

PHIL 3331

Happiness and the Meaning of Life

Class Number 13108 Section TR11

Tues/Thurs 11:00AM - 12:15PM

3607 James Hall

Professor C. Vitrano

This course will center on two philosophical topics: happiness and the meaning of life. The first part of the course will focus on the concept of happiness, where we examine its nature, source and value. We 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 shall also incorporate current empirical research on happiness into our discussions. The questions we 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."¹ 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 or stop by my office hours, which are on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:15 – 2:15 in room 3315 Boylan.

¹ Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (New York: Vintage International, 1991), 3-4.