

PHILOSOPHY 302: HAPPINESS & WELL-BEING

Instructor: Dr. James Sias

Monday & Thursday, 1:30–2:45pm — Spring 2016

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE HAPPY? What kind of value is there in being happy? Are some lives better than others? What sorts of features make for a “good life”? The purpose of this course is to seek answers to these questions. In doing so, we’ll examine various theories of happiness and well-being.

Contact Information

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Office hours: Wed, 12:30–2:30pm; or by appt

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NOTE:

Email is the best way to contact me, as I check it frequently most days. If I do not reply to your email within 48 hours, you should assume that it was never received in my inbox. Try sending another.

Required Texts

1. L. W. Sumner, *Welfare, Happiness, & Ethics* (Clarendon Press, 1996)
2. S. Cahn & C. Vitrano (eds.), *Happiness: Classic & Contemporary Readings* (Oxford University Press, 2007)

*Additional readings will be posted online.

Assignments

In addition to carrying a reading load appropriate to an upper-level seminar, this is a *writing-in-the-discipline* course (‘WID’ designation). Students will therefore complete two types of writing assignments, both designed to sharpen their skills as philosophical writers. The first is called a “critical response.” This is a very short (1-2 page) critical engagement with a course reading. Each student is required to complete 10 of these before the end of the semester. (Detailed instructions for critical responses will be posted to the course website.)

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

20%	Attendance & participation
30%	Critical responses
50%	Research paper
10%	Proposal
15%	Progress through drafts
25%	Final draft

Students will also write a 10-15 page research paper. The research paper is worth 50% of your final grade, but this will be divided between different stages of the writing process. Students will begin by submitting a research proposal, which consists of (i) a proposed paper topic, (ii) a thesis statement, (iii) a general description of how the paper will be organized, and (iv) a tentative bibliography. Each student will then meet with the professor to discuss the proposals before beginning the paper’s first draft. The first draft will be due near the end of the semester, with adequate time left for students to make revisions before submitting their final drafts. (Detailed instructions for the research paper will be posted to the course website.)

Course Policies & Procedures

Attendance & Participation

While I do not take attendance at each class meeting, I do keep track of who attends regularly and who does not. I also keep track of the frequency with which students participate in class discussion. Full credit (20%) is reserved for those students with perfect or near-perfect attendance, and who regularly participate in class discussion. Students who attend regularly, but rarely or never participate in class discussion, will receive a grade of 15% or lower.

Please note that your physical presence in the room during a class meeting does not constitute “participation” in the course.

Academic Conduct & Integrity

Academic misconduct of any form will not be tolerated. All cases of suspected academic misconduct will be reported to the College. This includes plagiarism and other forms of cheating, as well as the re-use of work submitted for credit in another course. And according to the “Community Standards” page on Dickinson’s website, “The typical sanction for academic misconduct is an F in the course and stayed suspension.” If students have any questions about the standards for academic conduct and integrity at Dickinson College, they are encouraged either to consult with the professor or to review the college’s full policies, which are available online.

Plagiarism is *any kind of presentation of someone else’s ideas as your own*. So defined, this includes more than just direct quotation without proper citation. Neither ignorance nor accident counts as a valid excuse for plagiarism.

Late work

Late work will be accepted without penalty *only* if the student can provide compelling evidence that the tardiness is due to illness, hardship, or required attendance at a school-sponsored event. Students must notify the professor (via email) as soon as they become aware of one of these possible causes of tardiness. In all other cases—i.e., cases in which a student’s work is late for reasons that are not recognized as valid excuses—the student will be penalized one-third of a letter grade for each day (including weekends) that the assignment is late—e.g., from a B+ to a B, then from a B to a B-, etc.

For the record: New days are counted from the end of class on the day the assignment was due. So, for instance, if an assignment is due in class on a Thursday, and that class period ends at 2:45pm, the assignment will be considered *one day late* as of 2:46pm on the same day.

Disabilities

Dickinson College makes reasonable academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students requesting accommodations must make their request and provide appropriate documentation to Disability Services in Biddle House. Because classes change every semester, eligible students must obtain a new accommodation letter from Director Marni Jones every semester and review this letter with their professors so the accommodations can be implemented. The Director of Disability Services is available by appointment to answer questions and discuss any implementation issues you may have. Disability Services proctoring is managed by Susan Frommer at 717-254-8107 or proctoring@dickinson.edu. Address general inquiries to Stephanie Anderberg at 717-245-1734 or e-mail disabilityservices@dickinson.edu.

Other notes of varied importance

- Courses at the 300-level will be taught in the *seminar* style (as opposed to the more traditional *lecture* style). If you are unfamiliar, this means that class meetings will be heavily discussion-based, and there is a correspondingly heightened expectation of student participation. And for the record, since enrollment in 300-level courses is markedly lower, a student's *lack* of participation in class discussion will stand out even more than it would in a lower-level course.
- On a related note: Class discussion will be mostly informal. Think of it like a twice-a-week book club meeting. Obviously, the normal standards of respect and basic human decency still apply (rudeness of any kind will not be tolerated). But, for instance, students need not raise their hands before participating.
- Noisy or otherwise distracting electronic devices are not to be used in class. This applies especially to cell phones. Computers are allowed, but if your use of a computer becomes a distraction to *anyone*, you'll be told to put it away or leave the classroom.