
**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK**

Course Number:	UGS 302	Instructor:	David W. Springer, PH.D.
Unique Number:	66215	E-mail:	dwspringer@mail.utexas.edu
Semester:	Fall 2008	Phone:	(512) 471-0512
Meeting Time:	Tuesdays 9:00am-Noon	Office Room:	2.202C
Meeting Place:	SSW 2.140	Office Hours:	Tuesdays Noon to 1:00pm or contact Hollee Ganner (471-9824; hganner@mail.utexas.edu) to schedule an appointment
Course Mentor:	Lillian Duncan (lduncan@mail.utexas.edu)		

THE ART OF BEING HUMAN: CONSTRUCTING MEANING OUT OF LIFE

“The man who regards his life as meaningless is not merely unhappy but hardly fit for life.”
~Albert Einstein

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This interactive seminar will explore how individuals overcome life’s challenges in order to create a meaningful and happy existence. Critical reflection on selected readings, art, poetry, music, and films will cover a range of topics, such as happiness, discipline, compassion, humor, balance, suffering, power, conflict, love and grace. Students will critically reflect on their own lives using an interdisciplinary perspective, and relate their experiences to class material.

Note about Course:

Signature Courses are designed to expose entering UT students to the broad goals and possibilities of a university education, while promoting a greater sense of intellectual community among undergraduates. Signature Courses are designed to make students aware of the high standards necessary for college-level academic work and help students cultivate skills to meet those standards. This class is designated as a First-Year Seminar and a Signature Course.

II. REQUIRED READINGS

Allison, J., & Gediman, D. (Eds.) (2007). *This I Believe: The Personal Philosophies of Remarkable Men and Women*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company.

Dalai Lama, & Cutler, H. C. (1998). *The Art of Happiness: A Handbook for Living*. New York, NY: Riverhead Books.

Prather, H. (1970). *Notes to Myself*. Moab, UT: Real People Press.

OPTIONAL READINGS

Peck, M. S. (1978). *The Road Less Traveled*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Phillips, C. (2001). *Socrates Café: A Fresh Taste of Philosophy*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Prather H. (2002). *How to Live in the World and Still be Happy*. York Beach, ME: Conari Press.

III. TEACHING METHODS

This class will use a combination of readings, lectures, films, and small group discussions. This course is scheduled to meet for three hours each week.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES

This is a seminar, writing emphasis course, which means that contributions from each student are needed to advance the learning process. In order to count as a substantial writing component course, this First-Year Seminar requires at least sixteen (16) pages of written work during the semester. Students will be expected to come to class prepared to participate in class learning. Here is a brief summary of how the course will work.

Students are expected to attend class sessions regularly and to participate in an interactive framework between students and professor. Students are expected to complete the readings prior to class, and should be well prepared to participate in discussions and experiential learning assignments. Failure to regularly attend the class and demonstrate through discussions that one has comprehended the readings will be strongly considered in assigning the final grade. Students are responsible for any material missed due to absences.

Students are expected to turn in all required assignments on the agreed upon due date **at the beginning of class**. Assignments turned in after class starts will be considered late. All late assignments will be assessed point penalties at the rate of **2 points each day late**. If the due date is a problem, then the student should see the professor and negotiate another due date ahead of time.

The University of Texas Honor Code

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty

Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, the student may refer to the Web Site of the Student Judicial Services, Office of the Dean of Students (<http://www.utexas.edu/depts/dos/sjs/>).

Documented Disability Statement

Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471-6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, visit <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.

Religious Holidays

By UT Austin policy, students must notify the professor of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If the student must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, the professor will give the student an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students

Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, students are responsible for reading their email for university and course-related information and announcements. Students are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to their e-mail address. Students should check their e-mail regularly and frequently—daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-sensitive. Students can find UT Austin’s policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)

If students are worried about someone who is acting differently, they may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns about another individual’s behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

Emergency Evacuation Policy

Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform the professor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the professor’s instructions.
- Do not re-enter a building unless you’re given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

V. COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

1. Reflection Papers:

Reflection papers to readings are due at the beginning of the classes marked on the schedule. Each reflection paper should be 4 pages in length, typed, double spaced with 12-point font and one-inch margins on all sides. You will write a total of 4 reflection papers, each worth 15 points (for a cumulative worth of 60% of the final grade).

Since the papers are brief, by “reflection paper” I mean an essay in which you critically reflect on what you consider to be the main points of the readings, class discussions, or movie. The goal is not to simply summarize the readings/discussions/movie. However, to write an effective reflection paper you must, obviously, understand them and communicate that understanding.

These are some questions you might ask yourself as you read the books and watch the films: What are the main points the author/film tries to make? What are the most forceful aspects of the work, and what, if any, effect does the book/movie have on your thinking about your own life? I’ll also be looking for the following as I grade the reflection papers:

- Personal critical reflection (how much critical self-reflection about your own past experiences, future visions, hopes, dreams, and so on are evident in the paper). Each reflection paper should include reflecting on at least one passage from the Prather text.
- Integration of critical thought, experiences, and readings blended together (how well do you demonstrate the ability to integrate critical thought, your experiences, and class material).
- Integration of self with class material (how well do you demonstrate that you have struggled with the integration of your personal characteristics [e.g., values, ethical dilemmas, personality traits, spirituality, etc.] with key concepts covered in class readings and discussions).
- Analysis of student strengths (how well do you analyze your strengths).
- Analysis of student areas for growth (how well do you critically reflect on what your areas for growth are at this point in your life, and how you plan on addressing these areas).
- The quality of the writing as well as the content. Written material should be carefully proof-read and errors (punctuation, typographical, spelling) corrected. Good writing requires a reiterative process that must be followed if quality is to improve. I strongly encourage you to read your paper several times and, if possible, have someone else proof read it.

To answer these questions, you will have to state your own views on relevant subjects. You may talk about yourself or your experiences. But this should not be an essay solely about you and your feelings (this is not a diary); try to connect your experiences to the larger questions and concepts discussed in class. In your reflection paper you may want to draw on evidence or arguments from other sources. If you do use information from other sources, make sure it is properly cited.

2. This I Believe Essay – Written Paper:

This I Believe is an exciting national project that invites you to write about the core beliefs that guide your daily life. National Public Radio (NPR) airs these personal statements from listeners each Monday on [*Morning Edition*](#) and [*All Things Considered*](#). *This I Believe* is based on a 1950s radio program of the same name, hosted by acclaimed journalist Edward R. Murrow. In creating *This I Believe*, Murrow said the program sought "to point to the common meeting grounds of beliefs, which is the essence of brotherhood and the floor of our civilization." More information about *This I Believe* can be found at the following link: <http://www.npr.org/thisibelieve/about.html>. (Taken from [*NPR.org*](#), April 4, 2005.)

Each student will write one essay, which you will actually submit to *This I Believe*. This essay will be worth 20% of the final grade.

This I Believe provides essay-writing instructions. These instructions, copied below from the *This I Believe* Web site (<http://www.npr.org/thisibelieve/guide.html>), will also be used as the grading criteria for this class.

We invite you to contribute to this project by writing and submitting your own statement of personal belief. We understand how challenging this is -- it requires such intimacy that no one else can do it for you. To guide you through this process, we offer these suggestions:

Tell a story: Be specific. Take your belief out of the ether and ground it in the events of your life. Consider moments when belief was formed or tested or changed. Think of your own experience, work and family, and tell of the things you know that no one else does. Your story need not be heart-warming or gut-wrenching -- it can even be funny -- but it should be *real*. Make sure your story ties to the essence of your daily life philosophy and the shaping of your beliefs.

Be brief: Your statement should be between 350 and 500 words. That's about three minutes when read aloud at your natural pace.

Name your belief: If you can't name it in a sentence or two, your essay might not be about belief. Also, rather than writing a list, consider focusing on a core belief, because three minutes is a very short time.

Be positive: Please avoid preaching or editorializing. Tell us what you do believe, not what you don't believe. Avoid speaking in the editorial "we." Make your essay about you; speak in the first person.

Be personal: This is radio. Write in words and phrases that are comfortable for you to speak. We recommend you read your essay aloud to yourself several times, and each time edit it and simplify it until you find the words, tone and story that truly echo your belief and the way you speak.

For this project, we are also guided by the original *This I Believe series* and the [producers' invitation](#) to those who wrote essays in the 1950s. Their advice holds up well and we are abiding by it. Please consider it carefully in writing your piece. Sample essays can be found at: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4564213>

3. This I Believe Essay – Audio Recording:

In addition to turning in a written copy of the This I Believe Essay, each student will also be required to turn in an audio recording of his or her essay to the professor. To create his or her audio recording, each student should contact Mike DeLeon to reserve time in the audio room. Mr. DeLeon may be reached by e-mail (mike.deleon@mail.utexas.edu) or phone (475-6156). Directions to the GSB offices can be found at: <http://www.utexas.edu/academic/diia/lab/>. This audio recording will be worth 10% of the final grade.

4. Class Attendance and Participation:

Discussions will have two basic components. Each student will have the opportunity to comment about an aspect of the readings/movie that is important to him or her. This could mean talking about what part of the readings/movie most impact or resonate with you. It could mean taking issue with some aspect of the readings/film. I will assume that everyone has completed the readings and is prepared to respond [we will be watching film(s) in class]. So, come to class each week prepared to speak coherently about the readings or watch a film with a critical eye. I will act as discussion leader, and sometimes will provide informative notes and lecture material to supplement class readings and discussion.

At the end of the semester I will judge your overall contribution to class discussion. This portion of your participation grade will be based on your: (a) familiarity with readings; (b) ability to hear and understand what others say; (c) ability to express yourself clearly; (d) ability to synthesize the thoughts of others to form new insights, conclusions, or questions; (e) ability to disagree constructively; (f) cooperation in building a stimulating and supportive intellectual atmosphere in class; and (g) ability to use Socratic questioning. To help me make a fair assessment of your effort, at the end of the semester you will provide me with a one-page self-assessment of your participation in the class. Your assessment should include your attendance and in-class participation, as well as outside activities (e.g., attending the University Lecture Series, tour of the Blanton Museum, the Library Instruction Session) related to the course. Because a significant portion of your grade is based on class participation, it is obvious that attendance is crucial; you cannot participate if you aren't physically present. Missed classes will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. If you have to miss a class and have a good excuse, please let me know as soon as possible.

VI. COURSE GRADING CRITERIA

GRADING SCALE

Reflection Papers (4 Papers @ 15 Points Each)	60%	100 – 90 Points = A
This I Believe Essay	20%	89 – 80 Points = B
Audio Recording of Essay	10%	79 – 70 Points = C
<u>Attendance and Participation</u>	<u>10%</u>	69 – 60 Points = D
		59 and Below = F
TOTAL	100%	

Because this is a Signature Course, as part of the course participation grade, all students must attend at least one event of the University Lecture Series:

The University Lecture Series gives first-year students an opportunity to interact with leading members of our faculty – scholars, scientists, and civic leaders who are nationally and internationally renowned. The lectures are designed to create a campus-wide conversation, and Signature Course students will be required to attend (or watch online).

All students, faculty, alumni, staff and community guests are invited, but the events will be aimed at entering first-year students.

Sponsored by the School of Undergraduate Studies with assistance from the Bernard and Audre Rappaport Endowment for Undergraduate Studies.

Video of each lecture will be available within 48 hours of its end.

Each Lecture will begin at 7:00pm sharp at Gregory Gym. You will need your UT ID Card for admittance.

September 16, 2008

Why Males Die Without Mating, and What You Can Do About It

Michael Ryan, Zoology

Because of fundamental differences in their reproductive biology, females are usually able to obtain mates while most males of a species die without having sex. In many species males evolve elaborate and expensive traits to convince females to mate with them. Why? What are the consequences? And what about human mate choice?

September 25, 2008

The Great Debate: Fight to the (Political) Death

Daniel Bonevac, Philosophy

James Galbraith, Gov/Business Relations, LBJ School

Betty Sue Flowers, Director, LBJ Library and Museum

Two top professors, a liberal and a conservative, go head to head tackling student's questions about issues most important to young voters. Dr. Flowers will moderate, fielding questions from our First-year Interest Groups.

October 1, 2008

Dream Scenes: Can Movies Heal a Fractured World?

Mia Carter, English

It is said that cinema is a universal language, but can movies simultaneously entertain and instruct? Carter will explore cinema's possibilities: its ability to view other worlds, its potential to expand one's understanding of the human condition and, at the farthest limit of possibility, the dream of communion among all people.

VII. COURSE OUTLINE (TENTATIVE)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topics, Readings and Assignments</u>
September 2	<p><u>Topics</u> Introductions and Class Overview, Review Syllabus</p>
September 8	<p><u>Topics</u> Constructing Meaning and Finding Happiness in Life</p> <p><u>Readings</u> Dalai Lama & Cutler – Introduction, Chapter 1 <i>A Monk's Struggle</i>, by Pico Iyer <i>The Myth of First-Year Enlightenment</i>, by James M. Lang <i>Dwelling in Possibilities</i>, by Mark Edmundson</p>
September 16	<p>DISCUSSION OF SIGNATURE STRENGTHS http://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu/Default.aspx</p> <p><u>Topics</u> Happiness Discipline</p> <p><u>Readings</u> Dalai Lama & Cutler – Chapters 2, 3 & 4 <i>The New Science of Happiness</i>, by Claudia Wallis <i>The Futile Pursuit of Happiness</i>, by Jon Gertner</p>
September 23	<p>REFLECTION PAPER 1 DUE (TO COVER PART I OF DALAI LAMA TEXT AND ANY RELEVANT DISCUSSIONS OR ACTIVITIES)</p> <p>GREG DAVIS – GUEST SPEAKER http://www.gregdavisphotography.com</p> <p><u>Topics</u> Warmth and Compassion Intimacy Examining Your Life</p> <p><u>Readings</u> Dalai Lama & Cutler – Chapter 5</p>
September 30	<p><u>Topics</u> Connection to Others Empathy</p> <p><u>Readings</u> Dalai Lama & Cutler – Chapters 6 & 7</p>
October 7	<p>REFLECTION PAPER 2 DUE (TO COVER PART II OF DALAI LAMA TEXT AND ANY RELEVANT DISCUSSIONS OR ACTIVITIES)</p> <p><u>Topics</u> Transforming Suffering</p> <p><u>Readings</u> Dalai Lama & Cutler – Chapters 8 & 9</p>

- October 14** **Topics**
 Shifting Perspective
 Finding Meaning in Pain and Suffering
Readings
 Dalai Lama & Cutler – Chapters 10 & 11
- October 21** **REFLECTION PAPER 3 DUE (TO COVER PART III OF DALAI LAMA TEXT AND ANY RELEVANT DISCUSSIONS OR ACTIVITIES)**
- CLASS MEETS AS USUAL AT 9:00AM**
TOUR OF BLANTON MUSEUM BEGINS AT 10:00AM (We will walk over from the School of Social Work to the Blanton together. Bring your UT ID.)
<http://blantonmuseum.org/index.cfm>
- Topics**
 Bringing about Change
 Anger and Hatred
Readings
 Dalai Lama & Cutler – Chapters 12 & 13
- October 28** **LIBRARY INSTRUCTION SESSION – PCL (Bring your UT ID.)**
- November 4** **Topics**
 Anxiety
 Self-Esteem
Readings
 Dalai Lama & Cutler – Chapter 14
- November 11** **VIVÉ GRIFFITH - GUEST SPEAKER**
- November 18** **REFLECTION PAPER 4 DUE (TO COVER PART IV OF DALAI LAMA TEXT AND ANY RELEVANT DISCUSSIONS OR ACTIVITIES)**
- DR. HOWARD CUTLER-PHONE CONFERENCE**
- Topics**
 Living a Spiritual Life
Readings
 Dalai Lama & Cutler – Chapter 15
- November 25** **NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY**
- December 2** ***THIS I BELIEVE* ESSAY DUE. THIS INCLUDES TURNING A COPY INTO YOUR PROFESSOR AND SUBMITTING YOUR ESSAY TO THE *THIS I BELIEVE* PROGRAM. AUDIO RECORDING IS ALSO DUE.**
- ONE-PAGE SELF-ASSESSMENT OF PARTICIPATION**
- Last Day of Class
- Course Evaluation and Wrap Up