

# The Meaning of Life

DAVID SCOTT WILSON-OKAMURA · GRBK 2000 · AUTUMN 2013 · EAST CAROLINA UNIV.

- Aug. 21 W Why are we reading these books?  
23 F PLATO, *Phaedrus* 227a–257b (Dover edn., pp. 93–118)  
26 M *Phaedrus* 257c–end (pp. 118–39)  
28 W *Symposium* 172a–197e (pp. 141–61)  
30 F *Symposium* 198a–end (pp. 161–82)
- Sept. 3 **T Labor Day Make-Up: Symposium** (discussion continued) **Analysis 1 due**  
4 W LUCRETIUS, *De rerum natura* (*On the Nature of the Universe*), book 1  
6 F *De rerum natura*, book 2  
9 M *De rerum natura*, book 3  
11 W *De rerum natura*, book 4  
13 F *De rerum natura*, book 5  
16 M *De rerum natura*, book 6  
18 W DOSTOEVSKY, *The Idiot* (1868–69) pt. 1, chs. 1–4 (trans. Pevear and Volokhonsky, pp. 5–51)  
20 F *The Idiot*, pt. 1, chs. 5–7 (pp. 51–88) **Analysis 2 due**  
23 M *The Idiot*, pt. 1, chs. 8–13 (pp. 89–145)  
25 W *The Idiot*, pt. 1, chs. 14–16 (pp. 145–75)  
27 F *The Idiot*, pt. 2, chs. 1–5 (pp. 179–236)  
30 M *The Idiot*, pt. 2, chs. 6–8 (pp. 236–76)
- Oct. 2 W *The Idiot*, pt. 2, chs. 9–11 (pp. 276–314)  
4 F *The Idiot*, pt. 2, ch. 12 – pt. 3, ch. 3 (pp. 315–67) **Analysis 3 due**  
7 **M Fall Break**  
9 W *The Idiot*, pt. 3, chs. 4–7 (pp. 367–424)  
11 F *The Idiot*, pt. 3, chs. 8–10 (pp. 424–57)  
14 M *The Idiot*, pt. 4, chs. 1–4 (pp. 461–506)  
16 W *The Idiot*, pt. 4, chs. 5–6 (pp. 506–38)  
18 F *The Idiot*, pt. 4, chs. 7–8 (pp. 539–72) **Analysis 4 due**  
21 M *The Idiot*, pt. 4, chs. 9–12 (pp. 572–615)  
23 W TOLSTOY, *War and Peace*, vol. 1, pt. 1, chs. 22–25 (trans. Pevear and Volokhonsky, pp. 87–111)  
25 F *War and Peace*, vol. 1, pt. 2, chs. 6–15 (pp. 137–77)  
28 M *War and Peace*, vol. 1, pt. 2, chs. 16–21 (pp. 177–200)  
30 W *War and Peace*, vol. 1, pt. 3, chs. 10–19 (pp. 253–94)
- Nov. 1 F *War and Peace*, vol. 2, pt. 1, chs. 7–9; pt. 2, chs. 11–13; pt. 3, chs. 1–3 (pp. 320–28, 381–93, 418–24) **Analysis 5 due**  
4 M *War and Peace*, vol. 2, pt. 3, chs. 14–19, 22–24; pt. 5, chs. 1 and 5 (pp. 453–67, 472–82, 535–38, 548–52)  
6 W *War and Peace*, vol. 2, pt. 5, chs. 8–22 (pp. 557–600)  
8 F *War and Peace*, vol. 3, pt. 1, chs. 1–2 and 8–20 (pp. 603–10, 627–71)  
11 M *War and Peace*, vol. 3, pt. 2, chs. 1–5 and 7–8 (pp. 682–705, 709–18)  
13 W *War and Peace*, vol. 3, pt. 2, chs. 12–16 and 19 and 24–25 (pp. 729–45, 753–56, 769–77)  
15 F *War and Peace* vol. 3, pt. 2, chs. 27–39 (pp. 780–820) **Analysis 6 due**  
18 M *War and Peace*, vol. 3, pt. 3, chs. 1–5 and 26 and 30–32 (pp. 821–33, 894–98, 913–23)  
20 W *War and Peace*, vol. 4, pt. 1, chs. 4–16 (pp. 943–86)  
22 F *War and Peace*, vol. 4, pt. 2, chs. 1–14 (pp. 987–1020)  
25 M *War and Peace*, vol. 4, pt. 3, chs. 1–15 (pp. 1031–66)  
27 **W Thanksgiving Break**  
29 **F Thanksgiving Break**

- Dec. 2 M *War and Peace*, vol. 4, pt. 3, chs. 16–19; pt. 4, chs. 4–6 and 12–20 (pp. 1066–74, 1082–89, 1102–25) **Analysis 7 due**
- Dec. 6 F The meaning of life (exam-period activity, 11:00–1:30)

## REQUIREMENTS

**Quizzes (25%).** On most days there will be a reading quiz. There will be 26 quizzes total, and each quiz will be worth 1% of the total course grade. There will be no make-ups for missed quizzes. However, because there is an extra (26th) quiz, you can miss one quiz without harming your grade. Think of it as a free pass: you can use it to go to the beach, or you can use it when you're sick. Because this system is based on numbers, you don't need to explain why you missed class; the math will take care of it automatically. Of course, you'll still be responsible for the material discussed in class. But once you've used that free pass, it's gone. My advice is to save it for when you're sick or need to care for a relative.

**Biweekly Analysis (75%).** Every other Friday, you will submit a written analysis of the previous two weeks' discussion. To fit the reading schedule better, the first analysis will be due Tue., Sept. 3; thereafter, analyses will be due on alternate Fridays, beginning Sept. 20.

What does a good analysis look like? First, it is not the same thing as a response paper. Nor is it a transcript of your class notes turned back into prose. Above all it is not a plot summary. It is a synthesis, rather, of ideas discussed in class. This is a short assignment, so you will not be able to cover everything that we talked about in the previous two weeks. Instead, you will need to decide which were the principal ideas. Organize your writing around those ideas and choose examples to illustrate them.

The use of phrases such as *I think*, *I believe*, and *I feel* is strongly discouraged. You don't need to report who said what, either.

A good analysis will summarize the content of discussion, but it will also evaluate that discussion: for instance, what got left out of our conversation and why does it matter? Don't just say, "We didn't talk about *x*." Say something about *x* and push the conversation forward. As a general rule, one part evaluation to three parts analytical summary is a good balance.

- Length: 900–1,200 words, not including long quotations. When you're done, do a word count (your word processor can do this for you) and write the result on the first page of your paper.
- Pages should be (a) stapled and (b) numbered by computer.
- First impressions count; so do spelling, punctuation, and grammar. If you have trouble with these, I recommend *Grammar in Plain English* by Harriet Diamond and Phyllis Dutwin.
- Double-space. Take pity on my eyes and use 12 point Times Roman (or a similar font of the same size).

Characteristics of an F Paper	Characteristics of a D Paper	Characteristics of a C Paper	Characteristics of a B Paper	Characteristics of an A Paper
Material from class discussion is scanty or disorganized. The cure is usually better notetaking during class.	Material from class discussion is scanty or disorganized. The cure is usually better notetaking during class.	Main points from class discussion are accurately summarized, clearly organized.	Material from class discussion is reorganized to make new points (=synthesis).	Synthesis + critique. What did our discussion omit? Poses fresh questions, offers new hypothesis.
No word count or too short.	No word count or too short.	Word count $\geq$ assigned length.	Word count $\geq$ assigned length.	Word count $\geq$ assigned length.
Numerous errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation.	Numerous errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation.	Some mechanical errors, but not more than one a page.	A few mechanical errors, but not distracting.	The writing is finely crafted, elegant as well as clean.

**Midterm and Final Exams.** There will be no midterm or final exams in this course.

Please don't read, send, or monitor **text messages** in class. Please do turn off your **cell phone ringer** before class begins. **Laptops and tablets** might be helpful in some courses, but not this one; please keep them shut during class.

#### EXTENSIONS

Everyone gets a two-day extension on two analyses over the course of the semester. You choose which ones. You don't need to ask me ahead of time: just hand in a sheet of paper with the date and your name on it that says, "I'm taking my first (or second) extension on this paper." In the interest of fairness, no one will be granted a third extension.

#### PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is using someone else's words or ideas in such a way that they seem your own. Give credit where credit is due; otherwise, you are cheating. If you plagiarize in this class, expect an F for the course. All plagiarism will be reported to the university, and additional sanctions may be imposed. If you have questions about plagiarism, ask them before the paper is due. Finally, be sure that the paper you do hand in is your final draft. If it's plagiarized, and you explain that you gave me "the wrong draft," I will feel sorry for both of us, but you will still get an F for the course. So check before you turn something in and make sure it really is your final draft. Better yet, avoid plagiarism in all of your drafts.

#### ACCOMMODATIONS

East Carolina University seeks to comply fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students requesting accommodations based on a disability must be registered with the Department for Disability Support Services located in Slay 138 (Voice/TTY 252-737-1016).

#### OFFICE HOURS, EMAIL

Office: Bate 2137

Office hours: MWF 11:50-12:15, 2:00-3:15. This spans two class periods: if you have class during both, grab me after class or call me on the telephone and we'll set up an appointment. My home number is in the book but, please, no phone calls after 9:00 pm.

Email: Instead of exchanging emails, let's have a conversation. That's what office hours are for.