

# **Syllabus for Life Worth Living – theoretical view and personal values**

**Shortnumber:** UME006G

**Credits:** 5 credits

**Min. grade:** 5,0

**Level:** Undergraduate

**Semester:** Fall

**Academic Year:** 2024-2025

**Attendance required:** Yes

**More on attendance:** Attendance is required in face to face sessions and counts for 10% of the final grade

**Assessment:** Several written and oral assignments and participation

**Final exam:** No Final Examination

**School of Education, Faculty of Education and Diversity**

## **Mode of study:**

Distance learning with real -time participation in online meetings and some onsite learning. The course has weekly online sessions with discussions and two face to face sessions where attendance is required.

## **Course Description:**

This course is the first of a pair of courses based on the same essential questions; “What makes life worth living?” and “How can we live a life worth living?”. The purpose of this pair of courses is to give students opportunity to be a part of a learning community and join others on a personal journey.

This foundational course aims at providing students with insights from various fields. Students will go through theoretical material from different disciplines (such as philosophy, psychology, diversity studies), and from different regions (Western, Asian, African). This will

be done through students reading, discussions and critical reflection on both the material and on students' own values and ideas. The teaching will aim at making students able to apply the knowledge, whether to current social reality or to their own personal situation and life, and not be passive receivers of "world wisdom".

Although the course requires students to read and engage with different theories or views about what makes life good and worthy of living, the pedagogical approach is based on engagement with questions rather than learning theories or becoming versed in certain moral, psychological or religious traditions. The questions are meant to be both outward looking and inward looking. By outward looking, we mean that they engage students and teachers in a discussion of different moral values, various traditions and social structures. By inward looking, we mean that the students and teachers are encouraged to take a personal stance and use the questions to reflect on their own lives.

#### **Learning outcomes:**

#### **Students will ...**

- Be more aware of their own values and able to express them in words and actions
- Be able to listen to others' values and see them in the context of different cultures
  - Have a good understanding of certain influential ideas about the good and meaningful life
  - Have practical knowledge of how to implement their ideas of the good and meaningful life in their own life

#### **Course Schedule:**

**August 29** (BJJ, IK, ÓPJ): Online session on Teams: Introduction and question 1: *Towards whom are we responsible?*

**September 5** (ÓPJ): Online session on Teams: Question 2: *How should we change?*

**September 12** - ON-SITE SESSION - *To Live Deliberately*

In this session, we will reflect on what it means to live deliberately. We will begin with a silent conversation about the following sentence:

"I wanted to live deliberately, to confront only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what life had to teach me."

We will not concern ourselves with where it comes from, who wrote it, or in what context it was written—at least not to start with. First, we will simply engage in a conversation about this sentence, a silent conversation.

**September 19 (IK):** Online session on Zoom: Question 3: *How free are we to live the life we desire?*

**October 10 (BJJ):** Online session on Zoom: Question 4: *What about the inner life, well-being and emotions?*

**October 24 (IK):** Online session on Teams: Question 5: *What should we strive for?*

**October 31 - ON-SITE SESSION -** *What led you to choose this field of study and how does that relate to your values?*

In this session, we will explore questions related to your choice of field of study.

We'll start with individual reflection, move on to small group discussions, and conclude with a full group conversation.

What led you to choose this field of study, and how does it relate to your values and the life you want to live?

Can your studies support you in realizing your values and defining your direction in life, and if so, how?

What is it about the content of the program you have chosen and the futures you envision that connects to what matters to you and the life you wish to lead?

## **Assignments:**

***Five Reflection Assignments (5% each of the final grade)***

Reflection assignments are individual tasks where students reflect on questions inspired by diverse philosophies of happiness and the good life. The emphasis is on students forming

personal perspectives and using the questions to examine their own lives. The assignments draw on various texts, podcasts, and other recordings.

**Length:** 500 to 1000 words (1 to 2 pages)

**Evaluation Criteria:** Both content and presentation will be assessed.

**Content:** It is important to use one or more of the texts from this week's reading list. However, the goal of the assignment is not to analyze the texts but to use them to explore aspects of your own life. It is also beneficial to connect your reflections to discussions held during class. Remember, this is a reflection assignment, meaning it requires you to think deeply, analyze, and question.

**Presentation:** The writing should be clear, free from language errors, and organized into paragraphs of appropriate length. If quoting texts, make sure to include them in a reference list (use the APA format).

**Assignment 1:** Reflect on the question: Toward whom are we responsible? Use one or two texts as a starting point and apply them to examine your own attitudes, values, and ideas.

**Assignment 2:** Reflect on the question: How should I change? Use one or two texts as a starting point and apply them to examine your own attitudes, values, and ideas.

**Assignment 3:** Reflect on the question: *How free are we to live the life we desire?* Use one or two texts and/or class discussions as a starting point, and apply them to examine your own attitudes, values, and ideas.

**Assignment 4:** Reflect on the question: *What about our inner life, well-being, and emotions?* *How do they affect our flourishing?* Use one or two texts and class discussions as a starting point, and apply them to examine your own attitudes, values, and ideas.

**Assignment 5:** Reflect on the question: *What is worth wanting?* This can be approached through various related questions: What is the purpose of life? Should we set goals? What kind of goals? Is there a connection between goals and happiness/well-being? Use one or two texts and/or class discussions as a starting point, and apply them to examine your own attitudes, values, and ideas.

**Assignment after on-site session 1** (25% of the final grade).

In this assignment we continue working with the text we worked with during the on-site session (Thoreau, *Walden*, p. 100). The task is divided into three parts.

(1) Review the images that were created during the silent conversation (available on the course's Canvas page). In these images, you will see what you wrote. Reflect on the following questions:

- 1.1 Did you interpret the sentence in the same way as others in the group?
- 1.2 Are there any comments that surprised you?
- 1.3 Did something someone wrote lead you to see the sentence in a new light?

(2) Thoreau went into the woods to live fully, to face the essential facts of life. But not everyone can go into the woods.

- 2.1 Is there a place in your life, or perhaps a person, that serves as your "woods"? Is there someone in your life who helps you face the essential facts of life (whatever those might be)?
- 2.2 Are you the "woods" for someone else? Is there someone who turns to you to live fully?

(3) Thoreau seems unsure whether life is good or bad, but he places great emphasis on living truthfully, not in illusion.

- 3.1 Is living fully, facing the essential facts of life, the same as avoiding illusion?
- 3.2 Is a truthful life necessarily a good life? Could illusion not be a way to live a good life in a harsh world?

The main objectives of this assignment are twofold: First, to examine and try to understand Thoreau's text. Second, to reflect on what is said in the text and connect it to your own life. The goal is not to agree or disagree with the text, and if you find it completely incomprehensible or even contradictory, that's perfectly fine. Simply discuss your perspective, provide reasoning, and explain your thoughts.

***Grading Criteria:***

1. Response to the Questions:
  - Address the questions with your own reflections in a 3-4 page essay (1,500–2,000 words).
  - Discuss key points that matter and answer all three questions.

- You may write more about one question than another, and incorporating course texts and points raised during class discussions will strengthen the assignment.

## 2. Presentation Quality:

- Ensure good organization, clear expression, and correct grammar and spelling.
- There is no requirement to reference texts outside the course materials, but if you do, follow academic conventions (APA format).

### **Assignment after on-site session 2 (25% of the final grade).**

In this assignment, the main question is addressed, along with additional sub-questions, and the reflection is connected to the course content:

- (1) What led you to choose this field of study, and how does it relate to your values and the life you want to live?
- (2) your studies support you in realizing your values and shaping your direction in life, and if so, how?
- (3) What aspects of the program you have chosen and the futures you envision are connected to what matters to you and the life you wish to lead?

### ***Grading Criteria:***

#### 3. Response to the Questions:

- Address the questions with your own reflections in a 3-4 page essay (1,500–2,000 words).
- Discuss key points that matter and answer all three questions.
- You may write more about one question than another, and incorporating course texts and points raised during class discussions will strengthen the assignment.

#### 4. Presentation Quality:

- Ensure good organization, clear expression, and correct grammar and spelling.
- There is no requirement to reference texts outside the course materials, but if you do, follow academic conventions (APA format).

### **Final assignment (25% of the final grade):**

The assignment takes the form of a report, providing students the opportunity to summarize their reflections over the semester and refine their worldview, values, and future plans that can contribute to flourishing and the life they wish to lead.

In this assignment it is important to address the themes of the course and connect them to the texts that have been read (or podcasts, videos, etc.), but above all, to reflect on your own experiences. The assignment should discuss topics such as worldview, values, and a flourishing or meaningful life. The assignment can—and should—be deeply personal, while also linking to the academic concepts covered in the course.

***Grading Criteria:***

1. Response to the Questions:

- Address the questions with your own reflections in a 4–5-page essay (1600 to 2000 words).
- Discuss key points that matter and answer all three questions.
- You may write more about one question than another and incorporating course texts and points raised during class discussions will strengthen the assignment.

2. Presentation Quality:

- Ensure good organization, clear expression, and correct grammar and spelling.
- There is no requirement to reference texts outside the course materials, but if you do, follow academic conventions (APA format).