

SEARCH FOR MEANING
Homan (PHI) / Daniels-Sykes (THY)
Tues/Thurs 10:00–11:50 A.M.

SEA 101.MO1 (4 credits)
Spring 2020

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OFFICE HOURS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

DR. CATHERINE HOMAN – PHILOSOPHY

Hours: Mon. & Wed. 1-2, Thurs 9-10, and by appointment

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Telephone: (414) 903-3103

DR. SHAWNEE DANIELS-SYKES--THEOLOGY

Hours: Before and After Class and by Special Appointment

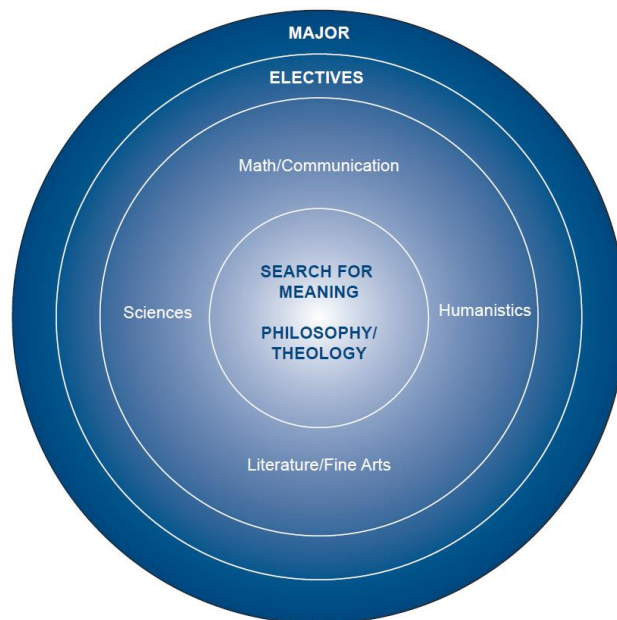
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E-mail: sykess@mtmary.edu.

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THEMES OF THE COURSE

1. What is the Transcendent and what is its significance?
2. What is happiness and its significance for human life?
3. What does it mean to be virtuous?
4. What are the possibilities for human knowledge?
5. What is the relationship of community to the individual's search for meaning?
6. What does the Christian tradition have to offer to the individual's search for meaning?
7. What are the various possibilities for thinking about and responding to suffering, social injustice, and/or death?



PURPOSE

Search for Meaning is required of all undergraduate students and involves reading and discussion of classic and contemporary authors from philosophical and theological viewpoints.

The course revolves around reflection on seven key human concerns such as: possible sources of happiness; viable ways to understand and respond to suffering, social injustice, and death; perspectives on the significance of the transcendent; and exploration of meaning within some of the great spiritual and intellectual traditions including the Christian.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the course, students will be able to

1. Analyze texts from both a philosophical and a theological perspective.
2. Demonstrate the skills and habits of productive and constructive intellectual conversation.
3. Compare and contrast various philosophical and theological points of view before arriving at conclusions, leading to a deeper understanding of one's personal worldview
4. Recognize and navigate ambiguity and the diversity of points of view.
5. Interpret theological and philosophical traditions and methods as ways of making sense of the central themes or questions of the search for meaning.
6. Articulate an understanding of relationship between the Mount Mary Mission and the search for meaning

MOUNT MARY UNIVERSITY MISSION STATEMENT

Mount Mary University, an urban Catholic university for women, sponsored by the School Sisters of Notre Dame, provides an environment for the development of the whole person. The University encourages leadership, integrity, and a deep sense of social justice arising from a sensitivity to moral values and Christian principles.

Mount Mary commits itself to excellence in teaching and learning with an emphasis on thinking critically and creatively. The baccalaureate curriculum integrates the liberal arts with career preparation for women of diverse ages and personal circumstances; the programs at the graduate level provide opportunities for both men and women to enhance their professional excellence.

MOUNT MARY UNIVERSITY VISION STATEMENT

Mount Mary University is recognized as a diverse learning community that works in partnership with local, national and global organizations to educate women to transform the world.

ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

Mount Mary University complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 which stipulates that the University will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations; please see

- Sara Sharpe, Student Success Center, Haggerty Library, Room 124.
- Phone: 414-930-3368

- Fax: 414-930-3700
- Email: sharpes@mtmary.edu

The well-being and success of each student in this course are important to us. We will do our best to ensure that the course presents as few barriers as possible and that students from all backgrounds and perspectives will be served equitably. The diversity that students bring to this class will be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. As a community of learners, we will be respectful and inclusive of the many identities of students in terms of gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, culture, perspective, and other background characteristics. We also encourage students registered in the course to discuss their learning styles and comprehension requirements with us.

THEOLOGY TEXTS

1. Bernandin, Joseph Cardinal. *The Gift of Peace: Personal Reflections* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1997).
2. King, Martin Luther. *The Strength to Love* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Press, 1981).
3. Mitchell, Beverly Eileen. *Plantations and Death Camps: Religion, Ideology, and Human Dignity* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2009).
4. Mitchell, Stephen. *The Book of Job* (New York, New York: Harper Perennial, 1992).
5. Wann, Helen. *The Partner Track: A Novel* (New York, New York: Saint Martin's Press, 2013).
6. Weger, Pauline and Alicia Williamson. *Beautifully Said: Quotes by Remarkable Women and Girls Designed to Make You Think* (New York, New York: Rock Point, 2017).
7. Sacred Scripture text: *The New American Bible*. As applicable and appropriate students may select to use the Quran, the Torah, and another text approved by the professor for theological reflection.
8. You are responsible for all of the additional supplemental materials, articles, and book chapters assigned for class. Please see E-learning for these readings.

PHILOSOPHY TEXTS

1. Descartes, René. *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Donald A. Cress. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 1993.
2. Plato. *Five Dialogues*, trans. G.E.M. Grube., rev. John Cooper. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 2002.
3. Several other texts will be provided as handouts or are available via E-Learning

TEXTS FOR BOTH PHILOSOPHY & THEOLOGY

1. "Joy," Zadie Smith (On E-Learning)

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

GRADING FOR PHILOSOPHY

1. Class Participation	40%
a. In-class work	(85%)
b. Facilitation	(15%)
2. ARRs	15%
3. Text Exegesis	10%
a. Draft Workshops	(20%)
4. Narrative Project	5%
5. Take-home midterm exam	10%
6. Take Home Final Exam	20%

1. Participation

- a. In-class: See "Class Participation" further below.
- b. Facilitator: As part of participation, each student will be responsible for facilitating/leading class discussion. The facilitator should
 - i. introduce that day's material by either giving a summary of the material or reading a quote that she felt was most important in the material,
 - ii. make a connection to a current event or experience and explain that connection,
 - iii. guide the class discussion through at least three philosophical discussion questions. Your ARR (see below) will be a good jumping off point for facilitation, and I am happy to meet with you ahead of time to help you prepare.
 - iv. After the reflection and discussion (10-15 minutes) the student is to take notes for the rest of the class and include all relevant new vocabulary, important philosophical issues and questions, and main threads of the conversation. By the next class period, the student will email me the notes, which I will then make open for the rest of the class. The notes are worth 25 points.

2. ARR (Active Reading Responses)

It is important that you develop the habit of "active" reading. This assignment is designed to help you do that. As you read, highlight significant passages and even include in the margins of the text questions and ideas you have about what you are reading. These texts will be challenging, but will also be rewarding through active reading and discussion. This assignment enables you to prepare better by working through the text ahead of class to determine both what you understand and where you have questions. Thus, the responses are a shared responsibility between the students and me.

Responses must be submitted via eLearning by 8am the day they are due. No late responses will be accepted except in unique circumstances and with prior arrangement. The lowest grade will be dropped from the final total. Specific guidelines are on eLearning.

3. Text Exegesis

An exegesis is basically a careful explanation of an argument. Rather than summarizing what a philosopher argues, you must show why and how the thinker makes a particular argument. You should, in your own words, articulate the main claims, arguments, and issues of the text. The exegesis should not include any criticism or commentary. Here the goal is clarity and precision, rather than comprehensiveness, so you need focus only on a portion of the text rather than the entire thing. More detailed guidelines will be distributed in class.

The exegesis has two parts: a pre-write and a final submission. Participation in the draft, peer-review workshops is mandatory. More information will be given in class.

The exegesis should be 500-700 words and include a correct citation for the text. More specific directions will be given in class.

4. Narrative Project

One of the aims of Search for Meaning is foster a deeper understanding of one's own worldview and to critically and creatively engage ideas and traditions. The personal narrative project enables you to share your own story and journey over the semester in your own voice. The narrative culminates in a creative project due at the end of the semester reflecting your journey.

5. Mid-Term Exam

There is one midterm and one final take-home examination for the course. You will be asked to provide a copy of it to both professors. Each will grade it separately, according to the expectations in his or her own portion of the course.

The midterm exam affords you the opportunity to think creatively and comprehensively about the Theology and Philosophy course materials, as we as to prepare for the final take-home exam that will ask you to draw on texts from both Theology and Philosophy. The paper will be a 500-700 word essay in response to a question your instructors will provide that is based on one of the seven theme questions of the course. The successful exam will present both a careful analysis of course materials as well as a synthesis and evaluation of your own ideas in response to the materials. Because this course is anchored in conversation, you will also give a five-minute presentation to your classmates the day the exam is due. The Midterm Exam is due March 3. More specific guidelines will be given in class.

6. Take-Home Final Exam

The take-home exam is the capstone assignment for the course, which will enable you to draw together the central themes and questions guiding our semester-long inquiry. This is a joint take-home exam that requires critical reflection upon material from both Theology and Philosophy. Two copies of the final must be handed in, one for each professor. Instructions for the final will be distributed 2 weeks before it is due. The exam is due May 12, 2020.

GRADING FOR THEOLOGY:

1. Class attendance and active class participation, including leading theological reflection exercise: 40%
2. Exams (Midterm 10% and Final 20%)
3. Two short essay papers of three to four papers in length (15% each=30%)

If a student misses assignments, including exams, these must be handed in by Friday noon of the week that it is due. After that time, NO assignment or exam can be accepted by the professor. So please plan your coursework appropriately!

Student can miss three classes: excused or unexcused. If a fourth class is missed, the student fails the course. So please plan ahead as you think about how important attendance is in this course.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

What you gain from this course will be largely up to you. Since this is a discussion-based course, participation is its most important aspect. There will be some minimal lecturing in order to give you a background for the material that will involve presenting some salient themes and terms. However, the heart of the learning will take place in discussion with others. Being prepared and engaged in class discussions, therefore, will not only add to your experience but to that of others as well. Through active engagement of the texts and thoughtful discussions with others, this course can be a vehicle for self-reflection and personal growth.

Since we are discussing ideas about which there are a variety of opinions and beliefs, it is very important to be considerate of others in the classroom. Moreover, while active engagement in discussion is encouraged, no one person should “take the floor” for an inordinate period of time. Your instructors will be moderating the discussion and may need to suggest improvements to encourage everyone to express themselves. Furthermore, when giving your opinion, always consider what your reasons are for it and be prepared to offer a reasonable argument. Bringing up ideas not from assigned reading can contribute to the discussion, but you will be evaluated primarily on demonstrating a thoughtful reading of the material assigned. Most importantly, be respectful of those who see things differently. Hopefully, we can create together an open atmosphere where we can all learn from the variety of opinions and beliefs we have as a group.

Please be on time and inform your instructors if you need to leave early (the latter is a disruption of the entire class and puts the departing student at a disadvantage because of what she has missed, and so should be avoided if at all possible). Missing more than 30 minutes of a class period, even for an excusable reason, will be counted as an absence for that day. We do recognize and support students with documented disabilities whose accommodations may include leaving class for short periods. Finally, it is inconsiderate and unacceptable to text-message, surf the Web, sleep, develop a pattern of going in and out of class during non-break class time without accommodations, or do work on assignments for other classes during our Search for Meaning class time. Each of these factors negatively into one’s participation grade,

opportunity for educational and personal advancement and, not least, one's regard for classmates, teacher, and the higher learning process.

Philosophy/Theology Participation Assessment Rubric: 10 points possible each class.

Skill Assessed	2 points: Excelling	1.5 point: Achieving	1 point.: Improving	.5 point Developing	0 points Beginning
PREPARED	I have done the required homework before class and am prepared to share my ideas and learn from others.	I have done the required homework before class and looked it over briefly.	I have done the required homework before class.	I did not do the required homework before class or do not remember it.	I did not do the required homework before class.
ENGAGED	I offer questions, ideas, and examples that relate to the topic.	I offer a few questions, ideas, and examples that are on topic.	When called on, I offer a question, idea, or example on topic.	I do not participate on topic.	I do not participate at all.
CREATIVE CRITICAL THOUGHT	When I state my opinion, I offer support for my idea from the text, experience, or other data. I ask questions in order to understand other's positions.	When I state my opinion I offer support for my idea OR I ask questions in order to understand others positions.	I state my opinions and offer support when asked.	I do not offer support for my opinions.	I do not participate at all.
PRESENT	I am physically and mentally present, on time, focused on the conversation.	I am mostly physically and mentally present, on time, focused on the conversation.	I am often physically and mentally present, on time, focused on the conversation.	I am rarely physically and mentally present, on time, focused on the conversation.	I am not physically present, and on time.
LISTENING	I am actively listening to others in the class as is evidenced by my body language, my questions, and comments.	I am mostly listening to others in the class as is evidenced by my body language, my questions, and comments.	I am sometimes listening to others in the class as is evidenced by my body language, my questions, and comments.	I am rarely listening to others in the class as is evidenced by my body language, my questions, and comments.	I am not paying attention to the class discussion. Ex. I am sleeping, using my phone, or doing other homework.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Because Search for Meaning is a discussion-based class, the majority of the learning and the assessment of that learning happens in class discussion. Class attendance is crucial for each student's learning and for the class to make progress as a whole. Therefore, anyone absent for more than three philosophy classes or three theology classes will receive a failing grade for the course. Anyone absent for more than two philosophy or two theology classes will lose ½ grade for that side of the course. Missed classes result in a 0 for participation for the missed class. (Exceptions can be made for excused absences for 2 classes) In very rare cases, students with exceptional circumstances can make an appeal of this policy by explaining, in writing, why these absences were unavoidable due to emergency circumstances and how the student intends to provide work that will compensate partially for the missed participation. The appeal will be examined by the whole of the theology and philosophy department in a timely fashion and granted or denied within one week of the student's written appeal.

COURSE GRADE

The final course grade is a simple average of the philosophy and theology grades. Thus, an A in Philosophy and a B in Theology would average to an AB for the course. Where a simple average is not calculable, the student receives the higher grade. Thus, an A in Philosophy and an AB in Theology would mean an A for the course. A failure in one section means a failure for the course.

LATE WORK

Assignments must be turned in on time. Late assignments will only be accepted in emergency situations, by prior arrangement with the professor, and will be lowered one letter grade. If a student, for a valid reason, misses a quiz or the handing in of any other graded assignment by its due date, she must contact the instructor within 48 hours of the missed work or no make-up will be given. A maximum of one such make-up exception is permitted.

EXTRA HELP

Come see us as soon as possible for additional help for any part of your learning experience.

STUDENT COURSE EVALUATIONS

During the final two weeks of class, students will be asked (online, via e-learning) to provide feedback on the course and instructors. The importance of this student feedback to the meaning and development of the course cannot be overstressed and it is expected students will submit this evaluation before completing the course.

ACADEMIC HONESTY AND INTEGRITY POLICY

Mount Mary University is an academic community dedicated to the intellectual and social and ethical development of each of its members. As members of this community we all are responsible for maintaining an atmosphere of mutual respect and honesty.

Standards for academic integrity provide a structure for the creation of an academic environment consistent with the values of the School Sisters of Notre Dame and the mission of

the University. In keeping with these goals, all students are expected to strive for integrity, in academic and non-academic pursuits. Acts that involve any attempt to deceive, to present another's ideas as one's own, or to enhance one's grade through dishonest means violate the integrity of both the student and University.

Academic dishonesty in any form has a negative impact on the essential principles of the Mount Mary University Community. Therefore, such acts are treated as a serious breach of trust.

A faculty member has the right and authority to deal with academic dishonesty in his or her classroom; however, a student who commits multiple violations against academic integrity shall be subject to administrative disciplinary action as described in the Academic Honesty and Integrity Policy and Procedures.

Copies of the full Academic Honesty and Integrity Policy and Procedures are available in the Mount Mary University *Undergraduate Bulletin* online.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Note: All work assigned should be completed *before* that class session.

Week One

1/21 Introduction (entire group), followed by separate sessions for Philosophy and Theology

1/23 PHI: bell hooks, "Theory as Liberatory Practice" (eLearning)

Logic and Arguments Handout (eLearning)

Questions: What does hooks think the aim of philosophy is or should be? Does it matter what sort of person engages in philosophy? What way(s) should philosophy be "done"?

Week Two

1/28 THY: Setting the stage: leading theological reflection exercise: review of the syllabus and supplemental materials: highlight the guidelines for two short reflection papers; highlight the theological reflection on current events; review the Key Principles of Catholic Social Teaching; highlight and discuss the seven fundamental questions for the class. What is Theology?

1/30 PHI: Plato, "Euthyphro" in *Five Dialogues*

Logic and Arguments Handout (eLearning)

Questions: What are at least three definitions of "piety" discussed by Socrates and Euthyphro? Why do they discuss piety in the first place? What insights might this conversation have both about big questions, such as the relation between humans and the gods, and about how to ask those questions?

Week Three

2/4 THY: Theological Reflection Exercise, sign up for leading theological reflection exercise; complete in-class assignment on your understanding of God and faith (see the questions in your supplemental materials); Discuss *Strength to Love* by MLKing (see quotes in your supplemental materials); Discuss the *Riddle of Existence* (see e-learning for this book chapter)

2/6 PHI: Plato, "Allegory of the Cave" (eLearning)

Plato, "Apology" in *Five Dialogues*

Questions: What does the cave represent? For Socrates, how do we know what is true? What accusations is Socrates charged with? Why does he think of himself as a "gadfly" in Athens who should be praised rather than punished? What does it mean that the unexamined life isn't worth living?

Week Four

2/11 THY: Theological Reflection Exercise; continue discussion on *Strength to Love* (see quotes in your supplemental materials); *The Riddle of Existence*; Discuss the *Gospel of Matthew* 1: 18-25; 2:1-23 (bring you bibles with you to class)

2/13 PHI: René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 1-17

Exegesis outline due; draft workshop

Questions: What does Descartes think is better explained by philosophy than theology? What method of inquiry does he use, and why? Is it necessarily to go to such lengths to secure knowledge? Why or why not?

Week Five

2/18 THY: Theological Reflection Exercise; View *Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero*, a video documentary on interreligious reflections about 9-11); **First Short Essay Due**

2/20 PHI: Descartes, "Meditation Two," (17-24);
Correspondence with Princess Elisabeth, (eLearning)

Exegesis draft due; draft workshop

Questions: What does Descartes conclude about the nature of his mind and his body? What is Elisabeth's argument against Descartes' conclusion? When you think about what makes you "you", would you come to the same conclusion as Descartes or Elisabeth?

Week Six

2/25 THY: Theological Reflection Exercise; *Hunger and Happiness* by Shannon L. Jung, pp. 15-39 (see e-learning for the text and see supplemental materials for the questions)

2/27 PHI: Descartes, "Meditations Three-Four" (24-42)

Exegesis Due

Questions: Why does it matter for Descartes whether God exists? Is there a relationship between God, truth, and knowledge? How do we know what we know, or don't know?

Week Seven

3/3 THY: Theological Reflection Exercise; *The Gift of Peace* by Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, pp. 3-123).

Midterm Exam Due—bring two copies

3/5 PHI: Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," (eLearning)

Questions: According to Sartre, how are we responsible for our actions? How are we to understand freedom? Is there such a thing as human nature?

Week Eight

3/10 THY: Theological Reflection Exercise, *The Book of Job* by Stephen Mitchell (see supplemental materials for questions)

3/12 PHI: W.E.B. Du Bois, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" (eLearning);
Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman" (eLearning)

Questions: What sorts of experiences does DuBois report having, both as a child and an adult? How should we understand "double consciousness"? Are there other forms of double consciousness than what Du Bois mentions? How are our identities shaped by others?

3/14-3/20 SPRING BREAK

Week Nine

- 3/24 THY: Theological Reflection Exercise, *Job's Daughters...* by Joan Chittister (small group discussion and exercises on various aspects of power)
- 3/26 PHI: Film, *Stranger Than Fiction*

Week Ten

- 3/31 Combined PHI and THY: María Lugones, "Playfulness, 'World'-Travelling, and Loving Perception" (eLearning)
 Questions: What does Lugones mean by "world"? How do we travel between worlds? What does she mean by loving perception? Is there a relation between play and understanding?

Week Eleven

- 4/7 Combined PHI and THY: *Joy* by Zadie Smith (see e-learning) Bring to class an object that means joy and one that means pleasure for you **(Second Short Essay Due)**
- 4/9 No Class; Holy Thursday

Week Twelve

- 4/14 THY: *The Brooke Ellison Story* (a video story) (please see your supplemental materials for the questions)
- 4/16 PHI: Aristotle, selection from *Nicomachean Ethics* (eLearning)
 Questions: How does Aristotle define "virtue"? What does it mean to be a virtuous person? Why do culture and environment factor into virtuous behavior? Do our current cultures promote virtues? If so, how? If not, why not?

Week Thirteen

- 4/21 THY: Theological Reflection Exercise; *Plantations and Death Camps* by Beverly Mitchell, pp. 1-53, 86-88 (see supplemental materials for questions and *The Cycle of Prejudice and Oppression*)
- 4/23 PHI: Iris Marion Young, "Five Faces of Oppression" (eLearning)
 Questions: Young argues that her account of oppression is more flexible, and therefore preferable, to other accounts. Is this true? Is there any connection between oppression and meaning?

Week Fourteen (Final Exam handout)

- 4/28 THY: Theological Reflection Exercise, *The Partner Track: A Novel* by Helen Wann, pp. 1-150. (see questions at the end of the book, prepare to share on three or four of them in class. Include with your sharing how *one* of your chosen questions relates to *one* of the fundamental questions for the class.
- 4/30 PHI: Susan Wolf, "Happiness and Meaning: Two aspects of the good life" (eLearning)
 Narrative Workshop
 Questions: What three accounts of happiness does Wolf address? Which one does she argue for? What sorts of activities do we or should we consider projects of worth? Do lives have to be meaningful to be happy?

Week Fifteen

5/5 THY: Theological Reflection Exercise, *The Partner Track: A Novel* by Helen Wann, pp. 151-294 (see questions at the end of the book, prepare to share on three or four of them in class. Include with your sharing how *one* of your chosen questions relates to *one* of the fundamental questions for the class.

5/7 PHI: Ada Maria Isasí-Díaz, "*Mujeristas: A Name of Our Own*"
Alice Walker, "Womanist" (handouts on E-Learning)
Narrative Project Due

Questions: Isasí-Díaz and Walker are both interested in what names are given to us and what names we give ourselves. How do names inform our identities? How are theory and practice connected in naming and in liberation? How do you tell the story of yourself?

Week Sixteen (Final Exam Week)

5/12 PHI & THY: Joint final exam (take home) due at beginning of class; followed by *required* Summary Discussion