


PHIL1010: The Meaning of Life
Spring 2025

Tuesday & Thursday from 1130am - 1245pm in ASH 143

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Course Website:	https://phil1010.kevinjpatton.com	Office Hours	Mon & Wed 1pm - 2pm

Course Description	Course Requirements	Policies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Course description• Learning• Prerequisites• Student Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Required materials and devices• Location of course resources on the web• Classroom expectations• Description of major assignments• Grading• Course schedule including required readings, and exams	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grading, late work, and dropping / withdrawing policy• Policy on absences• Information about student services:• Safety information• Academic Integrity

Course Description

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This course explores life's big questions – questions you may be asking yourself now more than ever. What is the meaning of life? How can you lead a fulfilling life? What truly matters? Together, we'll tackle these questions head-on. We'll develop critical thinking skills to examine different perspectives on life's purpose and meaning. We'll explore various paths to fulfillment, from relationships and personal growth to career success and service to others.

This course isn't about giving you easy answers. It's about equipping you with the tools and frameworks to define what a meaningful life means to you.

What Will You Learn?

In this course, you will learn to critically analyze metaethical theories, evaluate arguments about the nature of "goodness" and value, and how moral luck challenges moral appraisal.

Main skills to be developed

- **Critical Thinking:** Analyze complex philosophical concepts, evaluate arguments, and formulate your own reasoned perspectives on the meaning of life and fulfillment.
- **Self-Reflection:** Engage in introspection to examine your own values, beliefs, and aspirations related to a meaningful life.
- **Discernment:** Assess different perspectives on life's purpose, identify underlying assumptions, and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses.
- **Decision-Making:** Apply critical thinking and personal values to make informed choices about your life path and pursue your goals with intention.

Learning Outcomes

1. Understand diverse philosophical perspectives on the meaning of life, fulfillment, and happiness.
2. Clarify your personal values and how they relate to your vision of a meaningful life.
3. Develop a framework for making life choices aligned with your values and aspirations.
4. Improve your ability to engage in thoughtful discussions about life's big questions.
5. Gain a greater sense of purpose and direction as you navigate your college years and beyond.

How will I learn?

This course features interactive lectures where you'll be encouraged to share your insights and questions. We'll analyze important texts together, examining the arguments and exploring different interpretations. Expect to participate in discussions and develop your critical thinking skills by evaluating ideas and offering your own perspectives.

To prepare for class, you'll need to complete assigned readings and take notes. This will help you engage actively with the material and contribute to a collaborative learning environment where we can all learn from each other.

Prerequisites for the course

None.

How to succeed in this course

Active Preparation: Thoroughly read and analyze assigned texts before each class, preparing a formal argument reconstruction to facilitate active participation in discussions.

Engaged Participation: Contribute meaningfully to class discussions by questioning assumptions, offering alternative interpretations, and respectfully debating ideas with both the instructor and peers.

Assignment Submission: Adhere to deadlines for all assignments, recognizing that late submissions may impact your grade and hinder your ability to fully engage with the course material.

Come to Office Hours: If you are struggling to keep up, or find the readings extremely challenging, then coming to speak to me directly during my office hours will be helpful. Also, I have snacks.

Course Requirements

Required Materials

There are no textbooks that you are required to purchase for this course. Class materials, handouts, and supplemental resources will be posted on the course website: <https://phil1010.kevinjpatton.com>.

I do not use Canvas except for posting grades, making announcements, and submitting assignments.

Required Devices

There are no required devices for this course.

Classroom expectations

Your preparation for discussion and participation is extremely important for you and your team. Here are some ground rules:

- **This course thrives on mutual respect and active engagement.** As your instructor, I am committed to fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment where diverse perspectives are valued. I expect you to contribute to this environment by treating each other with courtesy and respect.
- **Remember, learning is an active process.** Your participation in class discussions, activities, and assignments is crucial for developing critical thinking skills and achieving success in this course. Embrace the challenge, step outside your comfort zone, and enjoy the journey of exploring your own thought processes!

Assignments

Assessment of your learning will occur through a variety of venues including the final project, reflection journals, homework assignments, quizzes, application activities, content synthesis, and class/team participation

Annotated Notes: You will be required to submit annotated notes over one of the readings nearly every week. As these will be submitted via Canvas, you can either annotate digitally (e.g. edit in Adobe, Word, Docs) or you may handwrite your notes and then take pictures of those notes and submit those. A handout over this assignment is available on the website.

Museum Assignment: This project will require that you visit the Samuel Bak museum in Aksarben. Requirements and due date are stated in a handout on the website.

Blue Book Exams: Students will take two non-cumulative, in-person exams. These exams must be handwritten and will evaluate both understanding of course material and original thought. One week before each exam, students will receive a study guide. If you require testing center accommodations, then I recommend getting that setup ASAP.

Bucket List: This assignment invites students to create a "bucket list" of their desired life experiences and accomplishments. Requirements and due date are stated in a handout on the website.

Reading Presentation: Each student will provide a 15-20 minute presentation over one reading throughout the course of the semester. The presentation will occur on the day that the reading is assigned. Sign-up will happen on the first day of class.

Grading for this Course

The following table represents how you will demonstrate your learning and how we will assess the degree to which you have done so.

Assignments	Total Points Possible	Percent of Total Grade
Annotated Notes	140	20%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adherence to color coding standards Appropriateness of marginal notes 		
Museum Assignment	100	15%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend lecture Quality of reflections 		
Blue Book Exams	200	30%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of answers 		
Bucket List	100	20%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of reflection Integration of course materials 		
Reading Presentation	20	15%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accuracy of presentation 		

Grade	Cutoff
A+	100-97
A	96-93
A-	93-90
B+	89-87
B	86-84
B-	83-80
C+	79-77
C	76-74
C-	73-70
D+	69-67
D	66-64
D-	63-60
F	<60

Semester Outline

Changes to the schedule may be made at my discretion and if circumstances require. It is your responsibility to note these changes when announced (although I will do my best to ensure that you receive the changes with as much advance notice as possible).

Week 1: Foundations	Tues: Syllabus; sign up for presentations Thurs: Frankl: pgs 9-17 (use the Frankl handout as a guide)	Presentation:
Week 2: Suffering & Meaning	Tues: Frankl: pgs 21-40 (bring answers to reading questions) Thurs: pgs 40-77 (bring answers to reading questions)	Presentation: Presentation:
Week 3: Suffering & Meaning	Tues: pgs 77-115 (bring answers to reading questions) Thurs: Bak Museum Visit (Google Maps link)	Presentation:
Week 4: The Objectivists	Tues: Susan Wolf Thurs: William Lane Craig	Presentation: Presentation:
Week 5: Objectivists & Review	Tues: John Cottingham Thurs: Review for Exam 1	Presentation:
Week 6: Exam 1 & The Subjectivists	Tues: Exam 1 🎉 Thurs: Trisel	Presentation:
Week 7: Subjectivists & The Absurdists	Tues: Richard Taylor Thurs: Albert Camus	Presentation: Presentation:
Week 8: The Absurdists	Tues: Thomas Nagel (Ch2) Thurs: Thomas Nagel (Ch3)	Presentation: Presentation:
Week 9: Moral Luck	Tues: Review for Exam 2 Thurs: Exam 2 🎉	
Week 10: Free Will & Consciousness	Tues: Earl Conee and Ted Sider (Ch6) Thurs: Frank Jackson	Presentation: Presentation:
Week 11: Identity and Time	Tues: Earl Conee and Ted Sider (Ch1) Thurs: Earl Conee and Ted Sider (Ch3)	Presentation: Presentation:
Week 12: Value Theory	Tues: John Stuart Mill Thurs: Robert Nozick	Presentation: Presentation:
Week 13: Philosophy of Religion	Tues: Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of Religion (Ch7) Thurs: William Lane Craig vs. Sean Carroll (link)	Presentation: Presentation:
Week 14: TBD	Tues: Thurs:	Presentation: Presentation:
Week 15: TBD	Tues: Thurs:	Presentation: Presentation:
Week 16: TBD	Tues: Thurs:	Presentation: Presentation:

Policies

Classroom Policies

Statement on Learning Success

Your success in this class is important to me. We will all need accommodations because we all learn differently. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible.

Together we'll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. I also encourage you to reach out to the student resources available through UNO. Many are listed on this syllabus, but I am happy to connect you with a person or Center if you would like.

Grading Policies

As I hope you can see, flexibility is built into the assignments to support your success in this course. If you miss a smaller assignment or don't do as well on a few notes assignments, your grade will not be impacted significantly. Consequently, the final grades are firm, and no additional curve is available.

Late work

Late work will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Generally, except in the case of an excused absence, work submitted after an assigned deadline will not be eligible for full credit. Please communicate with me if you are having problems keeping to the schedule. It is better to talk through problems than ignore them.

Absences

Excused Absence: The only absences that will be considered excused are for religious holidays or extenuating circumstances due to an emergency. If you plan to miss class due to observance of a religious holiday, please let us know at least two weeks in advance. You will not be penalized for this absence, although you will still be responsible for any work you will miss on that day if applicable. Check with us for details or arrangements.

If you have to be absent, use your resources wisely. Ask other classmates to get a run-down and notes on any lessons you miss. If you find there are topics that we covered while you were gone that raise questions, you may come by during office hours or schedule a meeting to discuss. Email specific questions you have in advance so that we can make the most of our time. "What did I miss?" is not specific enough.

Names and Personal Pronouns

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name, unless they have added a "preferred name" with the University Registrar:

<https://www.unomaha.edu/registrar/students/transcripts-and-records/update-your-personal-information.php>

I will gladly honor your request to address you by a name that is different from what appears on the official roster, and by the gender pronouns you use (she/he/they/ze, etc). Please advise me of any changes early in the semester so that I may make appropriate updates to my records. For instructions on how to add your pronouns to Canvas, visit:

<https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Canvas-Basics-Guide/How-do-I-select-personal-pronouns-in-my-user-account/ta-p/615336>.

University Resources for Students

Your success in this class is important to me. We will all need accommodations because we all learn differently. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we'll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. There are also a range of resources on campus:

Services for Students with Disabilities

The university is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment consistent with university policy and federal and state law. Please let me know if you experience any barriers to learning so I can work with you to ensure you have equal opportunity to participate fully in this course. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact the Accessibility Services Center (ASC). Please refer to ASC's website for contact and more information: <https://www.unomaha.edu/student-life/accessibility/index.php> If you are already registered with SSD, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and needs in this course.

Counseling and Mental Health Center

The Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) serves UT's diverse campus community by providing high quality, innovative and culturally informed mental health programs and services that enhance and support students' well-being, academic and life goals. To learn more about your counseling and mental health options, visit:

<https://www.unomaha.edu/counseling-and-psychological-services/index.php>

If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, call Crisis Services 24/7 at [402.554.2409](tel:402.554.2409).

Undergraduate Writing Center: <https://www.unomaha.edu/college-of-arts-and-sciences/writing-center/index.php>

Libraries: <https://www.unomaha.edu/criss-library/index.php>

ITS: <https://www.unomaha.edu/information-technology-services/index.php>

Food Pantry

Experiencing food insecurity? You're not alone. UNO offers a food pantry to help students in need. For information on eligibility and how to access this resource, please visit:

<https://www.unomaha.edu/maverick-food-pantry/index.php>

Important Safety Information:

If you have concerns about the safety or behavior of fellow students, TAs or Professors, contact Student Safety: <https://www.unomaha.edu/student-life/student-safety/index.php>

Title IX Reporting

Title IX is a federal law that protects against sex and gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, unprofessional or inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature, dating/domestic violence and stalking at federally funded educational institutions. UNO is committed to fostering a learning and working environment free from discrimination in all its forms. When unprofessional or inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature occurs in our community, the university can:

1. Intervene to prevent harmful behavior from continuing or escalating.
2. Provide support and remedies to students and employees who have experienced harm or have become involved in a Title IX investigation.
3. Investigate and discipline violations of the university's [relevant policies](#).

Emergency Operation Plan

The following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from UNO Public Safety.

<https://www.unomaha.edu/emergency/response-plan.php>

- In the event of a fire, the elevators will not be operational. If you require assistance going down stairs, you are to make your way to the designated stair towers where emergency personnel will assist you

University Policies

Academic Integrity

Each student in the course is expected to abide by UNO's standards of academic integrity. **Plagiarism is taken very seriously at UNO.** Therefore, if you use words or ideas that are not your own (or that you have used in previous class), you must cite your sources. Otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism and subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course. You are responsible for understanding UNO's Academic Honesty and the University Honor Code which can be found at the following web address: <https://www.unomaha.edu/campus-policies/academic-integrity.php>

Course Dropping / Withdrawing Policy

If you decide that dropping / withdrawing from this course is in your best interest, please be aware that there are specific deadlines for doing so. For information on those deadlines, visit:

<https://www.unomaha.edu/registrar/students/after-enrollment/adding-swapping-dropping-or-withdrawing-from-a-course.php>