

**PHIL 003 – Ethics and the Meaning of Life**  
**University of California Riverside, Fall 2006**  
MWF 10:40-11:30am in UV Theater 9  
Discussion Sections on Mondays

**Instructor:** John McAteer  
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**Course Website:** [www.ilearn.ucr.edu](http://www.ilearn.ucr.edu)

**Course Description:** Approaches one of the basic questions of value: How should one live? Covers classical and contemporary discussions of issues such as the human good, human virtue, the role of pleasure and happiness, egoism and altruism, duty, the relativity and objectivity of value, the meaning of life, death, autonomy, integrity, and conscience, *focusing especially on the exploration of Aristotelian and Nietzschean themes in contemporary American cinema.*

**Course Requirements:**

1. *Reading:* Students are expected to read all assigned texts completely, carefully, and on time. NB: there will be about 1000 pages of reading for this course (so an average of 100 pages per week, though balance of reading is more heavily weighted toward the beginning of the quarter). Some of this reading will be quite challenging. If you cannot commit to this amount of reading, please consider taking another course.
2. *Attendance and Participation:* Students are expected to attend and actively participate in all class lectures and discussion sections. NB: attendance will be recorded in discussion sections. Repeated absences will result in failure of the course.
3. *Exams:* In order to pass the course students must complete both the midterm and final exams, each worth 1/3 of the overall course grade. The midterm will be a multiple choice exam focusing on the philosophies of Aristotle and Nietzsche. The final exam will be an essay exam on the Wielenberg text and the film *Groundhog Day* (to be screened in class on Dec 6 and Dec 8). NB: the exams will be difficult and will include material from the readings and movie screenings not covered in lecture.
4. *Paper:* Students must write a 7-8 page term paper, worth 1/3 of the overall course grade. Papers should make use of the material from Booth in an analysis of ONE of the following three movies: (1) *Adaptation* (Jonze, 2002), (2) *Big Fish* (Burton, 2003), or (3) *Deconstructing Harry* (Allen, 1997). Each of these movies has something interesting to contribute to our thinking about the art of living. First briefly (2-3 pages) show how the movie establishes the theme of one's life as a work of art, using specific references to scenes, characters, and dialogue from the film. Then, for the majority of the paper (4-6 pages), use Booth's principles (in whatever way you find relevant) to critically evaluate the film's vision of the moral life. Be sure to defend your own view about issues. Papers must be submitted to the digital dropbox on the course website before midnight on 11/22/06. Late papers will be penalized 1/3 letter grade per 12 hours late. NB: plagiarism will result in failure of the course and referral to the Dean.

**Required Reading:** Booth, Wayne C. *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction*, reprint ed. (UC Press, 1989)  
Irwin, Terrence and Gail Fine. *Aristotle: Selections* (Hackett, 1995)  
Ansell-Pearson, Keith and Duncan Large. *The Nietzsche Reader* (Blackwell, 2006)  
Wielenberg, Erik J. *Value and Virtue in a Godless Universe* (Cambridge, 2005)

**Required Viewing:** *Pulp Fiction* (Tarantino, 1994)  
*Crimes and Misdemeanors* (Allen, 1989)  
*I ♥ Huckabees* (Russell, 2004)  
*Groundhog Day* (Ramis, 1993)

**Further Reading:** Annas, Julia. *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford, 1995)  
Broadie, Sarah. *Ethics with Aristotle* (Oxford, 1991)  
Cottingham, John. *On The Meaning of Life* (Routledge, 2003)  
Danto, Arthur C. *Nietzsche as Philosopher*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Columbia, 2005)  
MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Notre Dame, 1984)  
Klemke, E.D., ed. *The Meaning of Life*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford, 1999)  
Kupfer, Joseph H. *Visions of Virtue in Popular Film* (Westview, 1999)  
Nehemas, Alexander. *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, (Harvard, 1985)  
Nussbaum, Martha C. *Love's Knowledge*, (Oxford, 1990)  
Tudico, Paul J. and Kimberly Ann Blessing. *Movies and the Meaning of Life* (Open Court, 2005)

**Further Viewing:** *Deconstructing Harry* (Allen, 1997)  
*Melinda and Melinda* (Allen, 2004)  
*Match Point* (Allen, 2005)  
*American Splendor* (Berman & Pulcini, 2003)  
*Big Fish* (Burton, 2003)  
*Pan's Labyrinth* (del Toro, 2006)  
*Stranger Than Fiction* (Forster, 2006)  
*Adaptation* (Jonze, 2001)  
*Waking Life* (Linklater, 2001)  
*Lady in the Water* (Shyamalan, 2006)  
*Pulp Fiction* (Tarantino, 1994)  
*Buffy the Vampire Slayer* 6.7: "Once More With Feeling" (Whedon, 2001)

## Course Schedule:

- 9/29 Intro to Course
- 10/2 The Problem of the Meaning of Life (Read Booth, p. 1-48)  
10/4 Why Movies? (Read Booth, p. 49-80)  
10/6 In-class screening: *Pulp Fiction*, part 1 (Read Booth, p. 81-156)
- 10/9 Aristotle on Happiness: *Politics* and *Ethics* (Read p. 347-365, 450-459, and 501-516)  
10/11 Aristotle on Virtue: *Ethics*, continued (Read Aristotle, p. 366-416)  
10/13 In-class screening: *Pulp Fiction*, part 2 (Read Booth, p. 157-200)
- 10/16 Aristotle on Friendship: *Ethics*, concluded (Read Aristotle, p. 417-449)  
10/18 Aristotle on Art: *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* (Read Aristotle, p. 517-557)  
10/20 In-class screening: *Pulp Fiction*, part 3 (Read Booth, p. 201-264)
- 10/23 *Pulp Fiction* and Self Creation (Read Booth, p. 265-292)  
10/25 From Aristotle to Nietzsche: *The Birth of Tragedy* (Read Nietzsche p. 42-87)  
10/27 In-class screening: *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, part 1 (Read Booth, p. 293-324)
- 10/30 Nietzsche's Perspectivism: *The Gay Science* (Read Nietzsche, p. 207-237 and 362-384)  
11/1 Nietzsche's Immoralism: *Beyond Good and Evil* (Read Nietzsche, p. 311-361)  
11/3 In-class screening: *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, part 2 (Read Booth, p. 325-374)
- 11/6 Nietzsche's Aestheticism: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Read Nietzsche, p. 243-292)  
11/8 Woody Allen and the Impossibility of Self-Creation  
11/10 No class: Veteran's Day (Observed)
- 11/13 **Midterm Exam**  
11/15 God and the Meaning of Life (Read Wielenberg, p. 1-37)  
11/17 In-class screening: *I ♥ Huckabees*, part 1
- 11/20 God and Morality (Read Wielenberg, p. 38-67)  
11/22 No class: ***Papers due by midnight.***  
11/24 No class: Thanksgiving Break
- 11/27 The Divine Guarantee of Perfect Justice (Read Wielenberg, p. 68-97)  
11/29 Ethical Character in a Godless Universe (Read Wielenberg, p. 98-160)  
11/31 In-class screening: *I ♥ Huckabees*, part 2
- 12/4 Huckabees and Reconciling Atheism with Meaning  
12/6 In-class screening: *Groundhog Day*, part 1  
12/8 In-class screening: *Groundhog Day*, part 2
- 12/11 **Final Exam**