

# **Phil 3331      Happiness and the Meaning of Life**

**Class Number   46564   Section TR11   Tues, Thurs      11:00am – 12:15pm**

**Instructor: Christine Vitrano**

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This course will center on two of the oldest philosophical topics, happiness and the meaning of life. The first part of the course will focus on the concept of happiness, where we will examine its nature, source and value. We will begin with a review of the role played by happiness in the history of ethics, and then explore how it continues to play a role in contemporary moral debates. We will also incorporate current empirical research on happiness into our discussions. The questions we will examine include: What, after all, is happiness? Is it necessary for a worthwhile life? Is it sufficient? Does happiness depend on one's state of mind, one's circumstances, or both? Can a person be immoral, yet happy?

The second part of the course will focus on questions relating to what makes life meaningful or worthwhile. As Albert Camus explains, "Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy..." (*The Myth of Sisyphus*, New York: Vintage International, 1991, pgs. 3-4). We shall investigate the meaning of life by considering a theistic approach, a non-theistic alternative, and an approach that questions the meaningfulness of the question.

If you have any questions or would like to talk about this course, feel free to email me at [cvitrano@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:cvitrano@brooklyn.cuny.edu) or stop by my office hours, which are on Mondays and Wednesdays from 12:30 – 2:30 in room 3315 Boylan hall.