

## PHIL104 Happiness - Provisional Syllabus for January-April 2026

This is **not** the final version. The final version will be provided at the start of the course.

### Course Instructor

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### Calendar Description

What makes for deep, lasting happiness, joy, and wellbeing? This course studies contemporary and classical philosophical works and important debates in cognate fields such as psychology, economics, political theory, and sociology.

### Prerequisites and Corequisites

None.

### Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- LO1: Distinguish different notions of *happiness* using philosophical reasoning.
- LO2: Apply the concepts of *happiness*, *wellbeing*, *pleasure*, and *pain* to the analysis of theories of the good life, right action, and value.
- LO3: Distinguish different theories of wellbeing including hedonism, desire satisfaction, and eudaimonism.
- LO4: Evaluate the applicability of mindsets such as compassion, mindfulness, equanimity, and positivity to their own life and habits.
- LO5: Evaluate the qualities of proposed virtues such as generosity, kindness, and gratitude.
- LO6: Consider how the concepts and practical suggestions offered by different accounts of wellbeing apply to the world around them.
- LO7: Identify tools that can be used to cultivate greater personal wellbeing in their own life.

### Course Overview

If someone asks you why you are studying a specific subject or why you picked a certain meal for lunch, or why you always take a particular route home, you might reply that you prefer it or that you want to try something new, or that you want to live up to your parents' expectations, or that you didn't give it much thought. But, if the person presses you further on why you made this choice, your answer may amount to something like: You wish to be happy.

Happiness is a bit like the Sun: it is vital, but hard to look at directly. Some societies, like the United States, have made the pursuit of happiness part of their national identity: 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness'. Some societies, such as Bhutan, have made the amount of happiness per capita a point of national concern. Some societies, including many Indigenous communities,

understand happiness and well-being in terms of harmony with other living beings. Other societies turn away from happiness and view it as a superficial or gullible thing to value. Some of us may feel frightened of happiness or may feel that we don't deserve happiness. Many of us would like to be happier or even just a little less unhappy. And, many of us would like to make others happy, but have no idea where to start.

Happiness and related ideas lie at the heart of many theories in moral philosophy as well as many practical understandings of a good life, of what to value, and of how to behave. This course will survey a wide range of traditions and perspectives of wellbeing, from the ancient to the contemporary, highlighting points of connection and distinction between selected Western, Eastern, African, and Indigenous perspectives. The course will invite students:

a) to reflect on the nature and value of *happiness* and related ideas such as *pleasure*, *wellbeing*, *joy*, *flourishing* and the *good*, and

b) to explore through their own reflections, experiences, reading, and guided in-class and take-home practices the various attitudes, mindsets, and commitments that different intellectual traditions identify as parts of deep, lasting wellbeing.

The course will study contemporary and classical philosophical writings, drawing from different traditions and perspectives. The course will also refer to findings in related fields such as positive psychology, social neuroscience, political theory, economics, and sociology on the nature of happiness and credible ways to cultivate it. Students will be encouraged to try out new ways of thinking about happiness and wellbeing, to analyse both the philosophical literature and their own perceptions of what it means to be truly happy, and to put some of these ideas into practice.

In coming to this class, you bring with you your own understanding of happiness, informed by your upbringing, family, community, education, culture, and personal experiences. Some of the ideas we discuss will seem familiar to you. Some of them may seem foreign, and perhaps wholly unrelated to happiness as you understand it. Please do contribute your perspective and your experiences. Your contributions will enrich our reflections as a class on this immensely important topic.

The course will explore the following topics (one per lecture):

1. Introduction: Happiness
2. Pleasure
3. Desires
4. Higher Pleasures
5. General Happiness
6. The Love of Virtue
7. Flourishing
8. Belonging
9. Love and Intimacy
10. Friendship, Care, and Service
11. Altruism
12. Mindfulness

13. Compassion and Self-compassion
14. Positivity
15. Gratitude
16. Generosity / Kindness
17. Courage and Conscience
18. Good humour
19. Creativity and Play
20. Authenticity
21. Physical Exercise
22. Interspecies connection
23. Being in nature
24. Aesthetic appreciation
25. Emotional Depth: Loss, Sorrow, and Grief
26. Joy

### **An Indicative Set of Assignments (to be confirmed)**

#### Assignments and Grading Breakdown:

- a. 500-word start of term personal essay (10% of final grade) (LO1-LO5)
- b. Weekly journal entries on take-home practices on happiness, 12 in total (24% of final grade) (LO6-LO7)
- c. Class participation (26% of final grade) LO1-LO7) (sign in upon arrival; contribute to class polls, in-class activities, and group discussions)
- d. Happiness project (15% of final grade) (LO1, LO2, LO6, LO7)
- e. 2,000-word end of term essay (25% of final grade) (LO1-LO5)

#### Detailed Instructions for Assessments:

##### **a. Start of term personal essay (10%)**

- Write a brief 500-word essay in reply to the following prompt: ‘In my view, *happiness* is...’
- The essay should be clear, thoughtful, independent-minded, and cleanly presented.
- You don’t need to cite sources. But if you draw ideas from others’ work, you must cite them.
  - Here are instructions on how to cite: <https://guides.library.ubc.ca/howtocite>
- Essays should be typed in a clear professional font, e.g. Times New Roman, 12 point font.

##### **b. Weekly 250-word journal entries on the take-home practices on happiness (24%)**

- At the end of each class, you will be given suggestions for one or two take-home practices on happiness. Try out the practices (or reflect on them or discuss them with someone) and write a short 250-word comment on your experiences.
- The journal entries should be written in clean, clear, engaging prose, i.e. complete sentences. They should be typed in a clear professional font, e.g. Times New Roman, 12 point font.
- To get full marks, a student must engage with **one take-practice per lecture** (typically two per week). They must explain how they undertook to try out the practice or why they found

that particular practice difficult for them to undertake. The entries need not comment on the lectures but certainly may do so.

- You will write 12 journal entries (2 points per entry).

**c. Class participation (26%)**

- Regular attendance is expected by students in all classes at [UBC](#)
- The participation grade consists of 1% per class (13 weeks; 2 classes per week)
- Sign into iClicker at the start of the class. If you're late, please join anyway. You are welcome.
- To get the 1% participation mark for a given class, you must contribute to the Canvas polls, in-class activities, and class discussions; and your specific contributions – the reflection shown in your questions, observations, answers, and arguments – will inform your mark.
- Many of the polls, activities, and discussions relate to the assigned readings. Ensure you've read the required readings before class.
- If you are unable to attend regularly, **please contact Arts Advising or the Centre for Accessibility to inquire about accommodation.**

**d. Happiness Project (15%)**

- Pick one theme related to happiness (i.e. one lecture) explored during the term (e.g. altruism, sociability and belonging, pleasure, virtue, equanimity, compassion, integrity, creativity, authenticity, physical exercise, interspecies connection, being in nature, aesthetic appreciation, humility, mindfulness, etc.) and do something or make something that manifests that theme in some way.
- Submit your creation or a record of your creation: the record might be a video, a set of photos of an activity or event, some drawings, a piece of creative writing, a report, etc.
- Submit as part of your record a brief explanation (500 words) of the idea of happiness you chose, your perspective on it, and how you sought to manifest it.
- Your explanation should relate to the relevant course lecture and readings. It should be independent-minded and reflective. It should be typed in a clear professional font, e.g. Times New Roman, 12 point font.
- Happiness projects will be shared in small groups in the final class.

**e. End of term essay (25%)**

- Write a 2,000-word essay in response to an assigned question.
- The word limit does not include the footnotes or bibliography.
- You may exceed the word-limit by 10% without penalty.
- Essays should be typed in a clear professional font, e.g. Times New Roman, 12 point font.
- Please follow a recognised reference style. More information can be found on Canvas and here: <https://guides.library.ubc.ca/howtocite>
- The essays will be marked according to four criteria:
  - 1. Argument and analysis
  - 2. Understanding and interpretation of the literature
  - 3. Structure and organisation
  - 4. Quality of writing (i.e. prose, referencing, bibliography, spelling, grammar, etc.)
- The essay is due on XXX Students may have an automatic grace period until XXX. After

that date, two points will be deducted per day for lateness. If you have a personal reason (e.g. illness, family concern) to request an extension, please contact me before the deadline to arrange an alternative submission date or submit a request for an Academic Concession explained later in the syllabus .

- Advice on essays can be found in the Appendix below.

The rubric for the four criteria for the final essay can be elaborated as follows:

1. Argument and Analysis (25%)
2. Understanding and Interpretation of the literature (25%)
3. Structure and Organisation (25%)
4. Quality of Writing (prose, spelling, grammar, length, referencing, and bibliography) (25%)

**1. Argument and Analysis:** An outstanding paper will give a clear defence of a precisely stated thesis. The paper will display excellent analysis and argumentative rigour appropriate to the first-year undergraduate level courses. It will be sensitive to challenges and counterarguments and to the strength of the conclusion that may be drawn from the arguments provided. An outstanding paper will not try to do too much (it will not tackle too many issues / themes); it will have a tightly focused set of ambitions.

**2. Understanding and Interpretation:** An outstanding paper will show an impressive command of the relevant literature, appropriate for a first-year course. There will be no obvious inaccuracies in the interpretation of that literature. The discussion will situate the author's argumentative contribution in relation to ideas in the literature. (Be aware that a great contribution can be as simple as offering a new reason to endorse a well-established view.)

**3. Structure and Organization:** An outstanding paper will be clearly and logically structured. Sections are not required, but they can help to impose a clear structure.

**4. Quality of Writing:** An outstanding paper will be written in clear, lucid prose. The paper will be clean in its presentation, including grammar, spelling, punctuation, referencing, and bibliography. The paper will use a standard referencing style consistently and accurately. The paper will provide a complete bibliography of all and only those works cited in the paper. The paper may be single-spaced or double-spaced. It need not reach the word limit. (Quality matters more than quantity, but usually more quality is better than less quality.) The paper may exceed the word limit by no more than 10%. The word limit does not include notes or the bibliography.

## Required and Recommended Readings

- Further readings have been provided at the end of this reading list.
- An online resource that provides useful background material on a range of topics is *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<http://plato.stanford.edu/>). **This resource does not replace original texts. Do not cite this source when you could and should read and cite the original work.**
- **NB:** Beware of relying on Wikipedia or other non-specialist internet encyclopaedias. They are not peer-reviewed and may contain inaccuracies and misinterpretations. **Do not regard them as reliable academic sources.**

## Core Readings, In-class Activities, and Take Home Practices

Please complete the assigned readings in advance of each class.

### Week 1

1. Introduction: Happiness
  - a. Reading: [World Happiness Report 2023](#) Executive Summary ([link](#))
  - b. Reading: [Bhutan and the Gross National Happiness Index](#).
    - i. See also, Reyes-García V, Gallois S, Pyhälä A, Díaz-Reviriego I, Fernández-Llamazares Á, Galbraith E, et al. (2021) 'Happy just because. A cross-cultural study on subjective wellbeing in three Indigenous societies'. PLoS ONE 16(5): e0251551: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0251551>
  - c. In-class activities: Happiness word cloud; Songs that make you feel good.
  - d. Take home practice: The Happier Person: Think of someone you admire who seems to exude wellbeing, contentment, or even delight in life. If it's someone you know personally, see if you can spend some time with them this week. Notice what distinguishes that person. Write a short description of them for your journal entry.
2. Pleasure
  - a. Reading: Bentham, J. (2003). An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation (chapters I–V). In M. Warnock (Ed.), *Utilitarianism and on liberty* (pp. 17-51). Blackwell Publishing Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470776018.ch1>
    - i. Warnock's Introduction to this book is also worth reading.
  - b. In-class activity: The Intensity and Duration of Pleasure in M&Ms.
  - c. Take home Practice: Make a list of 'happiness boosters' or a 'nourishment list' that you can pursue throughout the week (Source: Tal Ben Shahar, *Happier*)

### Week 2

3. Desires
  - a. Reading: Heathwood, C. (2015). Desire-Fulfilment Theory. In Guy Fletcher (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Well-Being* (pp.135-147). New York: Routledge.
  - b. In-class activity: Holding your breath.
  - c. Take home practice: Distinguishing What We Want from What We Truly Need. (Source: James Baraz, *Awakening Joy*).
    - i. For a Dharma talk on realising our deepest desires, see <https://dharmafeed.org/talks/player/67470.html>
4. Higher Pleasures
  - a. Reading: Mill, J. S. (2003). Utilitarianism (chapters I & II). In M. Warnock (Ed.), *Utilitarianism and on liberty* (pp. 181-202). Blackwell Publishing Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470776018>
  - b. In-class activity: [Meaning](#) – Being part of something bigger.
  - c. Take home practice: Becoming Competent Judges: Identify two possible pleasures to experience, one which is 'higher' than the other, in Mill's sense. In picking your chosen pleasures, ensure that neither involves causing distress to others. Undertake to

experience each of the two pleasures. Reflect on your experience of each in your journal entry.

### Week 3

#### 5. General Happiness

- a. Reading: Mill, J. S. (2003). Utilitarianism (chapter III). In M. Warnock (Ed.), *Utilitarianism and on liberty* (pp. 203-209). Blackwell Publishing Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470776018>
- b. In-class activity: What do we all wish for?
- c. Take home Practice: [Action for Happiness](#) identifies 10 Keys to Happier Living (which make the acronym GREAT DREAM). Pick one key, read the description of it on their site. If you feel able, try it out. Reflect on it in your journal entry.

#### 6. The Love of Virtue

- a. Reading: Mill, J. S. (2003). Utilitarianism (chapter IV). In M. Warnock (Ed.), *Utilitarianism and on liberty* (pp. 210-215). Blackwell Publishing Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470776018>
- b. In-class activity: The virtues we value.
- c. Take home practice: *Metta* practice: Wishing others well: See if you can, silently in your own mind, say 'I wish you well' to each of the people you pass-by on the street or to each person you speak with. Record your impressions in your journal. (Source: James Baraz, *Awakening Joy*)
  - i. For a Dharma talk and guided meditation on *metta*, see <https://dharmafeed.org/talks/player/79776.html>

### Week 4

#### 7. Flourishing

- a. Reading: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I.
  - i. See also, Kraut, R. (2015). Aristotle on Well-being. In G. Fletcher (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Well-Being* (pp. 20–28). essay, Routledge.
- b. In-class activity: Setting an intention.
- c. Take home Practice: Following on from Aristotle's observation that one swallow [i.e. one songbird] does not make a summer, choose one virtue or one [key](#) to a happier life and, if you feel comfortable, try to incorporate it into your daily routine for a week (or for the rest of the term). If that feels difficult, then try to think about it each day. See Canvas for a Habits of Happiness Tracker template.
  - i. For a Dharma talk on awareness of intention, see <https://dharmafeed.org/talks/player/86705.html>

#### 8. Belonging

- a. Reading: Brownlee, K. (2020). *Being sure of each other: An essay on social rights and freedoms* (1st ed.). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198714064.001.0001>. Chs. 1, 3.
- b. Reading: Mbiti, J.S. (1989), *African Religions and Philosophy* (second edition). Heinemann, Ch. 10.

- i. See also: Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 497–529. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497>
- ii. Sandstrom, G. M., Boothby, E. J., & Cooney, G. (2022). Talking to strangers: A week-long intervention reduces psychological barriers to social connection. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 102, 104356. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2022.104356>
- iii. Hope, S. (2004), ‘The Roots and Reach of Rangatiratanga’, in *Political Science* 56/1: 23-54.
- iv. Hope, S. (2016a), ‘Human Rights: Sometimes One Thought Too Many?’, in *Jurisprudence* 7: 111-26.
- c. In-class activity: Introducing ourselves.
- d. Take home Practice: Talking to strangers: See whether you can speak with at least one stranger this week and perhaps even one a day for this week. Ensure that you feel safe and comfortable in your surroundings. You might choose settings you know are likely to be benign, e.g. on campus, in department front offices, etc.

## Week 5

### 9. Love and Intimacy

- a. Reading: Fredrickson, B. (2013). *Love 2.0: Creating Happiness and Health in Moments of Connection*. Hudson Street Press. Chs. 1-2.
- b. Reading: Frankfurt, H. G. (2004). *The reasons of love*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400826063>. Ch. 1.
- c. In-class activity: [36 Questions](#) Source: Arthur Aron and Elaine Aron
- d. Take home Practice: Love Languages. (Source, [Gary Chapman](#)). See if you identify with one way of expressing love more than with another. See if you can identify the ways the people you care about tend to express love and to recognise as expressions of love to them.

### 10. Friendship, Care, and Service

- a. Reading: Aristotle on friendship, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VIII.
- b. In-class activity: Venting and Appreciating
- c. Take home Practice: Option 1: What does it mean to be a true friend, in your view? Ask a few others what they think true friendship means. Report on their replies in your journal entry. Option 2: Either make a list of ways in which you have helped or are presently helping other people (it can be as simple as a friendly smile) or see if you can try out one or two new ways to help others.
  - i. For a Dharma talk on the Buddha’s thoughts on friendship, see <https://dharmaseed.org/talks/73414/>

## Week 6

### 11. Altruism

- a. Reading: Plato, *The Republic*, Book II (the Story of Gyges)
- b. In-class activity: Jacob Needleman on [Attentive Listening](#).
- c. Take home Practice: The Good Gyges. See if you can do some invisible good this



week (e.g. pick up some litter without anyone noticing, wash all the dishes without anyone seeing, etc.). Report on your choice and your experience in your journal entry.

## 12. Mindfulness

- a. Reading: Gowans, C. W. (2016). Buddhist understandings of well-being. In G. Fletcher, & G. Fletcher (Eds.), *The routledge handbook of philosophy of well-being* (pp. 70-80). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315682266-8>
  - i. See also [Just-a-minute Meditation](#) on relaxing the mind
- b. In-class activity: Guided meditation on mindfulness (Jon Kabat-Zinn).
- c. Take home Practice: Option 1: See if you can go 24-hours without looking at your phone (or any other device). Option 2: Take a moment to pause and close your eyes and focus on what you hear. See how many different things you can identify.

## Week 7

### 13. Compassion and Self-compassion

- a. Reading: Hills, A. (2003). Duties and duties to the self. *American Philosophical Quarterly (Oxford)*, 40(2), 131-142. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20010107>
  - i. For a Dharma talk on loving-kindness and compassion, see: <https://dharmaseed.org/talks/player/86588.html>
  - ii. See also: Kristen Neff on [self-compassion](#).
- b. In-class activity: Self-compassion exercise.
- c. Take home Practice: Self-acceptance: What would a wise, kind, and caring friend say to you when you make a mistake or don't meet your own expectations? How would that person say it? (Source: [Action for Happiness](#))
  - i. For a Dharma talk on metta / karuna (body scan), see <https://dharmaseed.org/talks/player/86923.html>

### 14. Positivity

- a. Reading: Fredrickson, B. (2009). *Positivity: Groundbreaking research reveals how to embrace the hidden strength of positive emotions, overcome negativity, and thrive* (First ed.). Crown Publishers. Part I: The Good News About Positivity.
- b. Reading: Fredrickson, B. L. (2013). Erratum: Updated thinking on positivity ratios. *American Psychologist*, 68(9), 814–822. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0033584>
- c. In-class activity: Sources of positivity
- d. Take home Practice: Without forcing it, see if you can lightly create a mindset for positive emotions, noticing that this exact moment right now is most likely benign, and then gently use that observation to lightly cultivate an inclination to be attentive, curious, kind, genuine, and open.
  - i. For a Dharma talk on inclining the mind toward well-being, see: <https://dharmaseed.org/talks/player/86037.html>

## Week 8

### 15. Gratitude

- a. Reading: Carr, D. (2013). Varieties of gratitude. *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, 47(1-2), 17-28. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10790-013-9364-2>
- b. In-class activity: Short Gratitude List; Look for the Good in This Moment. (Source:

- Rick Hanson)
- c. Take home Practice: Option 1: A Gratitude List. For a few minutes, write down everything you can think of that you are grateful for, or people to whom you are grateful. If you're in a difficult place, gratitude may feel inaccessible. That's ok. See if you can think of a few things that are going well, even small things. Consider sharing your list with someone. Option 2: Whom could you thank this week for something they give to you? (see [Action for Happiness](#) suggestion).
16. Generosity / Kindness (*mudita*)
- a. Reading: Coren, D. (forthcoming). *Sympathetic Joy*. Erkenntnis:1-11.
    - i. For a Dharma talk on *mudita* as a resource in response to challenging mind-states, see <https://dharmaseed.org/talks/player/84856.html>
    - ii. See also Fredrickson, B. (2013). *Love 2.0: Creating Happiness and Health in Moments of Connection*. Hudson Street Press. Chs. 5-6.
  - b. In-class activity: Appreciative Joy / Sympathetic Joy (*mudita*)
  - c. Take home Practice: Kindness Spotting: See if you can notice the moments when others are kind to you, from simple acts of holding a door open for you and pointing out you've dropped something, to deeper acts of love and care. (Source James Baraz, *Awakening Joy*)

## Week 9

17. Courage and Conscience
- a. Reading: Brownlee, K. (2012). *Conscience and conviction: The case for civil disobedience* (1st ed.). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199592944.001.0001>. Ch. 2.
  - b. See also the section on *Laches* in Woodruff, Paul, "Plato's Shorter Ethical Works", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2023 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2023/entries/plato-ethics-shorter/>
  - c. In-class activity: Interactional Dexterity: Two Truths and a Lie.
  - d. Take home Practice: Acting with Integrity in the Moment of Choice: As you go about your days this week, notice if moments arise that require you to make a choice – in an instant – to say X or Y, to do X or Y. See whether you can make your choices in those moments with integrity, in line with the values you espouse and that you can feel comfortable with yourself afterward about the choice you made.
18. Laughter, Jokes, and Good humour
- a. Reading: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book IV, Sections 6-8. Translated by W. D. Ross [various editions] on the social virtues, including a ready wit.
  - b. In-class activity: [Laughter yoga](#); ChatGPT Joke generator.
  - c. Take home Practice: Option 1): Jerry Seinfeld made a commitment to write one joke a day, every day, throughout his career, and he didn't worry if they were good or not. See if you can write down one joke or silly thought a day for a week. You're welcome to share your jokes in your journal entry or write about your experience of creating jokes. Option 2): Try out the suggestion to manufacture laughter – perhaps along with the video or with someone else – and see how it makes you feel.

- i. For a Dharma talk on overcoming stress with laughter, see:  
<https://dharmaseed.org/talks/player/54701.html>

## Week 10

### 19. Creativity and Play

- a. Reading: Suits, B. H. (1978). *The grasshopper: Games, life, and utopia*. University of Toronto Press. Introduction.
- b. Reading: Rose, J. L. (2016). *Free time*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400883684>.
  - i. See also: Nussbaum, M. (2011). *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. chs. 1-2.
- c. In-class activity: Make up a handshake. Balloon game.
- d. Take home Practice: Option 1: Enjoying rest and leisure: Can you sit in a chair and do literally nothing for an hour? How hard is it for you? Do you get interrupted or distracted? Option 2: Invent a game. It can be for one person or for several people. Try it out. Describe it in your journal entry.

### 20. Authenticity

- a. Reading: Varga, S., & Guignon, C., (2023) ‘[Authenticity](#)’, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.).
- b. Gyekye, K. (1997), *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience* (Oxford University Press), Ch. 4.
  - i. See also, Taylor, C. (1989). *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge University Press; and Taylor, C. (1991). *The Ethics of Authenticity*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- c. In-class activity: Who are you? Make a list of your values and beliefs. Make another list of the steps of a typical day of yours. Do your day-to-day activities align with your values and beliefs?
- d. Take home Practice: Reflect on the two lists you made in class. Consider whether you can take steps to bring your daily routine closer in line with your core values and beliefs.
  - i. For a Dharma talk on being without anxiety about our imperfections, see:  
<https://dharmaseed.org/talks/player/5944.html>

## Week 11

### 21. Physical Exercise

- a. Reading: Gros, F. (2014). *A Philosophy of Walking* (J. Howe, Trans.). Verso. chs. 1-5, 17-18.
  - i. See also the Action for Happiness page on [exercising](#).
- b. In-class activity: NYT: [The Joy Workout](#)
- c. Take home Practice: Go for a walk in the Pacific Spirit Park (or a wooded area near where you live). What do you notice? Describe your observations in your journal entry.
  - i. For Dharma guidance on sitting and walking meditations, see  
<https://dharmaseed.org/talks/player/83722.html>

## 22. Interspecies connection

- a. Reading: Nussbaum, M. (2011). *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. chs. 1-2.
- b. Reading: Appiah, Kwame Anthony (2024), 'Making Change', in *Conversations in Philosophy, Law, and Politics*. Ruth Chang and Amia Srinivasan (eds.), Oxford University Press (2024).
  - i. See also Krawec, Patty (2022). *Becoming Kin: An indigenous call to unforgetting the past and reimagining our future*. Augsburg Fortress Publishers.
  - ii. See also, Appiah, Kwame Anthony (2010), *Honor Code*. W.W. Norton, Preface.
  - iii. See the stories by James Herriot, and James Bowen's *A Street Cat Named Bob*.
- c. In-class activity: What are your thoughts on, and experiences with, non-human animals?
- d. Take home Practice: Option 1: If you own a pet or if you know someone who owns one, spend some time with that animal this week. Observe their behaviour, their habits. Do they seem to show emotions? How do you feel being around them? What kinds of interaction do they seem to enjoy? Option 2: Find an animal on campus to observe (without disturbing them). There are many birds and squirrels on campus. Sit quietly and observe them. What do they do? What do they need? What happens to them while you observe them? What conditions would make their lives go well?

## Week 12

### 23. Being in Nature

- a. Reading: Kimmerer, Robin Wall (2013). Skywoman Falling. In *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants* (pp. 3–10). Milkweed Editions.
- b. Reading: Mahuika, A. (1998), 'Whakapapa is the Heart', in K.S. Coates and P.G. McHugh (eds.), *Living Relationships* (Victoria University Press), 214-221.
  - i. Hope, S. (2022), 'Normative Disorientation and a Limitation of Human Rights' in *Being Social*. Brownlee et al (eds) OUP.
- c. In-class activity: Your Thoughts on Plants.
- d. Take home Practice: Option 1): Visit the UBC Botanical Garden. Write about the experience. Option 2): Adopt a plant. It need not come into your home. You might choose one that you see on your regular route. Decide to observe it over time to see how it is faring. Notice its leaves or needles. Learn its name. You might take photos, make sketches, or record changes in it. Write about your observations.
  - i. For a guided meditation on absorbing friendliness from trees and other beings, see: <https://dharmaseed.org/talks/player/83876.html>

### 24. Aesthetic Appreciation

- a. Reading: Lopes, D. (2018). *Being for Beauty: Aesthetic Agency and Value*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198827214.001.0001>. Introduction and Ch. 1.
- b. In-class activity: Draw with Rob.
- c. Take home Practice: Making Art: Option 1: Try something new in a fine art area, e.g.

drawing, dancing, singing, poetry writing, improvising on an instrument, spoken word, photography, Lego building, etc. ([Action for Happiness](#)) Option 2: Make time each day this week to engage in a hobby of yours. Report on your experiences and observations in your journal entry. Option 3: Look for beauty in your surroundings. What do you notice?

### Week 13

#### 25. Emotional Depth: Loss, Sorrow, and Grief

- a. Reading: Vitrano, C. (2013). 'Love and Resilience'. *Ethical Perspectives*. 20 (4):591-604.
  - i. See also the films *Inside Out* and *Hector and the Search for Happiness*
- b. In-class activity: Holding Difficult Feelings.
- c. Take home practice: Resilience: This [Action for Happiness](#) page identifies several common 'thinking traps', e.g. blaming ourselves or others, thinking some problem will be permanent, etc. Look at the list and see if you identify a tendency in yourself to have some of these kinds of thoughts. See if you can begin to notice when they arise. Make a note each time you identify one and label what kind of thought it is. Share your observations in your journal entry.
  - i. For a Dharma talk on sickness, depression, and one's own intentions, see <https://dharmaseed.org/talks/player/29691.html>
  - ii. For a Dharma talk on building resilience through togetherness, see <https://dharmaseed.org/talks/player/72926.html>

#### 26. Joy

- a. Reading: Locke, John [1690] *Essay Concerning Humane Understanding*, Book ii, ch xx: 'Of Modes of Pleasure and Pain'.
- b. In-class activity: Sharing of happiness projects.
- c. Take home practice: Reread your journal entries and review your take-home activities undertaken over the course of the term. Which ones resonated the most with you? Which ones did you find most challenging? Write your final entry in response to these two questions. Consider implementing some of the most enjoyable practices and one or two of the most challenging ones into your daily life going forward.
- d. For a Dharma talk on joy, see <https://dharmaseed.org/talks/player/86037.html>
- e. Take home video suggestion: [Finding Joy in Difficult Times](#)

### Selected Further Readings

- Aquinas. (1274). *Summa Theologiae* (many editions).
- F. D. Miller & E. F. Paul (Eds.), *Human flourishing* Cambridge University Press.
- Augustine. (1416). *De Trinitate* (many editions).
- Annas, J. (1993). *The Morality of Happiness*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brandt, R. B. (1966). The Concept of Welfare. In S. R. Krupp (ed.), *The Structure of Economic Science: Essays on Methodology*. pp. 257-76.
- Eggleston, B., & Miller, D. E. (2014) (Eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Utilitarianism*. Cambridge University Press.

- Feldman, F. (2010). *What is this thing called happiness?* (1st ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Foot, P. (1985). Utilitarianism and the virtues. *Mind*, 94(374), 196-209.
- Griffin, J. (1986). *Well-being: Its meaning, measurement, and moral importance*. Clarendon Press.
- Kimmerer, Robin Wall (2021). *Gathering Moss: A natural and cultural history of mosses*. Penguin UK.
- Nagel, T. (1978). *The possibility of altruism*. Princeton University Press.
- Ricard, M. (2015). *Altruism: The power of compassion to change yourself and the world* (First North American ed.). Little, Brown and Company.
- Stohr, K. (2019). *Minding the gap: Moral ideals and moral improvement* (1st ed.). Oxford University Press.

## Land Acknowledgement

UBC's Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam) people. I acknowledge the enduring relationship of the Musqueam people to these lands, who for millennia have passed their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.

UBC's information on [Indigenous Engagement](#) notes that 'the land upon which the Vancouver campus sits is *unceded*, that is, it was never surrendered to Canada or British Columbia through a treaty or other means (a circumstance more common in British Columbia than in the rest of Canada).'

In this course, we will look at themes of wellbeing related to interconnectedness, appreciation for all beings, and love. Among other things, we will look at the five ethical precepts of Buddhism, one of which guides us to only take what is freely given. We will also look at the writings of the Indigenous scholar Robin Wall Kimmerer, who observes that the language of *rights* – specifically private property rights – is at odds with 'an Indigenous worldview in which the earth exists not as private property, but as a commons, to be tended with respect and reciprocity for the benefit of all.' (See *Braiding Sweetgrass*).

## Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious form of academic misconduct involving intellectual theft. Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation. Where direct quotations are made, they must be clearly delineated (for example, within quotation marks or separately indented). Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else's work as one's own. Plagiarism should not occur in submitted drafts or final works. A student who seeks assistance from a tutor or other scholastic aids must ensure that the work submitted is the student's own. Students are responsible for ensuring that



any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. Students who are in any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult their instructor before handing in any assignments. Please see: <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959>. **Please ensure that you are familiar with the standards for good academic practice and the university's norms and regulations:** <https://artsone.arts.ubc.ca/about-arts-one/ubc-policies/ubc-plagiarism-policy/> and <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/dissertation-thesis-preparation/plagiarism>

### **Statement of UBC values and policies:**

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated, nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious and cultural observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available here: <https://senate.ubc.ca/policies-resources-support-student-success/>.

### **Academic Concession**

[UBC's academic concession policy](#) “articulates the University’s commitment to support students in their academic pursuits through the application of academic concessions in the event that students experience unanticipated events or circumstances that interfere with their ability to accomplish academic work.” An academic concession may be granted for a student when an unexpected situation or circumstance prevents them from completing graded work or exams.

Students may request an academic concession for the following three reasons:

- Unanticipated changes in personal responsibilities that create a conflict
- Medical circumstances
- Compassionate grounds

If students have a disability or ongoing medical condition that affects their studies for more than one term, they may request an [academic accommodation](#).

Requests should be made as early as reasonably possible. Depending on the situation, either the academic advising office or course instructor will manage student’s request.

If you miss marked coursework (assignment, exam, presentation, participation in class) and are an Arts student, review the Faculty of Arts’ [academic concession page](#) and then complete Arts Academic Advising’s online academic concession form, so that an advisor can evaluate your concession case. If you are a student in a different Faculty, please consult your Faculty’s webpage on academic concession, and then contact me where appropriate.

## Academic Integrity

The academic enterprise is founded on honesty, civility, and integrity. As members of this enterprise, all students are expected to know, understand, and follow the codes of conduct regarding academic integrity. At the most basic level, this means submitting only original work done by you and acknowledging all sources of information or ideas and attributing them to others as required. This also means you should not cheat, copy, or mislead others about what is your work. Violations of academic integrity (i.e., misconduct) lead to the breakdown of the academic enterprise, and therefore serious consequences arise and harsh sanctions are imposed. For example, incidences of plagiarism or cheating may result in a mark of zero on the assignment or exam and more serious consequences may apply if the matter is referred to the President's Advisory Committee on Student Discipline. Careful records are kept in order to monitor and prevent recurrences. A more detailed description of academic integrity, including the University's policies and procedures, may be found under [Discipline for Academic Misconduct](#) in the Academic Calendar.

## No AI

**\*\*The use of AI tools such as ChatGPT is not permitted for any assessment, except to minimally check the fluency of your prose.** But, be aware that ChatGPT and other AI tools often produce lifeless prose. You'd do better to follow the guidance on how to write Philosophy papers that will be given at the start of each lecture. Philosophy is a form of intellectual athleticism. **You cannot become an athlete if you have the robot run the race for you.\*\***

## Resources to Support Student Success

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available on the UBC Senate website: <https://senate.ubc.ca/policies-resources-support-student-success>



## **Appendix: Advice on Writing an Essay in Philosophy**

### **Guides on Writing in Philosophy**

- Jim Pryor: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>
- Harvard Writing Centre:  
[https://philosophy.fas.harvard.edu/files/phildept/files/brief\\_guide\\_to\\_writing\\_philosophy\\_paper.pdf](https://philosophy.fas.harvard.edu/files/phildept/files/brief_guide_to_writing_philosophy_paper.pdf)

### **Guides on Writing Clearly and Elegantly**

- Williams, *Style: Toward Clarity and Grace*.
- Evans, *Do I Make Myself Clear*.

### **Basic Tips for Writing in Philosophy**

- A Philosophy essay is not a murder mystery. It's a reasoned defence of a claim.
- Announce your thesis (i.e. your central claim) at the beginning.
- Spend the rest of the essay defending that claim.
- Narrow your focus. Take charge of the question. Tell your reader at the outset what you will do and why you will do it (and also what you won't do and why).
- Have a clear structure. Signpost. After you've defended your first main point, briefly summarise what you've done and tell your reader what you will do next.
- Situate your view in relation to the literature, if appropriate.

Features of a good essay:

- A clear statement of the central claim that will be defended.
- A conceptual specification of the key terms necessary to defend that claim. (For instance, if your essay is about privacy, specify what you mean by *privacy*.)
- A clear, well-structured defence of the claim (i.e. the reasons for advancing it),
- Effective engagement with possible objections against the claim.
- Ensure your paper has been checked thoroughly for spelling and grammar.
- Adhere strictly to an accepted referencing style.
- Be willing to write several drafts. Figure out what you think while writing the bad first draft. First drafts are always bad. They are supposed to be bad! Then refine your ideas in the good second draft and refine them again in the excellent third draft.
- Read professional philosophy articles as (good and bad) models of style and structure. Think about the articles you most enjoyed reading. Dissect them to understand how they are built.

Suggested structure:

- In the first few sentences, set the scene and explain why the topic matters.
- Next, introduce the thesis, e.g. 'In this essay, I shall argue that X.'
- Specify or refine that thesis. 'By X, I mean...'
- Finish the introduction by listing the (2-5) steps that you will take to defend your claim.
- Then: go through those steps. Consider objections. Defend your view against those objections. (If you find an objection forceful and devastating for your view, then it's time to go back to the drawing board and change your thesis.) Engage with the literature as appropriate.
- Conclude briefly by highlighting what you've achieved in the essay.
- Once you've followed these 'rules' for many years, and you understand why they are the rules, then you may begin to break them.

## Essay Checklist

The following are necessary but insufficient conditions for an A-.

	Criteria	Answer Yes or No or Not Sure
1.	Does my paper have a thesis? (Do I have a <u>central claim</u> that I defend in my paper)? <sup>1</sup>	
2.	Do I announce my thesis in my introduction (i.e. in the first couple of paragraphs)?	
3.	Do I outline in my introduction the steps I will take in my paper to defend my thesis?	
4.	In my paper, do I consider possible objections to my thesis or my line of argument for it, e.g. "A critic of my view might say..."	
5.	Do I consider the strongest possible objections to my view that I can think of?	
6.	Do I answer these possible objections?	
7.	Can my own voice be heard? Is it clear where the thinkers I'm discussing stop and where my own views and arguments begin? Does my voice take centre stage as it should? (You may use: 'In my view...' and 'I argue...')	
8.	Have I consistently and accurately followed a standard referencing style, such as Chicago, Harvard, APA, etc.?	Name the style used:
9.	Have I included a bibliography that follows a standard style and includes all and only the works I cite in my paper? Do I include an appropriate number of scholarly sources, e.g. 5-10 sources?	Name the style used:
10.	Have I checked my grammar, spelling, quality of prose, structure, etc.? Is my prose clean, professional, and engaging?	
11.	Have I accurately summarized the readings I'm discussing?	

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<sup>1</sup> The test is whether you can complete the sentence: "In this essay, I shall argue that..."