Philosophy 419: Happiness  
Fall 2017 (Florence)

Contact Information:
Professor: Dr. Erik Schmidt  
Office Hours: By Appointment  
E-Mail: schmidt@gonzaga.edu

Required Texts:
- Steven Cahn, Happiness: Classic and Contemporary Readings in Philosophy.
- Course Reader

Course Description:

This course explores questions related to human happiness and human flourishing by critically engaging the insights of history, philosophy, economics, psychology, experiments in living and folk wisdom. Our organizing goal will be to use the skills and resources of philosophical analysis to explore questions of human happiness about our lives as both individuals and citizens.

Our exploration will fall into three broad domains. One set of questions will relate to the concept of happiness. How is happiness related to other concepts like pleasure, contentment and flourishing? How have accounts of happiness changed over history? Why did they change and how are those changes related to other historical developments? Which concepts of happiness are best suited to our different pursuits in life? A second set of questions will relate to the methods we use to understand human happiness. Can we measure happiness? When evaluating happiness, how much weight should we give to memory and overall impression and how much weight should we give to our experience at any one given moment? How should we integrate the various empirical methods currently used to study human happiness? How should we deal with conflicts that arise among those methods? In what way should our decisions in life reflect the findings of empirical science? A final set of question will apply those methods to questions or decisions that shape our lives. How should we approach work, romance, recreation, family, faith, finances or other areas that are important to us? What insights into those domains can we draw from empirical science, philosophical reflection and human experience?

The version of the course I have prepared for the Florence program connects with the GIF curriculum in at least three ways. First, we will pay special attention to Italian philosophy by looking more carefully at selections from works by Ancient, Renaissance, and contemporary Italians. Second, we will explore the Slow Culture movement, which originates in Italy. Does the speed of contemporary culture undermine our prospects for happiness? Finally, we will explore the conditions of craft, as a social and economic model for human well-being, including an investigation of how the crafts shape the culture of Florence.
Core learning outcomes for this course:

1. (Knowledge) Students will be able to integrate the principles of a Jesuit education, prior components of the Core, and their disciplinary expertise.

2. (Skill) Students will be able to clearly and persuasively communicate with an audience of diverse educational backgrounds, personal experiences, and value commitments using ideas and arguments based on evidence, logic, and critical thinking.

3. (Attitude) Students will be able to assess the ways in which the Core has transformed the commitments and perspectives that will inform their future endeavors.

Course Requirements: The requirements for the course reflect the goals of the course and the learning outcomes.

(1) 40% Exams [Midterm (20%) and Final (20%)]
(2) 40% Application Project
(3) 20% Participation

(1) Exams: Students will take an in-class midterm exam on Tuesday, October 24th and a final exam on the date/time assigned to our class (December 15, 18, 19, or 20). Both exams will consist of ten short-answer questions. Students will select and answer eight questions. I will distribute a review sheet prior to each exam.

(2) Application Project: The orienting goal of the course is to explore the concept of happiness as it relates to various domains in human life. The application project asks students to bring their own area of major expertise into that conversation. I have listed sample topics on Blackboard to give you a sense of an appropriate scope for your project. Students are required to meet with me individually to have their topic approved by Thursday, October 5th. Final projects are due on Thursday, December 7th. I will provide written comments on drafts that are submitted to me by November 16th. A full description of the project can be found on Blackboard.

(3) Participation: Students are expected to be attentive and prepared to actively participate in class discussion. I will maintain a record of student participation and notify students who fail to meet this basic expectation. Participation in the course includes contributing to class discussion, online interactions, helping other students through study groups, and discussing questions about your papers or the course during office visits.

Course Policies: These are the basic rules that cover my expectations for each of you this semester.

1. Attendance and Participation: Attendance will be taken during each class. According to Gonzaga University policy, students who miss more than 6 hours of
class may receive a V or be asked to withdraw from the class. Please let me know if you are forced to miss class due to serious illness or family emergency so that we can arrange a schedule for you to make up the work you have missed. Bringing the text to class is critical for the activities we will engage in. If you do not bring a copy of the reading to class, you may be marked absent for that day.

2. **Laptops**: I do not allow laptops during class unless a student provides a Gonzaga accommodation letter requiring one. The reason for this rule is that it prevents the distraction of other students, encourages full participation, promotes and supports a culture of collaboration, and encourages an important set of skills related to attention, information processing, and note-taking.

3. **Late Work**: Papers are penalized by one letter grade for each class it is late. If students know ahead of time that they will have some difficulty meeting a deadline, please contact me at least two weeks prior to the deadline.

4. **Statement Concerning Sexual Misconduct**: Gonzaga University recognizes the inherent dignity of all individuals and promotes respect for all people. Sexual misconduct is not tolerated at Gonzaga. This includes unwanted physical/sexual contact, sexual assault, and unwanted and harassing sexual comments. (Clearly, this list isn’t exhaustive.) If you have been the victim of sexual misconduct, I want you to know that I am one point of contact for getting you in touch with mental health services, campus police, and (if you should choose to pursue legal action) city police. As a faculty member, I am interested in promoting a safe and healthy environment. But you should also know that if you tell me anything that incriminates a student, I am legally bound to report that information. The technical terminology here is that I am a *mandatory reporter* (along with all faculty and administrators). This rule prevents faculty and administrators from being passive bystanders: if you tell me something, I’m in serious trouble (= breaking the law) if I don’t do anything about it (e.g. contact Gonzaga University’s title IX coordinator).

5. **Students with disabilities and medical conditions**: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides reasonable accommodation for their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability/medical condition requiring an accommodation, please call or visit the Disability Access office (Room 209 Foley Library, 509-313-4134).

6. **Academic honesty**: Academic honesty is expected of all Gonzaga University students. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, and theft. Any student found guilty of academic dishonesty is subject to disciplinary action, which may include, but is not limited to, (1) a failing grade
for the test or assignment in question, (2) a failing grade for the course, or (3) a recommendation for dismissal from the University. (See also “Academic Honesty” on page 67 of the University’s online catalogue.)

7. **Course Evaluation**: At Gonzaga, we take teaching seriously, and we ask our students to evaluate their courses and instructors so that we can provide the best possible learning experience. In that spirit, we ask students to give us feedback on their classroom experience near the end of the semester. I will ask you to take a few minutes then to carry out course/instructor evaluation on-line. Please know that I appreciate your participation in this process. This is a vital part of our efforts at Gonzaga to improve continually our teaching, our academic programs, and our entire educational effort.