



**PHILOSOPHY 1361E (670)**  
**Finding Happiness: A Journey Through Philosophy**  
**Fall/Winter 2026 - 2027**

Instructor: Dr. Jonathan P. Marsh

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**Course Information**

**Class Times:**

**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.

**Prerequisite(s):**

**Antirequisite(s):**

**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 | 2026-2027 (online)

Instructor: Dr. Jonathan P. Marsh

Virtual Office Hour: TBA

Email: [jmarsh26@uwo.ca](mailto:jmarsh26@uwo.ca)

Please allow 24 hours for email replies (Monday–Friday). Weekend messages will be answered starting Monday.

### 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 2026-2027 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

**Important Notice:** Chromebook devices may not support key features of PowerPoint (namely, voice recordings) which are essential to this course. Please use or borrow a device that's compatible with all features of PowerPoint.

### Evaluative Requirements

| Assignments                                                  | Values | Dates              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------|--------------------|
| 1. Tutorial Participation (Optional)<br>TBA) (choose 1 or 0) | 15%    | 9/18 or 1/8 (time: |
| 2. Film & the Good Life (Integrative Reflections)            | 25%    | 11/10              |
| 3. Happiness Essay<br>topic-based date)                      | 30%    | 3/1 or 4/1 (choose |
| 4. Online Exam<br>Period. (Date: TBA)                        | 30%    | April Examination  |

*\*Please note that that Friday Make-Up Exams may only be written the instructor's consent.*

**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 9, 2026, and continues until the examination period in April of 2027, 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. If an assessment isn't properly submitted within the date range in the formal recommendation, it will qualify as a missed assessment. 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 (considerations for missed final 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 for no longer than the date range referenced in the formal recommendation.

### ***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 measures, and a careful eye, will be employed.

### ***Recording Policy***

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.

### **Course Map**

| <b>Dates</b> | <b>Units &amp; Topics</b>                                   | <b>Assignments</b>                                                                                                                                        |
|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|              | Fall of 2026 Term                                           |                                                                                                                                                           |
| Sep 11       | Course Introduction: The Quest for Happiness                |                                                                                                                                                           |
|              | <b>Unit 1: Philosophical Accounts of Happiness</b>          |                                                                                                                                                           |
|              | <i>Mental State &amp; Objective List Theories</i>           |                                                                                                                                                           |
| Sep 18       | Pleasure Theories                                           | <b>Tutorial #1</b> 9/18.<br>See Zoom info on Brightspace.                                                                                                 |
| Sep 25       | Desire Theories                                             |                                                                                                                                                           |
| Oct 2        | Wisdom Theories                                             |                                                                                                                                                           |
| Oct 9        | Well-Ordered Soul/Virtue Theories                           |                                                                                                                                                           |
|              | <i>Hybrid Theories / Proper Relation Theories</i>           |                                                                                                                                                           |
| Oct 23       | Union with the Divine                                       |                                                                                                                                                           |
| Oct 30       | Union with Nature                                           | <b>Release of film title</b><br>for Film & the Good<br>Life Assignment, by<br>11/1.                                                                       |
| Nov 6        | "Enjoyment of the Excellent" / "Enjoying the Good" Theories |                                                                                                                                                           |
| Nov 13       | Film Assignment/Integrative Reflections                     | <b>Film Assignment</b><br><b>due Nov 10</b>                                                                                                               |
| Nov 20       | Concluding remarks re: Unit 1.                              |                                                                                                                                                           |
|              | <b>Unit 2: Science of Happiness</b>                         |                                                                                                                                                           |
| Nov 27       | Measuring Happiness: Recent Findings                        |                                                                                                                                                           |
|              |                                                             |                                                                                                                                                           |
| Dec 4-9      | Shifting our Happiness Baselines                            |                                                                                                                                                           |
| Dec 10       | Study Day                                                   |                                                                                                                                                           |
|              | Winter 2027 Term                                            |                                                                                                                                                           |
|              | <b>Unit 3: Happiness &amp; Religion</b>                     |                                                                                                                                                           |
| Jan 8-15     | The Problem of Suffering                                    | <b>Tutorial #2.</b> 1/8.<br>See Zoom info on<br>Brightspace.                                                                                              |
|              | <b>Unit 4: Happiness &amp; Ethics</b>                       |                                                                                                                                                           |
| Jan 22       | Utilitarianism & World Hunger                               |                                                                                                                                                           |
| Jan 29       | The Ethics of Killing Happy Animals                         |                                                                                                                                                           |
| Feb 5        | The Morality Creating Happy (or Unhappy) People             |                                                                                                                                                           |
| Feb 12       | Quality of Life Assessments & Medicine                      |                                                                                                                                                           |
| Feb 26       | Happiness & The Future (Part 1): Climate Ethics             | <b>Essay</b> (Option A)<br>due on 3/1. <b>If you</b><br><b>skip this, you must</b><br><b>complete the</b><br><b>Option B essay,</b><br><b>vice versa.</b> |
| Mar 5        | Happiness & The Future (Part 2): Human Enhancement & AI     |                                                                                                                                                           |
|              | <b>Unit 5: Death &amp; Well-Being</b>                       |                                                                                                                                                           |

|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                             |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mar 12    | The Problem of Death: Is Death Bad for Us? (Happiness & Deprivation)                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                             |
|           | The Problem of Death Cont'd: Attempted Solutions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                             |
| Mar 19    | The Problem of Immortality: Should We Desire to Live Forever?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                             |
|           | <b>Unit 6: Unhappiness</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                             |
| Mar 25    | Meaning & Suffering                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>Essay</b> (Option B) due 4/1. <b>Only for those who didn't submit Option A.</b>                          |
| Apr 2     | Ancient Advice for Dealing with Misfortune                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                             |
| Apr 9     | Last Day of Classes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                             |
| Apr 10-11 | Study Days                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                             |
| Apr 12-30 | <b>Final Exam (online):</b> Please <b>do not make any irrevocable</b> (e.g., travel) plans until you know your exam schedule. 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. | <b>April Exam Date: TBA.</b> 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  
2026-27**

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## **1. Academic Accommodations (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](#).

## **2. Academic Consideration for Student Absences**

Students must be approved to write a makeup exam or for an extension of the assignment deadline. If you need to miss an exam or the deadline for the assignment, please follow these instructions.

There are two ways to seek academic consideration:

### **(i) Academic consideration based on medical or compassionate grounds**

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate grounds), they should contact the Academic Advising Office. As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration.

For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is the appropriate documentation. The SMC is available at <https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/pdfs/student-medical-certificate.pdf>

- King's students: The Academic Advising Office website is located in DLH 104. The Academic Advising website is <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising>.
- If your home faculty is Huron or at Western, please submit your documentation to your faculty's academic counselling office.
- Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

You may submit requests for academic consideration through the **Student Absence Portal**, linked on this website: <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising/academic-consideration-requests-and-student-absence-portal>

### **(ii) Academic consideration through an undocumented absence**

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per half-course (0.5) weight.

- Note that instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline to confirm this assessment.
- If instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs. (For example, if students need to submit X of Y assignments, this flexibility already provides consideration.)
- Undocumented absences can not be used as the basis for academic consideration for December or April exams.

For further information on the academic consideration policy, please see [https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/academic\\_consideration\\_Sep24.pdf](https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf)

### c) Absences from Final Exams

If you miss the Final Exam, **contact your Academic Advising Office** 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 (i.e., you are scheduled to write 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](#)).

### d) Religious Accommodations

Students should consult the University’s list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and their 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.

## 3. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King’s University College:  
<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/accessibility-services>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King’s University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/campus-life/student-supports/>

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

Western’s Mental Health Services site provides a complete list of options on how to obtain help: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental-health/index.html>

Academic Support Services at King's University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/academics/academic-supports/>

#### 4. Statement on Gender-Based Sexual Violence

King's and Western are committed to reducing incidents of gender-based sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: [Mental Health and Wellness at King's](#).

You can reach supports at King's by emailing [care@kings.uwo.ca](mailto: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 ([health@uwo.ca](mailto:health@uwo.ca)) or by calling 519-661-3568. Additional support services can be found <https://www.uwo.ca/health/gbsv/support/index.html>

#### 5. 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://kings.uwo.ca/sites/2025/assets/files/campus/Kings\\_Code\\_of\\_Student\\_Conduct.pdf](https://kings.uwo.ca/sites/2025/assets/files/campus/Kings_Code_of_Student_Conduct.pdf)

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.

#### 6. 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 [https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_offences.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.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 to check which tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in each course.** Note that although some courses may permit the use of such tools, it does not mean use of such tools 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.

## 7. 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.

## 8. 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.

## 9. 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.