



Philosophy 1361E (670)
FINDING HAPPINESS: A JOURNEY THROUGH PHILOSOPHY
Fall/ Winter 2025-2026

Instructor: J. Marsh
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Course Information

Calendar Description:

How do we find happiness in life? Is it through the fulfillment of desire, be it for pleasure, wealth, fame, companionship, knowledge, or union with God? Perhaps, paradoxically, it is by abandoning desire altogether and leading a simple life. This course will explore how philosophy has responded to these issues.

Extra Information: 3 hours.

Course Weight: 1.00
Breadth: Category B
Subject Code: PHILOSOP

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course (fulfilment of pre-requisites, no anti-requisite conflicts), or special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.



Finding Happiness: A Journey Through Philosophy
Philosophy 1361E | Section 670 | 2025-2026 (online)

Instructor: Dr. Jonathan P. Marsh

Virtual Office Hour: TBA

Email: jmarsh26@uwo.ca

Please allow 24 hours for replies.

Description

For many ancient and medieval writers, happiness is the highest or ultimate good (*summum bonum*). But what is it? Is it the satisfaction of our desires (for love, friendship, knowledge, wealth, or fame)? Or might it, paradoxically, involve giving up our desires and leading a simple life? Does happiness consist of enjoying excellence? connecting with Nature? or shared union with God? Is happiness even possible for beings like us? Do we have duties to make others happy? Students in this class will learn about these and related controversies.

Note: no background in the philosophy of happiness is expected or presupposed. [Adapted from the 2025-2026 Western calendar description.]

Methods

In addition to slides, with voice recordings, teaching methods involve music, film, readings, crowdsourcing and (optional) online tutorials.

Course-Related Expenses

All readings will be made available via OWL Brightspace. There are no anticipated costs for those, though, a small rental fee may be required for an assigned film (title[s] TBA), through a seller of your choice, assuming it's not accessible via or the UWO library.

Technical Requirements

Laptop or Desktop

Reliable Internet Connection

Microsoft Office

(NB: for the purpose of accessing voice recordings, on PowerPoint slides, something than Chromebook is strongly recommended.)

Evaluative Requirements

Assignments

Values

Dates

1. Tutorial Participation (Optional)	15%	9/13 or 1/9 (time: TBA) (choose 1 or 0)
2. Film & the Good Life (Integrative Reflections)	25%	11/10
3. Happiness Essay	30%	3/1 or 4/1 (choose topic-based date)
4. Online Exam	30%	April Examination Period. (Date: TBA)

1. Tutorial Participation [Optional] (15%): Online tutorials will run for approx. 60 minutes. Students who decide to participate will choose 1 of 2 tutorials and will receive a grade out of 15. Each tutorial will incorporate class discussions, small breakout rooms, and very brief (2-3 sentence) exercises; students must submit those when prompted (no late submissions will be accepted). Can't make either Zoom session? Fear not: your remaining assessments will automatically be evenly reweighed. So, for instance, if you score a total of 72/90 (80%) on your remaining assessments, your final grade will automatically become 80/100. Available, but hesitant or worried about your grade? Again, fear not: your tutorial performance *may* raise, but will *never* lower, your final grade – if does, I will simply eliminate the tutorial grade before final grades are submitted. Also, tutorials are designed to be stress-free, informal and fun.

2. Film & the Good Life [Integrative Reflections] (25%): It is important to be able to intelligently and creatively integrate course material in the context of a meaningful assignment. This required assignment is designed with this in mind. Students will analyze a film (title TBA) from the perspective of Unit 1 material on happiness. More details will be provided via OWL Brightspace.

3. Essay (30%): Paper topics, options and instructions will be provided (OWL Brightspace), but each student must come up with their own thesis statement and argument. There are **two options (A & B)**, corresponding to different topics and due date. You needn't notify me of your selection, but you must choose exactly 1. I.e., if you submit option A, you may not submit option B, vice versa.

4. Online Exam (30%): To take place during the April Examination period (date TBA). Any material we cover, during the academic year, is admissible and hence a fitting object of study (unless I explicitly state otherwise in writing via OWL Brightspace). Advanced preparation is, accordingly, strongly recommended. To this end, please keep up with your weekly checklists. Although outside sources, search engines (e.g. Google) and tools (e.g., AI, including grammar aids), are **strictly prohibited**, students are permitted to use course materials (e.g., PowerPoint slides) as they write this exam from home, making the exam, in this sense, "open book". Cheating-detecting software(s) will be employed, but the main mechanism for ensuring honesty is the very nature of the exam (which rewards original reflection as you combine and showcase understanding of course material etc.).

About this course

Welcome to PHIL 1361E! This is a distance/online course. You never have to come to campus. It's also "asynchronous", meaning we will not have a regular time when the entire class must be online. However, there will be some synchronous activities including (ii) weekly office hours and (iii) (optional) Zoom tutorials (which will be summarized for those who are absent). Throughout the course you are expected to keep up by reading your **weekly checklists** on our course website. This is how you will know what to do each week. This course begins on Sep 5, 2025, and continues until the examination period in April of 2025, honouring all important dates derived from University approved guidelines and academic policies (<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/academic-resources/academic-dates-and-events/>). Please note, in addition to a reliable internet connection, you will need access to a computing device with the capabilities of running PowerPoint, including its voice recordings.

Aims

By the end of the academic year, every committed PHIL 1361E student will

- 1). be acquainted with some of the major questions, figures, positions and controversies in the philosophy of happiness and how they relate to other controversies (e.g., in psychology and ethics) (theoretical understanding).
- 2). have carefully reflected on their own value scale, including what goods they regard as having final worth, with the purpose of making more choiceworthy decisions (self-knowledge & practical wisdom)
- 3). have presented and defended their own thoughts on a core issue in the philosophy of happiness, in the form of a sustained argument, the midst of considering objections and alternative perspectives (intellectual creativity & personal development).
- 4). have cultivated intellectual virtues pertaining to careful reflection, argumentation, dialogue, interpretation, research and clear writing (to help with outcomes 1-3) (skills).

Grading Information and Explanation of Grades

All assignments will be accompanied by grading criteria and clear directions. Students will be evaluated in accordance with how well they follow them. What follows is a university wide grade explanation.

- **A+** 90 – 100% One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
- **A** 80 – 89% Superior work which is clearly above average
- **B** 70 – 79% Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
- **C** 60 – 69% Competent work, meeting requirements
- **D** 50 – 59% Fair work, minimally acceptable
- **F** below 50 Fail

As the above scale implies, the cognitive skills (e.g., clarity of writing) and intellectual goods (e.g., understanding) come in degrees. This scale helps clarify those degrees.

Academic Considerations /Missed Work

Formal: No work will be received after the last day of classes without a formal recommendation from your advisor — after you have submitted proper documentation (e.g., medical documentation) to them. Moreover, any missed assignments will receive a grade of zero (o) unless the student receives academic considerations.

Informal: You are, however, permitted one *informal* academic consideration per term — i.e., one consideration without a recommendation from your advisor. Even so, this cannot be applied to (i) missed final exams (special exams always require formal recommendation from your advisor — see above) or (ii) missed Zoom tutorials (given that they are optional). Rather, any informal considerations must, if granted, be applied towards film assignments or term papers. Since this is an essay course, and since the film assignment is deemed essential, such accommodations will, as a default, come in the form of an extension of up to 1 week or until the last day of classes (whichever is sooner). Exceptions will only be made in rare cases where a more suitable arrangement is deemed fitting or necessary by your instructor and your advisor (e.g., there's an extensive absence due to bereavement or medical reason).

Class-specific policy on AI (e.g., Chat GPT) use

Use of Chat GPT or other AI services (including Grammarly) is strictly prohibited in all assessments, including essays and examinations. Unauthorized use of AI will be subject to

academic discipline. Fancy cheating-detection software(s), and a careful eye, will be employed.

Course Map

Dates	Units & Topics	Assignments
	Fall of 2025 Term	
Sep 5	Course Introduction: The Quest for Happiness	
	Unit 1: Philosophical Accounts of Happiness	
	<i>Mental State & Objective List Theories</i>	
Sep 12	Pleasure Theories	Tutorial #1 9/13. See Zoom info on Brightspace.
Sep 19	Desire Theories	
Sep 26	Wisdom Theories	
Oct 3	Well-Ordered Soul/Virtue Theories	
	<i>Hybrid Theories / Proper Relation Theories</i>	
Oct 10	Union with the Divine	
Oct 17	Union with Nature	
Oct 24	"Enjoyment of the Excellent" / "Enjoying the Good" Theories	
Oct 31	Film Title Release	Release of film title for Film & the Good Life Assignment, by 10/31.
Nov 7	Fall Reading Week (November 3-9, 2025)	

Nov 14	Film Assignment/Integrative Reflections	Film Assignment due Nov 14
Nov 21	Concluding remarks re: Unit 1.	
	Unit 2: The Science of Happiness	
Nov 28	Measuring Happiness: Recent Findings	
Dec 5	Shifting our Happiness Baselines	
	Winter 2026 Term	
	Unit 3: Happiness Ethics	
Jan 9	Utilitarianism & World Hunger	Tutorial #2. 1/9. See Zoom info on Brightspace.
Jan 16	The Ethics of Killing Happy Animals	
Jan 23	The Morality Creating Happy (or Unhappy) People	
Jan 30	Quality of Life Assessments & Medicine	
Feb 6	Happiness & The Future (Part 1): Climate Ethics	
Feb 13	Happiness & The Future (Part 2): Human Enhancement & AI	
Feb 20	Winter Reading Week (February 14–22, 2026).	
	Unit 4: Death & Well-Being	
Feb 27	The Problem of Death: Is Death Bad for Us? (Happiness & Deprivation)	Essay (Option A) due on 3/1. If you skip this, you must complete the Option B

		essay, vice versa.
Mar 6	The Problem of Death Cont'd: Attempted Solutions	
Mar 13	The Problem of Immortality: Should We Desire to Live Forever?	
	Unit 5: Unhappiness	
Mar 20	Meaning & Suffering	
Mar 27	Ancient Advice for Dealing with Misfortune	Essay (Option B) due 4/1. Only for those who didn't submit Option A. If you chose Option B, you must successfully submit your paper <i>before</i> midnight on April 2, 2026.
April 3	Good Friday	Slides will be posted on/by April 2 this week.
April 10-11	Study Days	
April 12-30	Final Exam (online): Please do not make any irrevocable (e.g., travel) plans until you know your exam schedule. For non-refundable tickets etc. do not entitle a special exam. Even though this is an online exam, you will need to be free/available to write during the exam window.	April Exam Date: TBA. Please consult the final exam schedule once it is published by the University.

Note: the above map is tentative and may be adjusted during the term. For the most updated and accurate information, please regularly consult your weekly checklist on OWL Brightspace.

Notice of Turnitin Analysis: All written work may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
GENERAL COURSE POLICIES
2025-2026

1. Academic Accommodations, Consideration for Absences

Academic Accommodation (Accessibility)

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found here [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate), they should follow the procedures below.

In some cases, where instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs.

Requests for academic consideration should be directed to the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration. Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration. For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate is available at https://www.kings.uwo.ca/kings/assets/File/currentStudents/courses_enrollment/exams_and_tests/SMC-Feb-2025.pdf.

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per course.

Instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline for each course.

For further information, please see:

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

Absences from Final Examinations

If you miss the Final Exam, contact the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a “Multiple Exam Situation” (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details (under Special Examinations).

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

2. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King's University College:
<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-services/>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King's University

College: <http://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/campus-services/student-supportservices/personal-counselling/>

Good2talk is a good online and phone 24/7 resource for students and is available in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options about how to obtain help:
https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/

Academic Support Services at King's University College:
<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/academic-resources/>

GBSV Support:

King's is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at:
<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

You can reach someone supports at Kings by emailing Care@kings.uwo.ca or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a social worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western's Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by email or by calling 519-661-3568.

Further supports can be found on this website: <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safecampus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

See also https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

University Students' Council offers many valuable support services for students, including the health insurance plan: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

3. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Use of Electronic Devices: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom: King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-affairs/code-of-student-conduct1/>

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

4. Statement on Academic Offences

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. Check with you instructor on what tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammarchecking tools) are permitted in the course. Because a tool is permitted in one course, that does not mean it is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system; see <https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/Originality Reports - TurnItIn.html>.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

5. Copyright of Course Material

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member. Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

6. Use of Recordings

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

7. Policy on Attendance

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.