

The awesome philosophy reading group

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Is life meaningful? What is the meaning of cool? How can I make my life awesome? Why run? Why surf? Is punk rock good? These questions have more in common than you would suspect. This group ISP (max 6 students, possibly more if there is sufficient interest) will work as a reading group of three philosophy books aimed at a rather popular audience and one article. Core themes of the ISP include what makes life meaningful; when it's good to violate social norms and expectations; the relation between meaning, value, and activity; relations between ethics and aesthetics; and that not all philosophers are lame.

We will be reading all three books simultaneously. In addition to short weekly responses that will make up the bulk of the discussion, students will write a final paper (due by the end of the ISP period) consisting of 1) a philosophical account of how to make their and others' life more awesome and/or meaningful; 2) concrete proposals to promote meaning and awesomeness at New College. The students' proposals will be showcased on a dedicated blog.

Readings

Aaron James, *Surfing with Sartre: An Aquatic Inquiry Into a Life of Meaning* (2017)

Jesse Prinz, The Aesthetics of Punk Rock. *Philosophy Compass*, 9 (2014): 583-593. doi: [10.1111/phc3.12145](https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12145)

Nick Riggle, *On Being Awesome: A Unified Theory of How Not to Suck* (2017)

Mark Rowlands, *Running with the Pack: Thoughts from the Road on Meaning and Mortality* (2013)

Assignments

- Discussion posts
 - To be posted on Canvas the night before the scheduled meeting
 - 300-500 words summarising and commenting on the schedule readings

- Response papers
 - 1,000 words (1,500 max): one on Riggle, another on James
 - Double spaced, Times New Roman 12pt, .doc or .docx (same for final paper)

- Final paper
 - 2,000 words (+/- 500): ideally but not necessarily engaging with the three books, from your chosen angle or on a specific questions; the paper will naturally draw on your response papers and discussion posts

- A blog (optional) will compile the best discussion posts after revisions. Posts, responses papers and the final paper are encouraged to reflect on potential applications of the topics to the New College campus and community.

Meeting time to be discussed at first meeting: 75' between 12 - 2pm

Date	Reading	Place	Assignment
Mon 1/7	Riggle, ch. 1-2	ACE 303	
Fri 1/11	Riggle, ch. 3-4	ACE 303	Discussion topics 1-2
Tue 1/15	Riggle, ch. 5-7 + Hi-Phi Nation podcast	Sarasota/Bradenton	Discussion topics 3-4
Thur 1/17			Response paper #1
Fri 1/18	James, pt. 2; <i>New Yorker</i> , 'The perfect wave'	bayfront, river walk or beach	Discussion topic 5
Tue 1/22	James, pt. 3, epilogue	ACE 303	Discussion topic 6
Wed 1/23			Response paper #2
Fri 1/25	Rowlands	tbd	Discussion topic 7
Sat 1/26			
Mon 1/28			Final paper