

# Phil 220 – Philosophy of Happiness

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## Course description

What is happiness? What does it mean to live a good life? Are happy people those people who have a really big bunch of stuff, or those people who make the best of what they have, or those people who experience a lot of pleasure, or something else? What can I do to be happier? These are some of the central questions we will ask in this course and try to find good answers to. Because we are reflecting on the fundamental questions about how we should *live*, what it means to live *well*, and how we should plan our lives as a whole, this course should quite literally change your life.

In philosophy, “new” does not equal “better”. Ancient philosophers were very interested in happiness and, in particular, the relationship between having a good character and being happy. In fact, according to Cicero, working out how these two things are connected is the *most* important question of ethics. Thus, when we come to think about happiness in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we already have a lot of really great debate to work from, which also makes us question our assumptions about what happiness is.

The purpose of this course is to give you a good understanding of the ancient debates about happiness and the good life. We will focus on how Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, the Epicureans, and later Aristotelians conceived of happiness and how they challenged each other about what happiness consisted in. Thus you will not only learn about what different people thought happiness was, but how to think critically and debate with others about happiness itself. We can then use these skills to think about what happiness is in your own lives now and what it means to live well.

## Required text

Cicero, *On Moral Ends*. Edited by Julia Annas, Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Note: there are different translations of this text and it is important that you use this one. I have provided an online version on D2L, but you can also buy it in print here:

[http://www.amazon.com/Cicero-Moral-Cambridge-History-Philosophy/dp/0521669014/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1425443223&sr=8-1&keywords=cicero+on+ends](http://www.amazon.com/Cicero-Moral-Cambridge-History-Philosophy/dp/0521669014/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1425443223&sr=8-1&keywords=cicero+on+ends)

## **Course lectures and required readings**

Lecture 1, Socrates and Plato – quiz, Tuesday 7 June:

Plato, *Euthydemus* and *Laws* (selections, on D2L)

Lecture 2, Aristotle – quiz, Thursday 9 June:

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 1 (selections, on D2L)

Lecture 3, Epicurus – quiz, Tuesday 14 June:

Epicurus, *Principle Doctrines* (on D2L, to be read whilst eating a small block of cheese)  
Cicero, *On Moral Ends*, Book 1, pp. 3–25.

Lecture 4, Cicero’s critique of Epicurus – quiz, Thursday 16 June:

Cicero, *On Moral Ends*, Book 2, pp. 26–64.

Lecture 5, Zeno and the Stoics – quiz, Tuesday 21 June:

Epictetus, *Handbook* (on D2L, to be read on a porch in a busy place)  
Cicero, *On Moral Ends*, Book 3, pp. 65–89.

Lecture 6, Cicero’s critique of Stoicism – quiz, Thursday 23 June:

Cicero, *On Moral Ends*, Book 4, pp. 90–116.

Lecture 7, Antiochus – quiz, Tuesday 28 June:

Cicero, *On Moral Ends*, Book 5, part one, pp. 117–142.

Lecture 8, Cicero’s critique of Antiochus – quiz, Thursday 30 June:

Cicero, *On Moral Ends*, Book 5, part two, pp. 143–150.

Lecture 9, Happiness: ancient and modern – no quiz

No readings! Your job now is to reflect on your life as a whole and think about why thinking about this material matters. And to finish your papers.

## Assessment

### Break it down

- 40% quizzes on course material (8x5%)
- 5% syllabus quiz
- 20% short weekly responses (4x5%)
- 30% final paper

The syllabus quiz will close Monday June 6 at 9pm.

The quizzes on course material will be every Tuesday and Thursday, closing at 9pm.

The short weekly responses will be due in the dropbox every Saturday, closing at 9pm.

The final paper will be due in the dropbox at Wednesday July 6 at 9pm.

Mark your calendars, set reminders and alarms now, and get into a work routine. These will not change. There will be no extensions or extra credit, so do not ask.

### Weekly writing assignments

Every Saturday at 9pm, you will be required to submit to the dropbox a short writing assignment. It will have the same format each week (see below), and I have provided you with an example for Plato on D2L:

*Question 1:* How does \_\_\_\_\_ define happiness?

*Question 2:* What is the place of virtue and external goods in \_\_\_\_\_'s conception of happiness?

*Question 3:* What is an objection somebody could give to \_\_\_\_\_'s conception of happiness?

Where \_\_\_\_\_ is:

*Aristotle* (Week 1, Sat Jun 11), *Epicurus* (Week 2, Sat Jun 18), *Zeno/The Stoics* (Week 3, Sat Jun 25), *Antiochus* (Week 4, Sat July 2).

Your answers to each of these questions should be 2–4 lines single-spaced. You shouldn't even get close to page 2 of your Word Doc. Aim for concision and precision.

Submissions will be graded on a 1–5 point scale (warning: 5s will be very rare indeed).

1 = Almost no comprehension of the position and an objection.

2 = Poor comprehension of the position and an objection.

3 = Adequate comprehension of the position and an objection.

4 = Good comprehension of the position and an objection.

5 = Excellent comprehension of the position and an objection.

## Final paper

Topic: *The Stoics, Epicureans, and Antiochus all defend different conceptions of happiness that Cicero criticizes. Choose **one** of these schools, then*

*(a) explain what their conception of happiness is,*

*(b) explain **one** of Cicero's criticisms of their position, and*

*(c) explain how an advocate of the philosophical school could defend themselves against Cicero's criticisms.*

Your final paper should be 1500 words, plus or minus 150 words. Anything not in this word limit will receive an instant 0. Those papers are really easy to grade, so it's better not to tempt me. Picking *hard* criticisms and giving *good* responses will impress me.

Be clear, concise, and precise. Make sure to back up your claims with arguments, evidence, and examples. Think for yourself – the answers will not all be in your notes.

## **Academic Integrity**

The University has policies against plagiarism within the Student Code of Academic Integrity, and against threatening behavior by students. Any cheating, fabrication, or plagiarism may result in a failing grade for the work concerned or for the course, at my discretion, and I may recommend additional penalties ranging from making the infraction a permanent part of your academic record to expulsion from the University.

All students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with these policies. Here is the relevant link:

<http://deanofstudents.arizona.edu/academicintegrity>

Note: I really, *really* hate plagiarism and am astonishingly good at spotting it. So if you are thinking, "Will it be worth it? Will I get away with it?" the answers are, "No", and "No." Plan ahead, stay calm, and think for yourself.

## **Students with disabilities**

Students who are registered with the Disability Resource Center must submit appropriate documentation to the instructor if they are requesting reasonable accommodations. Please let me know as soon as possible if you require extra accommodations – I will not make changes after the first week.

Here is a link to UA's DRC:

<http://drc.arizona.edu/>

## **You did it!**

Because you made it to the end of the syllabus, you get a bonus prize. I like animal pictures. So, if you *follow these instructions perfectly* and put a Word Document with your name on it in the dropbox under “Mystery Points” by the end of the first week (Sunday Jun 12, at 9pm) with an awesome animal picture, you get 5% of your grade for free (notice this was missing from the grade breakdown). But what this also means is that I expect you to have read every word on the syllabus, so if you email me during the course with a question that is on the syllabus I am allowed to respond with “It’s on the syllabus ☺” and if you complain about something that is on the syllabus I am allowed to respond with “Well, on the syllabus it was stated clearly that I expected you to do X, but you didn’t do X”. Finally, remember you got 5% of your final grade for free when you think about trying to weasel another 1 or 2% out of me.

Finally, there are other people enrolled in the class – please don’t expect me to make an exception for you. Just think: how you would feel if you worked really hard to get good work done on time when you were busy and tired and hungover, and then somebody else got an extension because they decided they were too busy or tired or hungover? Fairness requires that if I make any exceptions, I will have to make them for everybody. This will inevitably create a huge amount of work for me. I like trying to be a good teacher, but please try to be understanding in that it is difficult to be the sole instructor for a large class and I have other work that I am required to do (like finish my dissertation). So take responsibility for your own learning, plan your own time, get the work done in accordance with the instructions I have set out, and you’ll be fine.

I hope you enjoy the course! ☺