The Examined Life

University of Washington Tacoma
5 credits • Winter 2018
Section C: 12:50–2:55 in JOY 104 • Section E: 3:05–5:10 in GWP 216

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MDS 311B

Course Description
At his trial for impiety and corruption of youth in 399 BCE, the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates claimed that “the unexamined life is not worth living” (as reported by his student Plato in The Apology of Socrates). In the millennia since his death, Socrates’s famous dictum has given rise to a number of crucial questions pertaining to the examined life: what does it mean to be human? What are the best ways to live as a human being? How can we know ourselves as well as the world around us, and what should we do with that knowledge? Questions like these have remained central to the humanities—conventionally understood as the study of literature, philosophy, the arts, history, and other “human sciences”—ever since the classical period. Beginning with a discussion of Plato’s Apology and proceeding through a tour of humanities disciplines, this course explores ways several thinkers, authors, artists, and scholars have conceived of the examined life. You will practice your own critical, reflective self-examination, study the frameworks and methodologies that different humanities disciplines use to practice the examined life, interrogate both the utility and the limitations of various conceptions of the examined life, and practice scholarly inquiry in humanities disciplines.

You will pursue these goals by engaging in seminar-style, full-class discussions of assigned texts, by collaborating in small groups, by serving as a class note-taker for one session, by writing briefly and informally about assigned texts in class, by writing several entries in a reflective class journal, and by writing three essays: an Examined Life essay (3–5 pp.) in which you reflect on the values and assumptions that guide your own thoughts, decisions, and actions; a Humanities Major Profile essay (4–6 pp.) in which you read about a humanities discipline or major of your choice and conduct field research (interviews and observations) in order to analyze how the discipline or major helps students learn and/or live an examined life; and a Humanities Scholarship essay (5–7 pp.) in which you use scholarly research to develop and support your own academic argument about a text, artifact, or topic investigated by one or more humanities disciplines. You will also participate in writing workshops focusing on the writing process, revision, and research.

Student Learning Goals
This course gives you training and practice in the Core Student Learning Goals listed below; the full list is available at http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/undergraduate-education/core-student-learning-goals.

The instructor reserves the right to modify this syllabus at his discretion. Changes to course policy will be communicated in class and via email.
Inquiry and Critical Thinking

- **Inquiry and problem solving**: collect, evaluate, and analyze information and resources to solve problems or answer questions.
- **Research methods and application**: approach complex issues by taking a large question and breaking it down into manageable pieces.
- **Synthesis and context**: make meaningful connections among assignments and readings in order to develop a sense of “the big picture.”

Communication/Self-Expression

- **Argumentation**: formulate an original thesis-driven argument and sustain it in both written and verbal communication.
- **Analysis**: identify, analyze, and summarize/represent the key elements of a text.
- **Disciplinary awareness**: enter/place yourself into an existing dialogue (intellectual, political, etc.).
- **Expression of ideas**: express ideas clearly in writing and speaking in order to synthesize and evaluate information before presenting it.

Global Perspective–Diversity–Civic Engagement

- **Disciplinary perspective**: understand events and processes as “disciplinarily” situated.
- **Diversity**: think outside of cultural norms and values, including your own perspective, to critically engage the larger world.

Required Materials

All assigned readings will be available on Canvas, so there is no required textbook. In order to complete this course, you will need the following:

- A notebook dedicated to this class (you will frequently turn in writing assignments done in class, so you do need actual paper)
- Assigned readings, available on Canvas
- Regular out-of-class access to Canvas
- In-class access to assigned readings and your written work
  - You may print and bring to class **hard copies** of assigned readings and drafts of essays; or,
  - You may bring to class a **laptop or tablet** to access those readings and drafts electronically—**do not plan on using your phone to read online materials for class**

Assignments and Evaluation

This section describes the assignments you will be asked to complete for the course and outlines the relative weighting of course assignments.

Assignments

Your work for the class will consist of three essays (the Examined Life essay, the Humanities Major Profile essay, and the Humanities Scholarship essay), class notes, a class journal, drafts of essays and participation in associated writing workshops, and participation in class discussions. The class journal and participation are discussed in separate sections below. Detailed assignment sheets for essays will be posted on our Canvas site.

- **Examined Life essay (3–5 pp., double spaced)**: Following our reading and discussion of Plato’s *Apology*, you will write a brief personal essay in which you explain your understanding of the idea of the examined life and reflect on the values and assumptions that guide your own thoughts, decisions, and actions. Although your Examined Life essay will respond in some way to the *Apology*, your essay
will primarily draw on personal experience in order to illustrate for readers how you yourself practice the sorts of critical self-examination necessary for living an examined life.

- **Humanities Major Profile essay (4–6 pp., double spaced):** For your second major assignment, you will write an essay profiling a humanities major at UWT (or a major at UWT that draws in some way on humanities disciplines and traditions) and analyzing the role of the examined life in that major. In order to develop and support your essay, you will conduct both secondary research (by reading about the major you choose) and primary research (by interviewing people at UWT working in that major and by observing one or more courses in that major). The goal of this essay will be to clearly and convincingly explain for readers how the major you write about helps students learn and/or live an examined life and to analyze the role of the examined life in that major.

- **Humanities Scholarship essay (5–7 pp., double spaced):** In your final major assignment for the course, you will use scholarly research in the humanities to develop and support an original academic argument about a text, artifact, or topic investigated by one or more humanities disciplines. This essay will give you experience using methodologies practiced in humanities disciplines, conducting scholarly research, and developing a thesis-driven academic argument.

- **Class notes:** Early in the course, you will sign up to work, either on your own or with a classmate, as a class note-taker for a session of your choice. The goal of this assignment is to develop, as a class, a shared resource with which we can review previous discussions, track the development or trajectory of our thinking, catch up on the course when we have to miss class, and demonstrate collective engagement with class discussions and readings. Therefore, your notes should be somewhat more substantial than a simple outline, but less detailed than a word-for-word transcript of our discussions and activities. After taking detailed notes during the session you sign up for, you will post your notes on the appropriate wiki page on our Canvas site, and then you will begin the following class session by briefly reviewing your notes with the class. I may ask you to edit your notes for clarity and/or content.

### Grade Breakdown

The table on the left lists the proportion of your total course grade allotted to each assignment. The table on the right translates percentage grades into decimal grades.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Grade Breakdown</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>94–100%</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>4.0</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Examined Life essay (3–5 pp.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
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<td>Humanities Major Profile essay (4–6 pp.)</td>
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<td>20%</td>
<td>90–93%</td>
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<td>3.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Humanities Scholarship essay (5–7 pp.)</td>
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<td>87–89%</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<td>84–86%</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class notes</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>80–83%</td>
<td>B–</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class journal</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>77–79%</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drafts and workshops</td>
<td></td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>74–76%</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td></td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>70–73%</td>
<td>C–</td>
<td>1.8</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>67–69%</td>
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<td>0–59%</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>0.0</td>
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### Attendance and Participation

Regular, punctual attendance and active participation in class discussions and activities are absolutely crucial to your success in this class. **I expect everyone to attend nearly every class session, with minimal absences.** You will be graded on your participation in discussions and activities, and **you cannot receive credit for participating in a discussion that you miss.** If you must be absent from class on account of
illness, family emergency, or other unforeseeable circumstances, please contact me as soon as you can, preferably in advance of your absence if possible. After you miss a session, please review the class notes for that session posted on Canvas, and follow up with a colleague if necessary.

You will participate in the course through a combination of several means: weekly online discussions, in-class writing, and in-class discussion, both as a full class and in small groups.

- Approximately every other week, you will post a journal entry (as an attachment) on our Canvas discussion board by the end of the day Friday; additionally, you may earn participation credit by responding to colleagues’ journal entries. There will be a total of five online discussions over journal entries.

- Frequently, you will participate, either individually or in groups, in brief, informal in-class writing assignments.

- With very few exceptions, you can expect to participate in face-to-face discussions during every class session. Contributing actively and frequently to these discussions will raise your participation grade.

When you reply to a colleague’s contributions, either online or in person, your replies should be substantial—that is, you should attempt to advance our understanding of the ideas and texts we’re discussing by elaborating on points a colleague makes, drawing connections between a colleague’s point or journal entry and other points we have discussed, articulating alternative perspectives, or otherwise adding something new and useful to the discussion. **Saying “nice job!” or “I agree” does not count as a substantial reply to a colleague.** See two readings by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, “‘I Take Your Point’: Entering Class Discussions” and “‘Yes / No / Okay, But’: Three Ways to Respond,” both available on Canvas.

Early in the quarter, we will discuss our expectations for class participation in order to generate together a list of shared guidelines and standards for grading participation, and I will use those guidelines and standards to evaluate your overall participation in the course. Note that whatever we decide together about our expectations for participation, disruptive, distracting, or disrespectful behavior—for example, **texting, checking Facebook, or doing work for another course** rather than paying attention and participating—will **lower your participation grade**.

**Class Journal**

One requirement of this course is that you keep a journal in which you record and reflect on your reactions to assigned readings, observe and discuss textual details that seem important, explore possible paper topics, develop lines of inquiry from class discussion that you find interesting, respond to readings offered by your colleagues, and so on. I will supply prompts for each journal entry, but you are also welcome to explore other ideas in your journal. In other words, you aren’t tied down to the prompts I provide, as long as you’re dealing in some way with the ideas and/or texts we discuss together.

Your journal will serve several purposes: it will help you brainstorm and develop approaches to your essays; it will give you a venue to record ideas that you might want to return to later on; it will give you an opportunity to explore alternate directions or perspectives beyond what we focus on in class discussions; and it will give you an additional forum for demonstrating your engagement with course materials.

Because your journal will serve as a sort of laboratory for your ideas, you do not need to concern yourself with editing and polishing your prose. In addition, you should aim to articulate and explore ideas, not necessarily to construct a coherent interpretation or persuasive argument.
In order to receive full credit, a journal entry should be approximately one single-spaced, typed page long. Class journals will be due on Canvas selected Fridays, for a total of six or seven journal entries over the quarter (precise total TBD). Note that you will submit journal entries in two places on Canvas: 1) you will submit them on the assignments tab in order to earn credit for the entries themselves; 2) you will submit them on the discussion board in order to participate in online discussions.

Revision and Writing Workshops
As you work on your major papers, you will participate in a series of workshops that will help you develop and revise drafts of your essays. In addition, you will also have the opportunity to revise your Examined Life essay and your Humanities Major Profile essay for a higher grade once you have received a grade on the final draft. Participation in writing workshops is mandatory in order to revise an essay for a higher grade. If you miss a writing workshop, you may arrange to workshop with a classmate via email or Canvas, or you may schedule a consultation with the Writing Center (see pp. 6–7). To earn credit for making up the workshop, you must show me evidence of your out-of-class work or Writing Center consultation. If you miss a writing workshop and do not make it up, you may not revise the corresponding paper for a higher grade.

In order to revise an essay for a higher grade, you must first meet the following five conditions:

1. The original assignment must be submitted on time—unless you arrange to an extension with me, revisions are not allowed for late final drafts.
2. You must participate fully in the writing workshops for the essay you wish to revise.
3. The original assignment must be your own legitimate work—plagiarized papers are ineligible to be rewritten. (I will make exceptions, at my discretion, for relatively small-scale, apparently inadvertent plagiarism.)
4. The revised essay must show evidence of critical and substantial revision—you must do more than merely correct sentence-level errors (spelling, grammar, etc.) in order to receive a higher grade for the revision. You will show this evidence by adding at least four marginal comments to the essay in which you discuss what you have changed, how you have changed it, and why you think that change improves the essay.
5. The revision must be submitted by the deadline that you and I agree upon—I do not accept late revisions.

You are encouraged to meet with me to discuss revision strategies, but you are not required to do so. In any case, you must send me an email stating that you plan to rewrite an essay and proposing a new deadline for the revision.

The purpose of this course’s revision policy is to encourage and facilitate more work on revision—an indispensable stage of the writing process—than a conventional quarter-long curriculum allows. Revising a paper can take considerable time, but with so much material to cover and limited time to spend, this course moves at a pace that makes real, substantive revision more difficult than it might be in less-intensive courses. This policy provides you with an opportunity to develop revision strategies and practice the writing process while still proceeding with other course assignments.

If you revise an essay, the grade for the rewrite completely replaces the original assignment grade. In other words, if your first submission receives a B and the rewrite merits an A, you will receive credit for an A on the assignment, not an average of the two grades. (If it somehow turns out that the original final draft earns a higher grade than the revision, the original grade will stand.)
Late Work
Because this course covers much ground and moves at a quick pace, it is crucial that you meet assignment
deadlines. If you must miss an assignment deadline, you have one calendar week after that deadline to submit
work for partial credit. Late submissions of final drafts of essays will be penalized by 10% for each calendar
day (not weekday) that the assignment is late. For example, if a final draft is due on a Monday but it is not
submitted until Thursday, the grade for that assignment will be penalized by 30%. Late submissions of any
other assignments will receive half credit. Any assignment not submitted within one calendar week of its
original deadline—regardless of any university holidays that may fall in the interim—will receive zero credit.

Note that you will turn in all your out-of-class written work on Canvas. If you encounter technical difficulties
while trying to submit your work on Canvas, you may email assignments directly to me in order to receive
credit for submitting them on time. However, you are still required to post assignments to Canvas as soon as
possible.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity
Maintaining academic integrity is crucial to the advancement of scholarship, and scholars at all levels are
expected to produce original work and to avoid plagiarism. As defined in the University of Washington
Tacoma’s official course catalog, “[p]lagiarism is using the creations, ideas, or words of someone else without
formally acknowledging the author or source through appropriate use of quotation marks, references, and the
like.” Any assignment that engages in plagiarism, in part or in whole, will receive a score of zero credit. In
severe or repeated cases of plagiarism, the instructor reserves the right to pursue whatever official
institutional sanctions he deems appropriate.

If you borrow another writer’s wording—even just a short phrase or a small part of a sentence—you
must use quotation marks and parenthetical citations to indicate when and where you use someone
else’s text in your own writing. Failure to do so counts as plagiarism.

Please review UWT policies on plagiarism and academic integrity at www.tacoma.uw.edu/node/38211.

Formatting, Submitting, and Retaining Written Work
Aside from informal in-class writing assignments, you will submit all of your written work for the course via
Canvas. You may use whatever word-processing software you prefer, provided that it can save files in one of
the following formats: Word documents (.doc or .docx), rich-text format (.rtf), or PDFs. Be advised, though,
that I have virtually no expertise in programs other than Word, so if you need assistance with a technical issue
but you use another program, I will be unable to help.

In order to maintain a personal record of your academic progress, I strongly encourage you to retain graded
copies of all your assignments for this class. If you would like to receive detailed comments on the final draft
of your Humanities Scholarship essay, please contact me after or near the end of the course to request
feedback. Please do not contact the Office of Undergraduate Education to retrieve your graded work.

Writing Center
The Writing Center at the UWT Teaching and Learning Center offers a wide range of assistance with writing
assignments, from the early stages of selecting and narrowing a topic to the final stages of revising and editing
drafts, and from global issues of developing and supporting a thesis to finer points such as citing sources,
quoting and paraphrasing properly, and avoiding common mistakes in grammar and mechanics. Visit
www.tacoma.uw.edu/university-writing-program/writing-center to read about the services offered at the
Writing Center or to schedule an appointment; you can also email the TLC at uwtteach@uw.edu or call them at 253-692-4417.

**Student Counseling Center**
The Student Counseling Center offers short-term, problem-focused counseling to UW Tacoma students who may feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities of college, work, family, and relationships. Counselors are available to help students cope with stresses and personal issues that may interfere with their ability to perform in school. The service is provided confidentially and without additional charge to currently enrolled undergraduate and graduate students. To schedule an appointment, please call 253-692-4522 or stop by the Student Counseling Center (SCC), located in MAT 354. Additional information can also be found by visiting Student Health Services’ website at www.tacoma.washington.edu/studentaffairs/SHW/scc_about.cfm.

**Disability Resources for Students**
The University of Washington Tacoma is committed to making physical facilities and instructional programs accessible to students with disabilities. Disability Resources for Students (DRS) functions as the focal point for coordination of services for students with disabilities. In compliance with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, any enrolled student at UW Tacoma who has an appropriately documented physical, emotional, or mental disability that “substantially limits one or more major life activities [including walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning and working],” is eligible for services from DRS. If you are wondering if you may be eligible for accommodations on our campus, please contact the DRS reception desk at 253-692-4508, or visit www.tacoma.uw.edu/node/38768.

**Course Outline**
We will proceed according to the following general outline:

- **weeks 1–3 (Th, 1/4–Th, 1/18):** Introduction to the examined life (Examined Life essay due M, 1/22)
- **weeks 4–7 (T, 1/23–Th, 2/8):** Tour of humanities majors (Humanities Major Profile essay due F, 2/16)
- **weeks 8–10 (T, 2/13–Th, 3/8):** Practicing scholarship in the humanities (Humanities Scholarship essay due Th, 3/15)

**Schedule of Readings and Assignments for Weeks 1–3**
Assignments are listed in this schedule next to the day that they are due. For example, you should read Plato’s *Apology* before our class session on T, 1/9, not after. Important deadlines are listed in **boldface**, and writing workshops are listed in **ALL CAPITALS**. All readings are available on our Canvas page.

- **Th, 1/4** Introduction to the course
- **T, 1/9** John M. Cooper, “Socrates (469–399 BC)”—see especially the Introduction (pp. 970–71), sections 3–5 (974–78), and section 8 (979–80)
  - Plato, *The Apology of Socrates*
- **Th, 1/11** Plato, *Apology*
- **F, 1/12** Journal #1 due on Canvas
T, 1/16  WORKSHOP: planning the Examined Life essay
X. J. Kennedy, Dorothy M. Kennedy, and Marcia Muth, “Writing Processes”
  • Bring your copy of Plato’s *Apology* (along with any reading notes you’ve taken) and your Journal #1 to today’s session

Th, 1/18  WORKSHOP: drafting and revising the Examined Life essay—*bring a draft to class*
Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, “‘Yes / No / Okay, But’: Three Ways to Respond”
  •  **DRAFT OF EXAMINED LIFE ESSAY due on Canvas**

M, 1/22  **FINAL DRAFT OF EXAMINED LIFE ESSAY due on Canvas**