

## **First-Year Seminar (FYSM 100 – Section 18)**

Finding Meaning: An Introspective Examination of Life's Purpose in College and Beyond

Fall 2016

Mondays - Fridays (11:30a to 12:45p)

Althouse 109

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### **Required Texts**

- Frankl, V. (2006). *Man's Search for Meaning*. Boston, Beacon Press. **Available on Amazon.**
- Pressfield, S. (2002). *The War of Art: Break through the blocks and win your inner creative battles*. New York: Grand Central. **Available on Amazon.**
- Rosenwasser, D., Stephen, J. (2012). *Writing analytically (Seventh Edition)*. Boston: Wadsworth.

*Other readings, cases, and exercises will be posted on the course website (Moodle) or distributed as handouts.*

### **Course Description and Learning Goals**

The First-Year Seminar (FYS) introduces students to Dickinson as a “community of inquiry” by developing habits of mind essential to liberal learning. Through the deep exploration of finding our life's true meaning, students will:

- critically analyze information and ideas in the texts we discuss;
- examine issues from multiple perspectives;
- discuss, debate and defend ideas, including one's own views, with clarity and reason;
- learn to find, evaluate, and correctly incorporate outside sources so as to avoid plagiarism;
- create clear academic writing.

Researcher and author Tom Rath states “the pursuit of happiness” is a shortsighted personal goal. The latest research from Rath and others have placed particular emphasis on the value of meaning. In this experiential learning course, students will embark on a semester-long journey to find the meaning in their own lives. Through thought-provoking readings, class discussions, and personal reflections, students will be able to answer questions including:

- What is my life’s mission?
- What are my personal values?
- What is my role in my community (Dickinson, Carlisle, your hometown, the world)?
- What does it mean to be a global citizen?
- How can I influence others to pursue meaning in their own lives?

One thing we will discuss throughout the semester is you are “an experiment of one” (or n=1). In other words, the only way to find your true meaning is through continuous personal experience and deep reflection.

Beyond readings and exercises, students will also be involved in service learning activities working with local non-profit agencies and take part in field trips to local destinations to help discover their life’s purpose. The semester will conclude with students producing a TED Talk which will serve as a framework during their undergraduate studies and well beyond.

## **Course Requirements**

### **Readings/Preparation**

You should complete all readings and assignments (listed in the Course Schedule) in advance of the class in which they will be discussed. You will want to reference this column every day so that you know what is expected of you at each class.

In order for our class meetings to be successful, it will be important for you to do the following: (taken from the book, *Peer Instruction for Astronomy*, by Paul J. Green, p. 29)

1. READ. Come to class prepared to discuss the material.
2. RISK. Be open with your opinions and your questions. Listen to and encourage everyone’s ideas so they can take risks too.
3. RELAX. Don’t take criticism of your own ideas personally. Change your mind when the evidence shows that you should.
4. RESPECT. Act toward your peers as you would have them act towards you (“The Golden Rule”). Be civil. Be charitable.
5. REASON. Play the skeptic, but be critical of reasoning, ideas, and data -- not of people.
6. RESTATE. Try to paraphrase another’s explanation in a way that makes sense. Focus on coming to the best possible answer.

In short, we owe it to one another to be fully prepared for each and every class.

## Community Service

In this course, you will participate in community service by working at three not-for-profit agencies. Your active participation in these experiences is as important as the class readings and participation. The community service component has two purposes. First, the requirement provides you with the opportunity to contribute to the local community. Second, your service work will provide you with opportunities to gain new skills and also apply skills acquired through your formal education, learn more about yourself, and compare and contrast what you are learning in the classroom to the outside world. Additionally, these experiences will add perspective to the course readings and discussions. Through your service work, you will develop a deeper understanding of how nonprofit organizations are trying to address the needs of local community.

I expect you to act responsibly and professionally throughout your experiences—show up at your agency on time, ready for work, dressed appropriately. You will be assigned to small groups of 5 or 6 a few weeks into the semester and will work with the same group for all three experiences. The service work will typically take place between 4-6pm. I will consult your course schedule to avoid academic conflicts. Please know that your community service comes before any non-academic activities that you may be involved with during that time of day.

## Course Journal

Your course journal is an important tool for your learning. Frequently, I will ask you to complete some form of a writing task in your Journal (be sure to check the Course Schedule for journal prompts. The journal entries serve several purposes as they prompt you to reflect on your learning, to explore course ideas, and to practice the skills we discuss in class. You are required to complete your journal entries and submit them by 11:00 a.m. on the days when they are due.

You are enrolled in the Moodle course management system, which is linked to the Dickinson website. Moodle will be used for posting course information, assignments, readings from sources other than our texts, and links to interesting websites. We will be using Moodle for your journals, which will be kept private. In other words, I will be able to view all of your journals, but you cannot view each other's journals.

The prompts will always be listed in Moodle as a Journal assignment. These journal responses should be short, around 200-300 words. Your journal is a low-stakes opportunity for you to engage with the ideas we will be discussing in class. I do not expect the same kind of formal, highly polished writing that I expect in your four course papers. Instead, I expect your journal entries to:

- 1.) answer the prompt directly
- 2.) make reference to the relevant outside texts (when appropriate)
- 3.) show evidence of careful thought.

## Formal Papers and The Writing Process

As mentioned earlier, you are responsible for submitting four formal papers during the semester. As you develop more sophisticated writing behaviors, you will come to see that this process is recursive, not linear. For all but Assignment #3, you will write a thoughtful first version and then revise after receiving peer review feedback on the draft. All papers (drafts and final versions) must be word-processed and follow standard formatting: double-spaced; 12 point font; right hand corner numbering; and title, name, and date on first page. Throughout the paper, the citations and documentation style should be consistent according to APA style.

The penalty for not completing all four papers and the journal is an F for the course. Each day an assignment is late, you will be penalized one full letter grade.

### **Assignment #1 – Meaning @ The Movies (Paper and Presentation)**

Rough Draft Due: Monday: September 19th @ 11am (Email)

Final Draft Due: Friday: September 30<sup>th</sup> @ 11am (Moodle)

In this first assignment, you are asked to identify a movie or documentary that speaks to you about the meaning of life and should relate to our class discussions and course learning outcomes. Your paper will consist of up to two (2) pages (12 pt. font, Times New Roman, 1” margins) in length. This should not be simply a summary of the movie. Instead, the focus should be on the particular scene(s) from the movie that resonate with you the most. Particular attention should focus on proper sequencing of the paper. Also, be sure to refer to the five paragraph format (pg. 109-112) in *Writing Analytically*. Students will then present their papers in class (see Course Schedule). The presentation should be approximately five (5) to seven (7) minutes and should include a brief (no more than two minutes) scene from the film. A grading rubric will be provided early in the semester.

NOTE: If you have difficulty finding a film, please let me know as soon as possible. I also strongly encourage you to contact our library liaison, Anna Kozłowska.

### **Assignment #2 – Serving Learning**

Rough Draft Due: Friday, November 4 @ 11am (Email)

Final Draft Due: Friday, November 11 @ 11am (Moodle)

In this assignment, you are asked to compare and contrast the three (3) serving learning experiences from the semester. In your response, you should reflect on what was the most meaningful experience for you and why? How did it differ from the other two experiences? Also, how have the experiences from the service learning projects provide insight to finding meaning? You will reference the article by Van Tongeren et al, Prosociality Enhances Meaning in Life and incorporate that into your response. Your paper will consist of between three (3) to four (4) pages (12 pt. font, Times New Roman, 1” margins) in length. A grading rubric will be provided well in advance of the assignment.

### **Assignment #3 – Annotated Bibliography**

No Rough Draft

Final Draft Due: Monday, November 21 @ 11am (Moodle)

For the third assignment, you are asked to write an annotated bibliography using APA style consisting of between six (6) and eight (8) sources. An annotated bibliography is a list of books, articles, and other documents consisting of a citation followed by an evaluation of each work listed. The annotation assesses the value of a work, describes the subject matter, evaluates the item's usefulness, and identifies its sources.

Your annotations should answer the following questions:

- Why did you choose this item? How does it add to your understanding of the topic? What did you find out that you didn't know before?
- Who is the author and what are his/her credentials?
- What is the author's thesis statement and argument? What points does the author make in support of the thesis or argument?
- What sources does this author use to make his/her argument?
- What is the author's conclusion?
- How does this work compare or contrast to the others in your bibliography? Does it reinforce or contradict the other works?
- How might this work support or influence your own research?

Please be sure to present the bibliography in alphabetical order.

### **Assignment #4 – Finding Meaning: An Initial Reflection (Paper and Presentation)**

Rough Draft Due: Friday, November 18 @ 11:30am (Hardcopy)

Final Draft Due: Wednesday, December 7 @ 5pm (Moodle)

Throughout the semester, you have reflected deeply on life's meaning through course readings, discussions, exercises, guest lecturers, and, yes, writing. This final assignment is an opportunity for you to conduct one final reflection, based on your research and experience. The outcome of the assignment will be a six (6) to eight (8) page paper (12 pt. font, Times New Roman, 1" margins, double-spaced). Students will then present their papers at the end of the semester (see Course Schedule). The presentation should follow the guidelines discussed in class on developing an effective TED Talk. The presentation should be approximately five (5) to seven (7) minutes. A grading rubric will be provided well in advance of the assignment. My vision is for you is to continuously review your presentation during your sophomore, junior, and senior years and possibly beyond. I would like to know how your purpose has changed, if at all.

### Academic Integrity

Plagiarism is copying the words and/or ideas of another person (published or not) and submitting them as your own. When you plagiarize, you do not comprehend the course material, and you do not learn. If you are accused of plagiarism, there will be an academic conduct hearing, and potential consequences include an F for the assignment, required withdrawal from the course

with a penalty grade of F, stayed suspension, suspension from the college, expulsion, or revocation and withholding of diploma. Cheating includes re-purposing a paper that you wrote for another course or turning in one paper for two courses without the permission of both professors. If you are confused about the complicated rules regarding documenting research, please ask me. I can help. Enrollment at Dickinson represents a commitment to abide by the College's principles of academic integrity. Please read Dickinson's plagiarism and academic integrity policy, available at:

[http://lis.dickinson.edu/library/documents/Academic\\_Integrity\\_Info.pdf](http://lis.dickinson.edu/library/documents/Academic_Integrity_Info.pdf)

All first-year students and other students new to Dickinson College are required to complete the Academic Integrity tutorial on Moodle. No exceptions. Students who do not complete this instruction by the deadline will have a hold placed on their accounts that prevents them from requesting courses during the mid-fall registration period for spring courses.

To fulfill this requirement, students should:

- logon to Moodle through Gateway.
- select the course entitled "Academic Integrity Tutorial – 2016."
- read the directions and click on the link entitled, "Join the Conversation: Work Honestly and Use Information Responsibly" to begin the tutorial.

Students receive credit only after completing the entire tutorial, answering all questions, and clicking the "Submit" button.

**DUE DATE Monday, September 12, 2016 no later than 11 AM.**

Please direct questions about the Academic Integrity tutorial to Christine Bombaro in the Library at [bombaroc@dickinson.edu](mailto:bombaroc@dickinson.edu).

### Civility

One of the many approaches that will be used to achieve the course learning outcomes is through small group and whole group discussions. It is expected that there will be occasions in which opinions will differ among the participants. Positive conflict is encouraged because it will help all of us think differently which leads to greater learning and perspective. Conflict that is not considered positive is when other students and/or their opinions are not respected. This course, like so many other Dickinson experiences, has been developed to prepare you for opportunities beyond graduation. Therefore, acting civil to your colleagues is a primary expectation throughout the semester.

### Grading

#### Evaluation Policies for Writing Assignments

In general, I will evaluate your writing by considering how well you have achieved the following goals (developed by the Writing Program):

1. The author crafts an introduction that identifies a question, frames the question, and states a thesis.
2. The author organizes the writing, demonstrates a progression of ideas, and maintains a consistent focus or thread.
3. The author contextualizes the question and supports it with evidence.
4. The author sustains analytical inquiry throughout the assignment.
5. The author effectively incorporates relevant outside information.
6. The author engages the intended audience with a consistent, distinctive voice appropriate to the task.
7. The author adheres to appropriate standards for language use.
8. The author conforms to appropriate formats for citation of source material.

Once again, each day an assignment is late, you will be penalized one full letter grade.

### Attendance and Participation

Regular attendance and conscientious preparation for class are assumed and expected. Preparation, attendance, and participation are crucial to this course and your success in it. Your participation grade will be calculated based on the following criteria:

1. You come to class having done the day's reading.
2. You ask questions – good ones – and you are listening too because you respond to your peers.
3. You really know how to participate in a conversation with an interest in the viewpoints of others.
4. You can do more than tell a personal story – that is, you root your comments in the text we are discussing.
5. You enter the conversation without dominating or silencing others.
6. You are present and engaged in every class – not just physically but intellectually. Therefore, you take care of your needs before you come to class. You will lose all of your participation points if you make a regular habit of excusing yourself in the middle of class.
7. You engage in peer review with great gusto and a willingness to help others improve their drafts. You always have a complete rough draft, and you carefully read the drafts of your peers before coming to class. This one is really important to me. *For each scheduled peer review session (group or individual) that you fail to attend, bring a rough draft to, and/or participate in, you will lose five points off of your final grade for the course.*
8. You complete the information literacy exercises assigned by the librarian.
9. Your participation grade will also reflect the reports I get from the supervisors at the not-for-profit agencies.
10. You leave your laptops in your bags unless you are otherwise instructed by me. I want to remove the temptation to surf the Internet, and I am also persuaded by recent studies that found that people who take notes by hand actually pay attention differently than people who take notes on computers. <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/05/to-remember-a-lecture-better-take-notes-by-hand/361478/> (If you have a compelling reason that would justify using your laptop during class, I welcome you to speak with me individually.)

## Deadlines and Late Policy

Unless specified otherwise, assignments are due before the class session for which it is to be submitted. I would prefer that you email assignments to [riccios@dickinson.edu](mailto:riccios@dickinson.edu) (versus hard-copy or Moodle). Students will lose 10% of the overall grade if turned in late that day and 25% for each day the assignment is late. This is to be fair to the students who completed the assignment on time. No exceptions.

## Final Course Grade

Attendance/Participation/Peer Review	10%
Information Literacy Assignments	10%
Journal Entries	15%
Assignment 1: Meaning @ The Movies: Paper and Presentation	10%
Assignment 2: Reflection on Community Service Experience	15%
Assignment 3: Annotated Bibliography	15%
Assignment 4: Finding Meaning: An Initial Reflection	20%
Oral Presentation	5%

## Support and Resources

### Office Hours

I believe a lot of learning takes places during informal conferences, so I gladly welcome and encourage you to visit my office during the posted office hours or by appointment. Also, as your initial academic advisor, I feel it is my role to meet with you one-on-one a minimum of two times during the fall semester. The first will be within the first few weeks of the semester. The second time will be shortly before course registration for the spring semester.

### The Writing Center

Writers of all levels and abilities need feedback in order to develop their ideas and grow as writers. In our course, we have a dedicated Writing Associate, Grace Tuscano, who is able to provide this kind of feedback. However, for other courses, or if you would like additional help in this course, Dickinson's trained writing tutors can help you generate ideas, begin drafting, revise a rough draft, figure out your professor's preferred documentation style, understand and respond to professor feedback, edit your writing – among other things. You can walk in or call and make an appointment at (717) 245-1620 (or 245-1767 for foreign language writing). For more information about hours and procedures, visit the web:

<http://www.dickinson.edu/academics/resources/writing-program/content/Writing-Center/>

### Reference Librarians

The library employs several reference librarians who are trained professionals and who help library users find information. Whether for this course or any other over the next four years, you need never become frustrated by your research. Instead, you can ask a reference librarian to help



you find sources related to your topic. They can help you find information (books, articles and more), choose the most relevant databases, improve your research strategy, critically evaluate information, and cite sources properly. **Anna Kozłowska** is the liaison librarian for our course. While Anna doesn't have formal "office hours," you can contact her to schedule an appointment. There are reference librarians who can work with every major in the college. If you start at the Writing Center, their offices are on the parallel wall. The reference librarian on duty has a little red flag hanging from the top of the door.

### Accommodating Students with Disabilities

Dickinson College makes reasonable academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students requesting accommodations must make their request and provide appropriate documentation to the Office of Disability Services (ODS) in Dana Hall, Suite 106. 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 ODS is available by appointment to answer questions and discuss any implementation issues you may have. ODS proctoring is managed by Susan Frommer (717-254-8107 or [proctoring@dickinson.edu](mailto:proctoring@dickinson.edu)). Address general inquiries to 717-245-1734 or email [disabilityservices@dickinson.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@dickinson.edu). For more information, go to [www.dickinson.edu/ODS](http://www.dickinson.edu/ODS).