



The Good Life

Happiness, Meaning and Ethics in a Complex World

Fall 2019 - TR 9:00-10:20am - ACE 239

Primary instructor: Professor Nicolas Delon

Contact: ndelon@ncf.edu

Office hours options:

- book a slot here: ndelon.youcanbook.me/
- or email to make appointment
- open door, Thurs. 1-3pm, ACE 303
- I also often have lunch at Metz and Four Winds—come and chat!

Partner instructor: Caitlyn Sanderson

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Peer leader: Carter Delegal

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Office hours: Thursday 10:30-11:30am; Friday 1-2pm. Library coffee bar.

This class is part of the New College First Year Seminar (FYS) program created for new students. Each seminar course will introduce students to an engaging topic of inquiry and to strategies for success in the unique academic environment of New College. A three-person teaching team will facilitate teamwork and engage the class in meaningful discussions to foster community, cultivate resilience and personal agency, and advance understanding of how New College works. Each course is designed to create a supportive learning environment in and out of the classroom that blends academic content and skills with essential knowledge and resources to facilitate a seamless transition to the New College experience. Each class is limited to a maximum of 16 first year students, including transfer students.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

What makes life good? What is the good life? Everyone wants, it seems, to live a good life, but we all have many different views of what that means. We will explore the various dimensions of the good life—happiness (including pleasant experiences), meaning and purpose, and virtue, morality and moral progress. A valuable, worthwhile, meaningful life has a subjective, psychological component but also involves what one does and accomplishes. And it seems we have reasons to care about both dimensions. This seminar draws from philosophy and the psychology of happiness and well-being and blends theory and practice to offer an introduction to great philosophical questions, critical thinking, and connection-making between timeless questions and the contemporary world: e.g. how to live a meaningful life in the age of climate change and automation? Will making this world better and helping others make me happy? Do I need money to be happy? Is success a matter of luck? How can college make me a better person? Is Marco Rubio’s complaint that ‘We need more welders; less philosophers’ evidence that we need more philosophy? Together we’ll think of, and try out, ways of making our own and others’ lives better. Readings will include classics and recent work, from a variety of areas and traditions, in philosophy, literature, film and TV shows, pop culture, and science. Activities will include small group discussions, journaling, exercises in and outside the classroom, and training the basic skills of a good life—nurturing social connections, rewiring one’s mind through the cultivation of healthy habits (eat, sleep, exercise).

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Cultivate Community Connections and a Sense of Belonging at New College.

As a result of this class, students will...

- a) foster a productive and constructive team climate through positive, respectful collaborative behaviors.
- b) establish connections with peers and professionals at New College.

2. Foster Resilience and Growth Mindset.

- a) develop a sense of self as a learner and member of the New College community.
- b) make connections across learning experiences in and out of the classroom.
- c) demonstrate effective time management strategies

3. Facilitate Navigation of the New College Program and the Liberal Arts Educational Experience

- a) understand and navigate the structures and procedures of the New College academic program.
- b) explore and understand the opportunities of the liberal arts educational experience and its relevance to their lives at New College and beyond.

4. Foster active and critical reading of academic texts. *Students will...*

- a) know and demonstrate strategies to be used before, during, and after reading academic texts.
- b) engage with academic texts as an active and critical reader.

These four objectives are mutually reinforcing and the FYS seeks to integrate them as it covers specific academic content. While doing so, students will be introduced to fundamental philosophical questions and work personally and collectively on **concrete ways of pursuing a good life at New College and beyond.**

REQUIRED READINGS AND RESOURCES

- **Daniel Haybron, *Happiness: A Very Short Introduction*** (Oxford University Press). Copies are available at the campus bookstore. It’s about 120 pages and very accessible. We will not cover Haybron’s book in detail in class, but I will reference it regularly. Ideally, you should have finished it by Week 4.
- **Journal:** a notebook—preferably a sketchbook with thick, unlined pages rather than spiral-bound notebook, but it’s really up to you as long as it’s in a format that makes its pages easy to scan. And pens of different colors. See Annex 1.

Assignments Overview

Please refer to the course schedule for deadlines. You are expected to complete assignments unless they are marked as optional. Most of the assignments should be submitted to Canvas. Don't wait until the last minute to submit in case you face technical issues, and always save and back up your drafts. Don't write in Canvas first; draft, save, and back up on your own device and ideally cloud-based storage, then copy to Canvas.

All the materials assigned in the course schedule must be read before class. You must be prepared to participate in class discussions and bring notes with you. *Read my recommendations in Annex 1.*

Your journal will make up an important part of your work throughout the semester. While neither of us will have direct access to your journal, you will have to scan and upload specific pages during the semester (so it's best to keep a separate section for private thoughts).

For reading and writing purposes, Jim Pryor (NYU) offers valuable guidance on his website. Please use them.

- Philosophical terms and methods (<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/vocab/index.html>)
- Reading philosophy (<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>)
- Writing a philosophy paper (<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>)

COURSE EVALUATION

- Attendance and participation
- Weekly commentary
- Journaling
- **Soft skill assignments (log and reflections) (complete all or nearly all of them)**
- Group Project (contribution to the group + your final write-up of the project)
- Midterm essay
- Final Reflections Assignment (based on journal)

Daily routine: In addition to the assignments listed in the course schedule (and further detailed in Canvas), you are expected *for your own sake* to strive to complete and the daily routine detailed in Annex 1. Use your journal.

Fun fact: I'm bad at routines and consistency

Journaling: Many of your reflections and self-rating assignments will be made in the journal. Keep track of your daily routine in a separate section of your journal. See Annex 1 for instructions.

Fun fact: I will also be journaling and sharing some of my entries with you!

Weekly commentary: For all readings, students will post 2-4 questions in Canvas the day before class. One student will summarize the main take-aways on class day and one student will raise a selection from the questions raised by their classmates. Graded as Complete/Incomplete. Satisfactory evaluation requires completing at least 75% of the commentaries.

Midterm essay: 1,000-word philosophical essay on a topic of your choice after consulting with me. A first draft will be due Week 5. Each student will peer-review an anonymous classmates' outline. Each essay must include: a thesis, a roadmap, sections, arguments for the thesis and at least one objection to it (and a reply).

Collaborative project: Four groups of 3-4 students will work from Weeks 8-14 on an aspect of the good life and present their work together at the end of term (brief oral presentation and poster). Each student will also submit an individual report on their contribution to the group work.

Fun fact: I used to hate working in groups; I'm glad I was forced to do it.

Class Policies

MEETING WITH US

Each of you will be expected to meet one-on-one with Carter and with me at least once during the semester. Please consult Annex 1 for more details and a note on courtesy.

COURSE DEADLINES

Out of fairness to other students and out of concern for the teaching team's schedule, plan ahead and advise early if you anticipate that you will be unable to complete an assignment in time. Extensions will only be granted in exceptional circumstances **and** if requested with a minimum of a week's notice. As a rule, do not count on extensions as they will only be granted on a case-by-case basis. Do not assume I have received your assignment until you receive email confirmation or it appears as submitted in Canvas. Technical issues will not be accepted as excuses (again, plan ahead).

Fun fact: I've missed a number of deadlines. I've often wished I had not.

COURSE ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Attendance is mandatory. Missing more than three classes without permission will normally result in an UNSAT and any unjustified absence will affect your evaluation. I will not circulate an attendance sheet but I will keep track of absences. Don't mistake the time it takes me to remember names for the (little) time it takes me to remember faces. Please email the teaching team **before missing class whenever possible (if not ASAP after class)**. You are solely responsible for catching up with missed materials and pertinent information. Ask your classmates for notes.

Participation: The teaching team will assess your demonstrated capacity to engage with arguments, verify assertions, research facts, unpack implicit assumptions, critically examine your positions, and work with the class with mutual respect, concern and dedication. Missing classes mechanically affects your participation, and therefore your evaluation. That said, there may always be good reasons to miss a class, in which case your performance will not be negatively affected. It's understandable that some of you are shyer than others, and less willing to speak their mind in class. You should not. There is no such thing as a silly question (unless it's answered in the syllabus), a view that is not worth sharing simply because it's not popular, or an authorized point of view that students should take. Please feel welcome to express yourself as long as you do so respectfully, in good faith, and following course policies and etiquette.

LAPTOPS

No, thank you. I'll say a few words about this in class, but unless you have a relevant accommodation for note taking, or I have asked you to bring it to class for an activity, please refrain from using your laptop in class. Smartphones must be kept on silent mode in your bag, unless again, otherwise indicated. That said, you will be expected to have access to a computer for the completion of assignments and some group activities (use the library's computers or their loaner laptops if needed). Check your college email regularly for announcements.

Campus Policies and Resources

Student Accessibility

In order to ensure an inclusive classroom environment, any encountered or foreseen barriers should be discussed with me immediately. Adjustments or solutions may be agreed upon that do not compromise the objectives of the course.

If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, you are also welcome to initiate this conversation with the office of Student Disability Services (SDS). SDS works with students with disabilities and faculty members to identify reasonable accommodations. Please visit their website for additional information: <https://www.ncf.edu/student-disability-services/>. You may also contact Student Disability in-person (HCL3), via phone at 941-487-4496 OR via email at disabilityservices@ncf.edu. If you have already been approved for accommodations through SDS, please meet with me as soon as possible.

Title IX

New College of Florida is committed to equal access to education pursuant to Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972. The law protects all individuals on our campus from gender-based discrimination or exclusion or instances of sexual misconduct. All full-time faculty, full-time staff, and resident advisors are Responsible Employees required to report any known instances of sexual misconduct or gender discrimination to the Title IX Coordinator. Please contact our Title IX coordinator (titleix@ncf.edu) or see the website (<https://www.ncf.edu/campus-life/title-ix/>) for more information.

Equity, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity

New College's commitment to academic excellence can only be realized in a learning environment that is inclusive, characterized by openness to diverse perspectives, and marked by mutual respect. Anything short of this aspiration is inconsistent with our commitment. Equal access, and the opportunity to participate fully in all of our programs and facilities, without regard to race, color, creed, religion, political ideology, national origin, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation, is essential to that commitment and will be the standard to which we expect all members of our learning community to adhere.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is essential to maintaining a vibrant, healthy, and engaging learning environment for which we all must take responsibility. The New College faculty considers academic dishonesty to be a serious violation of community standards. Students are expected to refrain from acts of academic dishonesty, which may include:

1. cheating and/or plagiarism (such as: presenting the intellectual work of others as one's own; failing to cite sources; improper paraphrasing via failing to use own words even if a citation is given; partial, incomplete, or inaccurate citation of work of others);
2. unauthorized multiple submissions (submission of the same work for different academic activities, without the approval of the instructor);
3. false citation (false citation of a source or knowingly attributing work to a source from which the referenced material was not obtained);
4. falsifying data (fabricating or altering data to deliberately mislead; for example, changing data to get better experiment results is academically fraudulent);
5. falsifying information, signatures, or initials on official and academic forms.

If you are in doubt about what practices are permissible in an examination, you should consult me prior to sitting for the exam. If you lack understanding of how, in a paper or other presentation, to distinguish your thoughts from those of others, the faculty can refer you to standard guidelines and discuss specific questions.

Course Schedule

How to read this schedule?

Assignment deadlines and campus events to be filled in soon. Schedule subject to change. Check email/Canvas regularly for updates. The second column below includes ‘**Core Success Topics**’ as well as assignments and provisional class activities. The fourth column lists materials to be discussed (hence, read) by the date indicated. Readings are available in Canvas or linked to. The items in **bold dark red print** are common to all first-year seminars. The right-hand column lists important dates and events across the NCF community (in **red** are important campus deadlines, in **purple** events and holidays, in **green** course deadlines). It will also include assignment deadlines. The items in **bold orange** print will take place outside of class at class time unless otherwise indicated. Some of these activities can be completed at your discretion within the assigned window.

DATE	Activities	Topics	Readings	Important Dates Community Events
WEEK 1 8/26 – 8/30	Introductions What is this class about? What are you doing here?	Welcome to college! Welcome to philosophy!	Haybron, ch. 1-2, if you already own a copy. THURS: Descartes, <i>Discourse</i> , parts 1-3	
Week 2 9/3 – 6	MON (Labor Day): go out, watch a movie, read a book. Using Canvas for this class (bring/share a laptop, for once)	Eudaimonia	TUES: Price on Plato THURS: Aristotle (Book I, selection from X)	9/2 Labor Day 9/9 Contracts Due; 9/10 Late Contracts (\$)
Week 3 9/9 – 13	TUES: in-class small-group activity on conflicts happiness vs. ethics Professor Delon away this week THURS: NCF Foundation (Sanderson): values identification; mission statement; nonprofits	Happiness and virtue	TUES: Kant <i>Groundwork</i> I (selection) (with Carter)	Contract renegotiation F 9/13 FYS campus-wide scavenger hunt
Week 4 9/16 – 20	Scavenger hunt and research literacy THURS: Self-directed wellness assignment: combine at least two: gratitude, mindfulness, social connection, exercise, sleep). Sleep 7-9 hrs; do <u>not</u> check emails/social media; breakfast; walk, run, museum...; do <u>not</u> work until class time is over. Record impressions in journal and post by Friday	Happiness and virtue, cont'd	TUES: Epicureans (Epicurus, Lucretius) and Stoics (video + Cicero, Epictetus, Seneca) Read by Thursday: Confucianism (Yang), Daoism (Zhang)	Contract renegotiation 9/20 Fin. Aid Drop Grace Period Ends No class 9/19 Post CEO appt by 9/20
No class Thursday				

Week 5 9/23 – 27	Differences activity: Three groups list most important values, pleasures, and pains	Pleasure and reality	Mill (Chapter 2) Nozick, <i>Experience machine</i>	Essay 1 st draft due 9/24
Week 6 9/30 – 10/4	THURS: Writing Resource Center Failing, practicing, making progress	The psychology of the good life	TUES: Theories of well-being (Parfit); The measure of happiness (Haybron 4-5) THURS Bishop Tiberius (11)	
Week 7 10/7 – 11	TUES: Counseling/Wellness Meet with staff; discuss well-being [Stress/Resilience] Getting help/Missteps + Reflection (due after break)	Psych cont'd Meaning	TUES: Psych cont'd Gilbert TED talk Santos Aspen Ideas (to 47') THURS: Schopenhauer ; Nagel; Wolf (#1)	Time managt assign due ESSAY DUE
FALL BREAK: 10/14 – 10/18				
Week 8 10/21 – 25	AOC/Degree Requirements Sanderson on NCF system Helping friends: groups imagine distress situation and map out ways they can help and obstacles + discussion on tensions between partiality and impartiality	Helping	TUES: Tiberius (#2) Henrietta's tumor THURS: Wolf (#2) Singer	Kindness assignment
Week 9 10/28 – 11/1	[Liberal Arts/NCF/Career] Carter on his experience Sanderson on career planning Counsel a classmate	Luck and success	TUES: Frank - The job you love - Why luck matters THURS: on surfing: Avery , Rinaldi , James	Career Exploration assign due 11/1 Group projects
Week 10 11/4 – 8	[Stress/Time Management] Revisit/reflections Research literacy (critical thinking, responding/resistance to facts, confirmation bias) / [writing/group]	Disability	Campbell & Stramondo Kittay	ISP planning Tues: potluck
Week 11 11/11 – 15	Activity: formulate a valid argument for/against [__] + Reflection & peer & self-ratings	Selves	Parfit, Strawson , Paul TUES - guest: Dr. Lopez (Religion) on Buddhism and happiness	M, 11/11: Veteran's Day

Week 12 11/18 – 22	[Time Management] Final Reflection and Self-Rating Outside activity Document animals on campus and assess well-being	Death	Nagel (see Meaning above) Williams Rini Think about death How to grow old Watch: The Good Place	11/26: Drop/Add Deadline ISP planning
Week 13 11/25 – 27	Using Evaluations & Certifications ISP descriptions	Animals	Fraser Higgins et al. Guest tbc: Dr. Harley (Psychology, ES) on animal minds and well-being	Thanksgiving No class 11/28 Journal reflection, group project, paper
Week 14 12/2 – 4 Make-up class on 12/5 (tbc)	Going home for break Coming back for ISP Final reflections Project presentations	Anthropocene	Scranton , Jamieson & Nadzam	12/2: ISP descriptions, course evals due
EXAM WEEK: 12/9 –12/11				