

**HOLY NAMES UNIVERSITY**

Fall Semester 2014

**PHIL 40W: The Human Person – 3.0 units**

**(SUBJECT TO REVISION)**

**Instructor's Name:** David A. Sylvester  
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**Office Hours:** Mondays, 3 – 4 p.m.  
and by appointment  
**Phone:** (Cell 510-435-9017)

**Class times:** M & W, 1:30 p.m.-2:45 p.m.  
**Final Exam:** Fri., Dec. 12, 1-4 pm.  
**Class Room:** Heafey 652  
**Class Dates:** Aug. 27– Dec. 3, 2014  
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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In this course, we will embark on the amazing adventure of exploring our existence. What is to be a human being – and a “human person?” What is our relationship as humans to ultimate reality? Do we as humans have a purpose to life? What is the meaning of human suffering and death, and how can we find happiness, meaning and peace? Why do we ask these questions and what is the proper use of reason and logic in responding to them?

We will work on improving four skills essential to philosophy: how to ask questions, how to read carefully, how to reason with logic and evidence and how to take a position and defend it in writing. We will read both classic philosophic texts and modern descriptions of “lived philosophy.” The classic texts pose the questions and ideas at the foundations of Western philosophy and will require a line-by-line “close” reading. For the modern writings, we will read two books, *Tuesdays with Morrie* and *Man’s Search for Meaning*. These are highly readable and should be read whole. Our discussion will engage us in a dialogue between the classic ideas and the modern experiences, including our own experience of life.

As a class, we will form a learning community. My role is to establish the structure and ground rules for our discussion. Your role is to do your best, be honest, especially about doubts and confusion, and engage the studying and discussion with your whole self. The learning will come from our group interaction. In this sense, the real “teacher” is the group process itself.

As a “W” course, writing will be an important focus. You will write informal “quick writes,” a formal self-reflection paper, two formally argued debate papers, with possible revisions, and a philosophic autobiography, also with a possible revision. You will keep every word you write in a Writing Folder and select your best pieces to present at our last class with your autobiography.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

By the end of the course, you, the student, will have:

1. Understood and practiced the skills, attitudes and habits leading to lifelong learning.
2. Deepened your understanding of traditional concepts and questions about human life in the various world philosophic traditions.
3. Improved your ability to form and defend a philosophic position through disciplined reasoning and proper logical argumentation in constructive debate.
4. Improved your ability to write informally to discover new thoughts and to write formal papers to argue authentically and clearly according to proper academic style.
5. Refined your personal philosophy of life.

Required Texts:

Albom, Mitch, *Tuesdays with Morrie*:

Frankl, Viktor E. *Man's Search for Meaning*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006.)

Reference Texts on Reserve in Library:

Stevenson, Leslie. ed. *The Study of Human Nature: A Reader*, Second Edition (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press), 2000.

Stevenson, Leslie and Haberman, David L. *Twelve Theories of Human Nature*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition. (Oxford University Press.) 2009.

Hacker, Diane, *A Pocket Style Manual (Sixth Edition, spiral bound)*

**COURSE ORIENTATION:**

This course is a major professional endeavor, like taking a job with important responsibilities at an international business or preparing to play on a world-class sports team. There is no such thing as “going through the motions.” Philosophy is notoriously difficult to read and understand. Your brain will hurt. You will wonder why you enrolled. Don't worry. That's normal. These are mental growing pains. They will pass and you'll be the better for it. Students of past generations have spent their lifetimes on understanding these thinkers. Their ideas have the power to change your life for the better forever.

Therefore, we will need to prepare mentally to meet the challenges of this material. The task at hand will require grueling training, intense concentration, a willingness to struggle through disappointment, confusion and setbacks, a refusal to quit or be satisfied with anything less than your best effort. Our task requires excellence from all of us!

**LEARNING COMMUNITY GUIDELINES:**

For this class to work, we all must participate fully. I will make every effort to maintain a respectful, honest atmosphere where everyone has equal opportunity and feels safe enough to share their thoughts openly. Your job is to do the work, say what you really think and be open to new ideas, even if they make you uncomfortable. The whole group will suffer if any one of us shows up in body but not in spirit.

This is a large class and our progress will quickly become chaotic unless the following points are respected. These are essential to your learning, and your grade:

- Plan on 5 hours of homework a week: As discussed in the HNU Policies at the end of this syllabus, you can expect 2 hours of work outside of class for each hour of class, or a total of 5 hours of outside work each week for this class. I suggest you block out time in your calendar and make arrangements so your study time is inviolate.
- Print, read and bring copies of the readings: Please print, read and bring all the readings posted on Blackboard. We have too many students for me to provide copies in class.
- Know this syllabus – and expect change: Our work is dictated by the needs of the class discussion, not preset plans. Be aware: we may vary the reading schedule if necessary.
- No late arrivals: Your learning, and grade, will suffer unless you arrive on time and participate fully to the end of the entire class. No class will be dismissed early.
- Attendance required: You are expected to attend every class. If you miss more than 20 percent of the class time, or six classes, you may fail, per HNU policies. I reserve the right to take roll and note absences.

- No excused absences: A missed class is missed learning. There are no excused absences. If you have an emergency and must miss a class, you can make it up by doing three things: 1) Notify me by email or cell phone in advance of the class. 2) Submit documentation of the emergency. 3) Write a 3-page informal paper that reviews the material covered in the reading and the class discussion by talking to your class members and submitting your paper within two weeks of the missed class. I will not remind you about this. If you do not make up the class on your own initiative within two weeks, it will count as one of your six absences toward failure.
- Ongoing emergencies: Students with ongoing emergencies that require repeated absences should discuss their situation with HNU counseling services and the Student Success Center to evaluate and make a realistic plan for continuing their studies.
- No TurnItIn and no printed copy in class = no paper: Every word you write, except for informal quick writes in class, must go through TurnItIn. Hence, it is your responsibility to turn all written assignments to TurnItIn before the electronic cut-off deadline. (DETAILS TO BE ANNOUNCED.) It is also essential that you print out your paper in proper academic style, staple it and submit it at the beginning of the class when it is due. In other words, to meet the paper's deadline and receive credit, you must 1) submit it to TurnItIn on time **and** 2) bring a printed copy to hand in at class.
- No late submissions: No late papers are accepted. In an emergency, you may submit a paper late for half-credit. Papers will be returned to you unread if they do not meet academic standards or have not been properly submitted to TurnItIn and handed in as a printed copy by their deadlines. I do not accept any papers by email.
- Maintain your Writing Folder: As part of your attendance and participation, you will turn in Writing Folder with all your writing periodically for me to review. Always bring your Folder with all your writing to our conferences.
- No extra credit: There will be no extra credit and no make-ups for missed assignments.
- Resolve your technology problems with the helpdesk as soon as possible: If you have technical problems of any kind, please resolve them as soon as possible by notifying the helpdesk at [helpdesk@hnu.edu](mailto:helpdesk@hnu.edu), or by visiting their offices on the third floor of Heafey across from the computer lab. Your computer problems are your responsibility to resolve at the beginning of the semester.
- Two standards for papers: You can do what you want with your informal papers, as long as you make an honest effort and write legibly so I can read them. I will not grade them or judge them on grammar, spelling, form or content. Your formal papers are different. No formal paper – your debate papers and final papers -- will be accepted that does not meet academic standards as outlined in the Guidelines to an Acceptable Paper posted on Blackboard.
- No side conversations or disruptions: You may think no one notices, but if you talk to your neighbor, the entire class hears low-level static and it disrespects the person speaking. Just as we give you our undivided attention when you speak in class, you are expected to do the same when others speak. Otherwise, I will ask you to stop or leave.
- No eating in class. Please eat snacks or meals before you come to class or during our break. It's hard to think and talk during a serious discussion our stomachs are busy.
- Seek help for special problems: If you have problems during the semester with your study habits, writing, English grammar, personal emergencies, disabilities, or academic format

requirements (like APA style), please consult with the appropriate campus services and let me know.

- No special deals: If you think you've made any arrangements with me or received special permission from me to deviate from any of these policies, please get it in writing from me. If it's not in writing, it doesn't count, no matter what I say before or after class.
- Plagiarism rules are strictly enforced: Plagiarism includes
  - quoting someone else's work without proper citation,
  - paraphrasing ideas from other sources without citation,
  - "cutting and pasting" from the Internet without exact quote marks, even with citation,
  - copying ideas from other sources without paraphrasing them in your own words, even with proper citation,
  - using a "model" of a similar paper on the Internet,
  - buying a paper online or "borrowing" someone else's paper
  - asking someone for "help" to do your thinking for you, or to "check my English" by rewriting your paper and
  - anything else that is not your original work, including
  - "cutting and pasting" from your previous papers and think I won't notice.
- Plagiarism will be reported to the administration as academic dishonesty, subject to academic sanction and the grade of F in this course. It is your responsibility to know what plagiarism is and isn't by reading carefully the relevant sections in *A Pocket Style Guide* by Diane Hacker on reserve in the library.

- **Practice Safe Academics: 1) Do your own work 2) Quote accurately 3) Paraphrase properly in your own words 4) and always always always provide citations to the sources using an acceptable academic style like APA, MLA or Chicago for Endnotes or Footnotes.**

- HNU Policies rule: Please consult and know the HNU policies at the end of this syllabus.

### **METHODS OF EVALUATION AND CLASS REQUIREMENTS:**

This is a "W" class, so writing will be a big part of your learning experience. The goal is for you to become comfortable with writing through the process of writing, summarizing and revising. Some of your writing will be in short bursts of spontaneous "quick writing" at the beginning of class or during free writing periods in class. In other cases, you will write formal papers in preparation for the class debates and as a final paper at the end of the semester. All formal writing is public. Expect to share your formal papers with the class.

1. **Quick writing starters:** At the start of some classes, you will have 5 to 10 minutes to respond in a short essay form to a question or prompt based on the reading or previous class. These are informal and quickly written. 10 "quick writes" x 2 points each = 20 points.
2. **Self-reflection Paper:** At the beginning of the course, you will write a formal 3-pg self-reflection paper. No revisions. 5 points.
3. **Debates and debate papers:** The heart of the class will be **three debates** that you will participate in, either as a debater on a team or a listener. Everyone will study the issue under debate and choose **two of the debates for writing a formal 3-page debate paper** presenting

your position and arguing it with reasons, evidence and examples. Your grade will depend on your paper and performance in the debate. If you have tried your best on your debate paper, and you ask, I may agree that you revise it, submit it by the revision deadline and **receive the higher of the two grades**. If your effort is clearly inadequate on the first paper, no revision. 2 x 10 points = 20 points.

**4. Philosophic Autobiography Papers:** As a summation of your own experience and reading, you will write a formal 5-page Philosophic Autobiography that will relate the course themes to your experiences in life. This paper should 1) examine your own experience in life, including your experience of other people or events, 2) to illustrate the ideas and readings discussed in the class and, 3) present changes you may have undergone during this examination and avenues for further exploration. This self-reflection paper is not a thesis paper, does not need an argument, but it needs to be a thoughtful, serious attempt to grapple with the meaning of the course material. It must have specific examples and specific references to the texts we have read, with proper academic citation. A successful self-reflection will balance the voice of the quickwrite with the rigor of a formal argument paper. Also, like the Debate Papers, you have the option of revising it and receiving the higher of the two grades.

**5. Self-Assessment of class participation:** Three times during the semester, you will write and submit to me an assessment of your learning, participation and attendance by filling out a form you can download from Blackboard. Each self-assessment will cover five classes for 10 points each. You will propose a grade for your attendance and participation based on a scale of 0 to 10. I will make the final decision. 30 points.

**6. Final class:** Your presentation of your philosophic autobiography and your Writing Folder takes the place of your final exam. This final class is a free discussion for “internalization and appropriation,” a reflection on what you have taken to heart from the course, what you are still pondering and what you have rejected. This last class is scheduled for **Friday, Dec. 12 from 1 to 4 pm**. You should plan now to make sure you will attend. Attendance and participation counts double the normal class. If you miss the class, your grade will drop by 10 percent. 10 points.

**7. Writing Folder:** You must keep all your writing in a Writing Folder and select your best pieces at the end of the semester. These should be simple plastic folders with pockets with your syllabus. I will have samples to show you.

**8. Student Conferences:** As part of your attendance and participation, I will have individual conferences for 15 to 20 minutes with all students on each of the papers they have written. All conferences and student meetings are in the Brennan Lounge. I do not use the classroom or any office for meetings.

### **GRADING SYSTEM SUMMARY:**

- ▶ 10 “quick writes” x 2pts = 20 percent
  - ▶ Formal 3-pg self-reflection paper 1 x 5 pts = 5 percent.
  - ▶ 2 Debate papers and debate performance: 2 x 10 pts = 20 percent
  - ▶ Final Philosophic Autobiography Paper: 15 percent
  - ▶ 3 self-Assessments of class attendance and participation: 3 x 10 pts = 30 percent
  - ▶ Writing Folder and Final Paper presentation at the Final Class: 10 percent
- TOTAL: 100 percent.

**Course documents, assignments and this syllabus  
are posted on Blackboard: <http://blackboard.hnu.edu>.  
Look there for updates and revisions.**

## CLASS SCHEDULE

### Theme: Human Person as Questioning Seeker

#### Week 1

Wed., Aug. 27: Intro to Course, Syllabus; What is Philosophy?

READING DUE: Course Syllabus

ALSO DUE: Student Information Sheets.

#### Week 2.

Mon. Sept. 1 *NO CLASS: Labor Day.*

Wed, Sept. 3 What is life's "invitation to philosophy"? What role do questions play in your life?

Class discussion.

READING DUE: 1) Hacker on Avoiding Plagiarism. 2) Standards for Academic Papers,

3) Points for Successful Argument Papers. (Blackboard = BB)

#### Week 3

Mon. Sept. 8: How to read classic texts.

PAPER #1 DUE: Formal 3-pg self-reflection paper on life questions

TurnItIn deadline: Sunday midnight:

Printed originality report deadline: Beginning of class.

READING DUE: How to Read Classic Texts, handout, (BB)

READING DUE and IN-CLASS READING: Plato's *Apology* pg. 7 to 9 ("I have gained..." to "...extreme poverty.")

### Theme: Human Experience of Suffering and Death

Wed. Sept. 10: Why do humans suffer? Does it have meaning – or is it meaningless pain?

READING DUE: Albom, *Tuesdays with Morrie*, pg. 1- 61.

*NB: (Last day to drop with 100 % refund)*

#### Week 4

Mon. Sept. 15. Is it rational to fear death? Socrates' argument and death.

READING DUE and IN-CLASS READING: Plato's *Apology*, his death sentence on pgs. 23-26. (BB)

Wed. Sept. 17: How does our attitude influence our experience of death?

READING DUE Albom, *Tuesdays with Morrie*, pg. 62-121.

Week 5.

Mon. Sept. 22: Debate Workshop 1: How to take a position and argue it through reasoning with logic and evidence;

READING DUE Albom, *Tuesdays with Morrie*, pg. 121 -199.

DUE: Watch *The Great Debaters* on Netflix or Amazon.

**Pick Debate Topic 1.**

Wed. Sept. 24: Debate Workshop 2: Preparation with class notes, arguments, evidence.

DUE: Bring notes and ideas for arguments pro and con, reasons and evidence for both sides of Debate Topic 1.

READING DUE: Debate Guidelines (BB)

Week 6.

Mon. Sept. 29: DEBATE 1

PAPER #2 DUE: Debate Paper 1.

TurnItIn deadline: Sunday midnight.

Printed originality report deadline: Beginning of class.

DUE: Self-assessment of attendance and participation for Weeks 1-5.

TurnItIn deadline: Sunday midnight.

Printed originality report deadline: Beginning of class.

DUE: Turn in Writing Folder for first review.

Bring Debate Guidelines (BB)

Schedule conferences on your Debate Paper 1

**Theme: Human Person and Ultimate Reality**

Wed., Oct. 1: What is really real? Plato's Cave Analogy

READING DUE: Plato's Republic (cave analogy), pg. 35-41 (stop at \*\*\*) (BB)

Week 7

Mon Oct. 6: Cave analogy and ultimate reality (continued)

DUE: Watch *The Matrix* (part I) on Amazon or Netflix streaming

DUE: Optional revision of Debate 1 paper.

TurnItIn deadline: Sunday midnight.

Printed originality report deadline: Beginning of class.

Wed. Oct. 8: Socrates' idea of ultimate reality

READING DUE: Plato's *Phaedo*, pg. 498-501 on Socrates death. (BB)

**Theme: Human Person and the Soul**

Week 8.

Mon Oct. 13: What is the human soul? Relation to body? Plato's tripartite soul.

READING: Plato's Republic (on the Soul), pgs. 44 pg. 55 ("It follows, my friend..." to end. (BB)

Wed Oct. 15: Aristotle on the Soul

READING DUE: Aristotle excerpts TBA "On the Soul" and "Metaphysics" (BB)

**Pick Debate 2 topic for Debate Paper 2.**

Week 9.

Mon., Oct. 20: Debate 2 Workshop.

DUE: Bring notes and ideas for arguments pro and con, reasons and evidence for both sides of Debate Topic 2.

Wed., Oct. 22. **DEBATE 2**

PAPER DUE: Debate 2 paper.

TurnItIn deadline: Tuesday midnight.

Printed originality report deadline: Beginning of class.

WRITING FOLDER DUE: Turn in Writing Folder for second review.

Schedule conferences on your Debate Paper 2

**Theme: Human Person, Good and Evil**

Week 10

Mon., Oct. 27: Are humans good or evil or both?

READING DUE: Immanuel Kant, pp. 127-138, especially pp. 130-132. (BB)

Wed., Oct. 29: Good and evil (continued).

READING DUE: Confucian debate over good and evil, pgs. 22-33 (BB)

(START READING ON YOUR OWN: Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning, pgs. ix – 30)

Week 11

Mon., Nov. 3: Good and Evil (continued).

READING DUE: Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, Book II. (BB)

DUE: Self-assessment 2 for attendance and participation for Weeks 6-10.

TurnItIn deadline: Sunday midnight.

Printed originality report deadline: Beginning of class.

PAPER DUE: Optional revision of Debate 2 paper

TurnItIn deadline: Sunday midnight.

Printed originality report deadline: Beginning of class.

(READING ON YOUR OWN: Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning, pgs. 31-60)



**Theme: Human Person, Happiness and Meaning**

Wed., Nov. 5: Is happiness possible in this life? How can we find it?

READING DUE: Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics*, (excerpts TBA) (BB)

Week 12.

Mon., Nov. 10: Aristotle and virtue ethics (continued)

Class discussion

**Pick Debate Topic 3.**

Wed., Nov. 12: Class Workshop: Debate Preparation

DUE: Bring notes and ideas for arguments pro and con, reasons and evidence for both sides of Debate Topic 3.

Week 13.

Mon., Nov. 17: **DEBATE 3**

PAPER DUE: Debate paper 3

TurnItIn deadline: Sunday midnight.

Printed originality report deadline: Beginning of class.

(READING ON YOUR OWN: Frankl, Finish Part I, through pg.93)

Schedule conferences on your Debate Paper 3

Wed. Nov. 19: Where is meaning in the midst of catastrophe?

READING DUE: Finish Frankl, pgs.95-122 and be prepared to discuss entire book.

**Theme: Human Person and Modernity**

Week 14.

Mon., Nov. 24: Frankl Meaning and catastrophe (continued)

PAPER DUE: Optional revision of Debate 3 paper.

TurnItIn deadline: Sunday midnight.

Printed originality report deadline: Beginning of class.

Wed., Nov. 26: Optional Writing Workshop on your philosophic autobiography

**HAPPY THANKSGIVING!**

Week 15.

Mon., Dec. 1: Modern interpretations

READING DUE: *Twelve Theories*, Ch. 9: "Sartre: Radical Freedom," 181-200.

PAPER DUE: Philosophic autobiography.

TurnItIn deadline: Tuesday midnight.

Printed originality report deadline: Beginning of class.

WRITING FOLDER DUE: Turn in Writing Folder for third review.

Schedule student conferences on philosophic autobiography

Wed. Dec. 3: Sartre and Existentialism (continued):  
Class discussion

Final Class:

**Friday, December 12, 1 to 4 pm.** Presentation of Final Papers and Folders

DUE: Self-assessment 3 for attendance and participation for Weeks 11-15.

PAPER DUE: Optional revised philosophic autobiography.

TurnItIn deadline: Thursday midnight.

Printed originality report deadline: Beginning of class.

WRITING FOLDER DUE: For sharing, discussion and distribution in class.

**ENJOY YOUR HOLIDAY VACATION!**

## Syllabus Addendum

### **Definition of Grades:**

“A” – Demonstrated exceptional effort in understanding and advancing the class discussion, shown imagination and insight in generating philosophic ideas and in the final seminar paper.

“B” – Good performance in class discussion, participation and in writing the seminar paper.

“C” – Present in body but less so in mind or spirit. Adequate work. Fulfilled basic requirements.

“D” – Inadequate effort in all areas of understanding the ideas, participating in class discussions, writing the final seminar paper and meeting class requirements.

“F” – Unacceptable work; failure in basic class requirements.

**HNU Attendance Requirement:** The HNU Catalogue states that students who have excessive absences may receive a grade of F. Excessive absences occur when more than one-fifth of the scheduled class hours are missed. The instructor reserves the right to assign a grade of F to any student who misses more than 20% of class time.

**HNU Credit Hour Policy:** It is HNU policy that to receive academic credit for a course, the student is expected to do a minimum of two hours of work outside of class for every hour of direct instruction from the instructor. The amount and kind of work assigned and activities engaged in should support the stated learning outcomes/course objectives outlined above on the syllabus.

**HNU Academic honesty policy prohibiting plagiarism:** The University considers honesty vital to its academic life. Therefore, it requires that students learn and abide by the standards of honesty expected in an academic community. See the University catalog for further clarification on this point. In general, academic honesty requires that students: (1) submit work that is clearly and unmistakably their own; (2) properly represent information and give adequate acknowledgment to all sources that were used in the preparation of an assignment; (3) neither seek, accept, nor provide any assistance on tests, quizzes, and/or assignments unless explicitly permitted to do so by the instructor. Since cheating undermines the learning process, the instructor reserves the right to assign a grade of *F* to any student who represents the work or ideas of another person as his/her own.

**Pathways to Academic Success (DSS):** Reasonable and appropriate accommodations for individuals with qualifying disabilities are extended through Pathways to Academic Success (Disability Support Services). Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the Coordinator of Pathways to Academic Success (DSS) at 510-436-1394 or [dss@hnu.edu](mailto:dss@hnu.edu) to set-up a confidential appointment to discuss accommodation guidelines and available services. You should also contact your instructor—and provide copies of your contract or accommodation letters—as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made. All discussions will remain confidential.

**Use of HNU Email for Communication:** The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (known as FERPA) require careful protection of a student's academic record. This record includes materials and communications regarding grades, degree planning, performance, assessment, and most other matters documented or discussed between a student and faculty member. One method we use to ensure that the student--and only the student--is reading email correspondence from HNU faculty, staff, or administrators is to require the student to use her/his password-protected HNU email account when communicating regarding school-related matters. For similar reasons, we also require that faculty use their password- protect HNU email accounts when communicating with students or with other HNU personnel regarding student academic matters.

### **Note the following Academic Calendar dates:**

Last date to add: Wed., Sept. 10, 2014

Last date to drop: Wed., Sept. 10, 2014 (100% Refund); Wed., Sept. 17, 2014 (50% Refund)

Last date to withdraw: Wed., Nov. 12, 2014

Last day to file for incomplete: Mon. Dec. 8, 2014