

The University of Toronto – Fall 2021

PHL 2222H F – MA Proseminar

“Well-Being”

What does it mean to say that something is good for someone, that something makes his life go better? The answer to those questions, whatever it is, is what philosophers typically refer to as well-being. But in what does well-being essentially consist? Pleasure? Getting what we want? Realizing our potential? Engaging in objectively valuable activities and relationships? This is the central issue we will investigate in this course. We will also consider questions about the moral importance (or unimportance) of well-being, the relation between conceptions of well-being in philosophy and psychology, the character of well-being over time, and the way we should think about well-being for children, persons with dementia, and other living things. Readings will include selections from historical authors, like Aristotle, Epicurus, Mill, and Sidgwick, as well as from contemporary writers, like Derek Parfit, L. W. Sumner, James Griffin, Martha Nussbaum, Valerie Tiberius, Fred Feldman, and Thomas Hurka,. As an MA seminar, this course will focus on providing students with opportunity to get feedback on their philosophical writing. Students will have a choice to write either three short essays or one longer term paper.

Instructor: Andrew Franklin-Hall

Contact: andrew.franklin.hall@utoronto.ca

Meetings: Thursdays 9:00-12:00 (in person with Zoom option)

JHB 418

First class: Sept. 9 - Last class: Dec. 2 - No Class: Nov. 11

Zoom Link: <https://utoronto.zoom.us/j/87245132426> (no passcode)

Communication: If you want to contact me, **please use my email address**—not the Quercus message system (I won't see your message as quickly). I will try to respond to you within 24 hours (48 hours on weekends). If you do not hear back from me, feel free to send me a reminder. Sometimes an email gets lost in the pile.

Office Hours: I will not hold regular office hours, but I am happy to set up office hours in person or over Zoom.

Class Meetings: If you are taking the course for credit, you must attend (nearly) every class and participate in class discussion. If, for COVID-related reasons, you cannot attend in person, then you may participate by Zoom. However, I do not want you to participate by Zoom just because you have trouble getting up early enough for class.

Readings: The schedule and all readings can be accessed through the Quercus website associated with this course.

Format: This will be a discussion-based seminar. I may occasionally make long-winded comments that sound suspiciously like lectures, but for the most part, I want this class to be a conversation. I will distribute discussion questions in advance of each class. We may not get to every question, and you should feel free to ask questions that I have not posed. But the pre-circulated questions will help structure our discussion and guide your reading.



Evaluation: Evaluation will have two main components: participation and writing. The participation has two parts: half class discussion, half posting responses to discussion questions to the Quercus Discussion Board.

As for writing, you have two options. You can either write three short papers or you can write one long paper (about 5000-6000 words). The idea behind the long paper is that you may want to prepare a writing sample for applying to a PhD program or a paper to submit to a conference.

Participation		
Regular Participation in Class Discussion	10%	
Regular Submissions to the Quercus Discussion Board (at least eight times)	10%	

Writing – Track 1 – Three Short Papers		
Essay 1 (1500-2000 words)	20%	Due Oct. 3
Abstract for Essay 2 (about 200 words)	5%	Due Oct. 17
Essay 2 (2000-2500 words)	25%	Due Oct. 31
Abstract for Essay 3 (about 200 words)	5%	Due Nov. 21
Essay 3 (2000-2500 words)	25%	Due Dec. 12

Writing – Track 2 – Writing Sample Paper		
Brainstorming Session	5%	By Oct. 3
Abstract	5%	Due Oct. 17
Outline	10%	Due Oct. 31
Rough Draft (5000-6000 words)	20%	Due Nov. 21
Final Draft (5000-6000 words)	40%	Due Dec. 12

Participation: Students should read assigned reading before class and regularly engage in class discussion.

Discussion Board: At least 2 hours before class, registered students should submit a thoughtful response to one of the discussion questions on the Quercus Discussion Board. Responses should be at least 200 words long. Students are, of course, welcome to read the responses of classmates and engage with their answers. Submissions will not be graded, but answers that do not demonstrate familiarity with the texts will not receive credit.

Writing Track 1: If you go this route, you will submit three short essays. The first essay will respond to one of the distributed essay topics. For the second and third, students will first propose a topic with a 200-word abstract. The abstract requirement is credit/no-credit, but I will offer advice (if I can think of any). The essay, of course, will be graded normally.

Writing Track 2: If you go this route, you will work on one long paper throughout the semester. If this is your choice, it is essential that you begin work right away. (This is not the procrastinator track). First, you will schedule a meeting with me and we will brainstorm some possible topics. Then you will write a 200-word abstract, followed by a reasonably detailed outline of what you intend to write about. These requirements are all credit/no credit. After this, you will submit a rough draft, followed by a final draft. These will be graded normally. If you elect to write one long paper, then you may choose to write on something other than our assigned texts, so long as it is related to the topic of the course.



Accommodations: Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please approach the Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

<http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is an accurate signal of each student's academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the process for addressing academic offences.

Potential offences include, but are not limited to: In papers and assignments: 1. Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement. 2. Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor. 3. Making up sources or facts. 4. Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment. In academic work: 1. Falsifying institutional documents or grades. 2. Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes. All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor or from other institutional resources.