosophy Experiment Project Presentations—**

CRN 34032 / MWF @ 11am: Monday, May 2, 11am-1pm

CRN 34033 / MWF @ 12pm: Wednesday, May 4, 11am-1pm

Important Note: The final day to turn in any class materials (including office hours visits) is midnight on Monday, May 2. No projects or assignments will be accepted after this time, as I will be working on grades.



IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Please read the following information carefully. These notifications are required by the UCA administration to appear on all UCA course syllabi.

- ◇ **Face Coverings Statement:** All students are expected to comply with the University policy regarding face coverings (see <https://uca.edu/coronavirus/students/>).

- ◇ **Academic Integrity Statement:** The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university's Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the Student Handbook. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student's acceptance of this university policy.

- ◇ **Americans with Disabilities Act:** The University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need an accommodation under this Act due to a disability, please contact the UCA Disability Resource Center, 450-3613.

- ◇ **Building Emergency Plan:** An Emergency Procedures Summary (EPS) for the building in which this class is held will be discussed during the first week of this course. EPS documents for most buildings on campus are available at <https://uca.edu/go/bep-library>. Every student should be familiar with emergency procedures for any campus building in which he/she spends time for classes or other purposes.

- ◇ **Title IX Disclosure:** If a student discloses an act of sexual harassment, discrimination, assault, or other sexual misconduct to a faculty member (as it relates to "student-on-student" or "employee-on-student"), the faculty member cannot maintain complete confidentiality and is required to report the act and may be required to reveal the names of the parties involved. Any allegations made by a student may or may not trigger an investigation. Each situation differs, and the obligation to conduct an investigation will depend on the specific set of circumstances. The determination to conduct an investigation will be made by the Title IX Coordinator. For further information, please visit: <https://uca.edu/titleix>. *Disclosure of sexual misconduct by a third party who is not a student and/or employee is also required if the misconduct occurs when the third party is a participant in a university-sponsored program, event, or activity.

- ◇ **Student Handbook:** Students are strongly encouraged to familiarize themselves with all policies in the [Student Handbook](#), especially the Academic Policies and the Sexual Harassment Policy.