The Franciscan College of New Jersey
The School of Arts & Sciences
The Department of Philosophy

PHIL-309/A: Morality and the Pursuit of Happiness
Fall 2014

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Class Meets: TBA
Office Hours: TBA

Felician College Mission:

Felician College is an independent co-educational Catholic/Franciscan College founded and sponsored by the Felician Sisters to educate a diverse population of students within the framework of a liberal arts tradition. Its mission is to provide a full complement of learning experiences, reinforced with strong academic and student development programs designed to bring students to their highest potential and prepare them to meet the challenges of the new century with informed minds and understanding hearts. The enduring purpose of Felician College is to promote a love for learning, a desire for God, self-knowledge, service to others, and respect for all creation.

Philosophy Department Mission:

To engage in Philosophy is to engage in the pursuit of truth and understanding through rational reflection upon all facets of human experience and concern, including knowledge, reasoning, reality, faith, and fundamental moral, social, and aesthetic values. The Philosophy Department, in turn, exists to represent and promote these pursuits within our College community. Thus, the Department provides courses and supports programs intended to encourage our students to engage in such pursuits for themselves, so that they may be personally enriched as they develop sharpened minds and broadened perspectives. In all of its activities, the Department remains committed to upholding and advancing the College’s Franciscan mission and Liberal Arts tradition.

Course Description:

Morality and the Pursuit of Happiness provides a foundation for moral decision-making through the study of fundamental ethical theories, as students address the theme of ‘happiness’ – its definition, pursuit, and attainment. Students will explore philosophical approaches to the many questions, problems, and methods associated with the pursuit of this ultimate of human goals, and how this pursuit relates to who we are as moral beings. We will be concentrating on the works of ancient and contemporary thinkers, who address topics such as: the nature of happiness, its elusiveness, expressions of its attainment, its relationship to human nature, freedom, and knowledge, and particularly its implications for and relationship to morality – generally, happiness as a conduit for moral activity that imbues human existence with meaning and value.
Student Learning Objectives: Satisfies Theme Area II of the General Education Curricular Commons.

Ethics, Values, and Truth: Develop a framework of values and ethics to guide reflective decision making through the pursuit of truth and a deeper understanding of oneself and the world.

A. Articulate the diverse ways of knowing intrinsic to the intellectual disciplines and significant ways they foster self-growth and broader understanding.
   1. Analyze the basic problems associated with the conceptualizations of happiness as a human ideal, within the disciplines of psychology, neuroscience, religion, education, and other fields.

B. Analyze personal values as a basis for making ethical/moral decisions.

C. Demonstrate skills for effective participation in civic responsibility.
   1. Construct and support – orally and in writing, and with logical and critical precision – one’s own position on the pursuit of happiness and its relation to other facets of one’s life and wellbeing.

D. Demonstrate the skills indicative of an effective life-long learner in pursuing knowledge and applying new information and skills to life.
   1. Apply logical rigor and critical thinking methods to evaluate the ways in which philosophers attempt to resolve questions and challenges associated with the nature of the good life and the pursuit of happiness.

E. Evaluate diverse ethical issues and theories, in making decisions with moral integrity.
   1. Identify key figures in the history of philosophical thinking about happiness.
   2. Assess – orally and in writing – the moral perspectives of philosophers through the ages, as expressed in primary and secondary source texts.

Required Sources:


Schedule of Readings and Topics:

Week 1    Syllabus Review and Course Expectations
          Introduction: What’s So Great About Happiness? Do We Ever Achieve It?

Week 2    Exploring Definitions of Happiness [EH: pp. 2-82] (SLO: A1, B1, E1)

Course Evaluation:

Your grade for this course is earned based on the careful and thoughtful crafting of five assigned reaction essays (18% each) corresponding to themes addressed throughout the course and reflecting your philosophical analyses of themes found in the readings. All writing shall correspond to regular readings and class discussions. Therefore, regular and high quality participation in class discussions is expected. Your participation, which includes your attendance, constitutes the remaining 10% of your course grade. Contributions to our discussions demonstrate your interest in and understanding of the topics being discussed, as well as offer the rest of us valuable insights.

Your writing will involve interpretive essays—detailed descriptions and assessments of specifically assigned readings. All written responses are to be submitted in electronically, and are to be completed by their designated due dates. No late responses will be accepted – no exceptions. If for some unforeseen and
excusable circumstance an extension is warranted, then, based on my discretion, the essay may be submitted up until the class session in which these are graded and comments returned to the rest of the class. Specific due dates for all assignments, as well as detailed instructions for their completion, will be announced in class.

**Grading System:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>95-100</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>90-94</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>83-86</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>Above average</td>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td>70-76</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>65-69</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Failure</td>
<td>64 or below</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Scoring Rubric for Written Assignments:**

Each written assignment will be evaluated carefully using the criteria listed below. Study these criteria carefully. Remember, ultimately it is the quality of your writing, not its quantity, that counts. The quality is a distinction of its completeness and accuracy, as well as the depth of understanding and effort at originality that you demonstrate, and the degree to which you relevantly support and explain your claims. Please, keep in mind that no form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. Trust yourself! Any response submitted late will inevitably receive a lower grade than had that same response been submitted as scheduled.

**(90-100 pts):** Outstandingly clear and precise explanation with superior supporting information from the relevant texts. Originality of insights, that is, effort in taking a creative and original approach in analyses and ideas expressed. Overall demonstration of excellence in scholarship, that is, writing has excellent organization, very few grammatical or spelling errors. All assignment directions have been followed.

**(80-89 pts):** Good to very good explanation with good to very good support from relevant texts. Good to very good reasoning and some effort given to originality in analyses and ideas expressed. Demonstrates good scholarship, that is, writing has very good organization, few grammatical or spelling errors. All assignment directions have been followed.

**(70-79 pts):** Fair or adequate explanation with basic support from relevant texts. Does what the assignment basically asks. Adequate reasoning but not much effort given to originality in analyses and ideas expressed. Writing has decent organization, functional prose, but too frequent errors in grammar and spelling. Some assignment directions were not followed.

**(65-69 pts):** Bare minimum explanation and discussion, but too general and/or has some inaccuracies or flaws in reasoning and/or application of ideas. Coverage of subject matter is cursory and does not meet the minimum required for a complete response. Writing is disorganized, exhibits awkward sentence and/or paragraph structure, as well as poor grammar and spelling. Some assignment directions were not followed.

**(60-64 pts):** Response attempts but does not effectively respond to topic or address the subject matter. Response fails to support assertions made or examples used. Explanations are unclear. Overall inadequate understanding demonstrated, with major flaws in reasoning. Writing is very disorganized and/or awkward sentence structure makes it difficult to read, along with poor grammar and spelling. Assignment’s directions were not followed.
(0-60 pts): Assignment not submitted (0 points), or does not address the subject with anything even reasonably germane to the topic or issue at hand.

**Scoring Rubric for Class Participation:**

**(90-100):** High quality contribution to the rest of the class’ understanding of the relevant texts. Demonstrates excellent understanding of topics presented. Student responds to others with additional supporting information, has original insights, and can offer sensitive and accurate responses to other students. The degree of effort and thought evidenced by the student's contributions is much greater than average.

**(80-89):** Good quality contribution to the rest of the class’ understanding of the relevant texts. Demonstrates good understanding of topics presented. Student responds to others appropriately, has interesting insights, and offers some responses to other students. The degree of effort and thought evidenced by the student's contributions is greater than average.

**(70-79):** Sporadic or average quality contribution to the rest of the class’ understanding of the relevant texts. Demonstrates accurate but superficial understanding of topics presented. Student responds to others with some clarity of thought, provides some insight, but lacks depth. The degree of effort and thought evidenced by the student's contributions is average.

**(65-69):** Infrequent or below average quality contribution to the rest of the class’ understanding of the relevant texts. Demonstrates a general, cursory, simplistic, and/or very limited understanding of topics presented. Student responds to others ineffectively, that is, is unclear and offers no insights with respect to topic at hand. The degree of effort and thought evidenced by the student's contributions is less than average.

**(60-64):** Inadequate participation, that is, offers no real contribution to the rest of the class’ understanding of the relevant texts. Demonstrates a poor understanding of topics presented. Student does not respond to others, is unclear and confused with respect to topic at hand. The degree of effort and thought evidenced by the student’s responses compares very poorly with those of others.

**(0-60 pts):** Student offers no contributions whatsoever. Or, what few contributions made to a discussion do not address the subject with anything even reasonably germane to the topic or issue at hand.

**Course Policies:**

(1) Students must be prepared to make a serious effort in reading outside of class in order to benefit from our time spent together in class. In order to succeed in this course it is imperative that you complete all the required reading assignments before the class meeting in which they will be discussed. This is especially important within our community of learning, where we depend on one another’s contributions and involvement. Because your participation is essential to our learning experience and to getting the most out of the course, you are expected to attend all class meetings on time, for their entire scheduled duration, as well as keep up with the reading assignments.

(2) To get the most out of any philosophical study you must actively engage in asking questions, identifying perplexities, clarifying ideas, developing your own viewpoints and arguments, and evaluating others’ views and arguments. An absent student obviously cannot be involved in such activities, which include classroom discussions and some in-class work. Thus, the following attendance policies apply:
A. Each absence reduces your participation grade. I will take attendance each class meeting. Missing (either excused or unexcused) more than the equivalent of four weeks of classes will result in either receiving a failing grade for the course or being asked to withdraw from the course. In special cases beyond your control and/or where you are missing in all of your enrolled courses and not simply in the course in question, you may be granted an ‘Incomplete’ in accordance with College policies and procedures.

B. Your absence record can accumulate by full and/or partial absences (e.g., if you arrive late for class or leave early), which means you may be counted fully absent when missing portions of classes. If you miss all or part of a class meeting, it is your responsibility to find out what you have missed, so that you are prepared. In this situation, it is strongly recommended that you make arrangements to acquire notes from at least one of your classmates.

C. An excused absence, that is, an absence completely beyond your control (e.g., a serious illness or death in the family, an automobile accident or breakdown, personal illness) requires written documentation. At my discretion I shall determine whether or not the reason given for the absence presents an acceptable excused absence.

D. Lastly, I expect that given an absence, or even its likelihood, you will make every effort possible to communicate with me via email, phone, or personal visit to my office. Any class you miss means understanding the material becomes that much more difficult. The Associate Dean of Humanities shall be the final arbiter regarding disagreements over the imposition of absence penalties, the acceptability of a documented excuse, etc. This policy in no way limits your right to a grade appeal in accordance with existing College policies and procedures.

(3) Please remember to exercise full respect for all persons in this class, regardless of the circumstances or positions taken. Also, a few words on those dreaded electronic devices—cellular phones and the like—that after millions of years of human evolution have managed to infiltrate our lives and imprison our hearts and minds. There is no need for us to see or hear your cell phone, or any like device, in this classroom. Kindly, mercifully, please, turn off (really off, not on vibrate) and put away your electronic devices before entering this classroom. Simply let your voicemail do what it is supposed to do. Being fully present in this class implies not being distracted.

(4) All students are expected to abide by the Felician College Honor Code (see, pp. 47–51 of Undergraduate Catalog 2012-2013). Any form of academic dishonesty can result in a failing grade for the assignment, the course, and/or dismissal from the College. Plagiarism involves the taking of someone else’s ideas, words, or creative efforts, and implying they are yours by not properly citing or quoting their sources. Submitting any material, no matter its length or purpose, with your name on it constitutes a quasi-legal claim that the work it represents is your own. It must therefore be the product of your own effort and ability—in organization, thought, style, and content. It should also represent work done for this present course. Thus, submitting a paper that you wrote for a different course is unacceptable. Submitting work that someone else has authored, or co-authored with you, in whole or part, is unacceptable. It is also unacceptable to paraphrase (partly or completely) into your own words material written by another person—even from assigned texts. It is unacceptable for any portion of the paper to represent someone else’s abilities and understanding rather than yours (except where explicitly cited or quoted.)

Your writing assignments shall be such that you need not refer to outside sources other than your assigned readings. When there is a need to quote an author, any such “borrowed” material must be identified with quotation marks, reference to the author, and page number. Papers should never include too many quotations, paraphrases, or other means of presenting material that did not originate with you—even when these are cited. In other words, if it ever becomes necessary to quote your sources, you should avoid doing so extensively. Quotations should be employed when you simply wish to restate, clarify, or strengthen a particular position.
Remember, I am interested in what you have to say about the subject at hand. If you cannot express your ideas in your own words, then neither of us learns. There is absolutely no need to plagiarize! Academic dishonesty on any assignment shall result in a failing grade for that assignment, ranging all the way to a 0% depending on the severity. Any instance of academic dishonesty shall result in your inability to achieve any grade higher than a ‘C’ for the entire course. Along with these penalties, the Felician Honor Council will be informed of the infraction and shall take the appropriate measures, which include the posting of a letter in your permanent student file and a letter sent to your home. As a community of teaching and learning we simply ask that you trust yourself, your ideas, and your ability to convey to others those ideas.

TURNITIN: Your essays must be submitted electronically to TurnItIn. The originality of your essays will then be evaluated by TurnItIn by comparing these to essays submitted by students in previous semesters, as well as material accessible through the Internet. Your submissions to TurnItIn will enable you to be certain that work from other scholars, perhaps appearing in your essays, is being presented with appropriate citation of the source material. You are required to enroll in TurnItIn by going to <www.turnitin.com>. At that point you will be prompted to create your user profile. Please use the following class ID number [xxxxxxx] and enrollment password (case sensitive) [happy].

(5) Lastly, remaining registered in this course constitutes your acceptance of the terms outlined in this syllabus. Fulfilling all course assignments with integrity and as scheduled ensures fairness and equality. Please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss material or your work; that is what we are here for. Keep in mind that the discipline and effort with which you accomplish your work is a reflection of your personality. Above all, it is expected that you take pride in your work and show an interest in your personal development—both in and out of the classroom. These principles shall be especially enforced in this course.

Last day to withdraw from the course with a ‘WD’ designation is?

No class on Thursday, November 27 & 28 (Thanksgiving).

College-wide policies are available in the Felician College Undergraduate Catalogue 2012-2013.

Course policies and schedules are subject to revision in the event of unforeseen circumstances.