

SCP 457.001
Fall 2013
Senior Capstone: Quest for Wholeness

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Associate Professor
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MWF 11:00-11:50
GRV 112

GRV 211
301-2017
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Office Hours: MW 1:30-3;
F 9:00-10:30

“Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?,” Mary Oliver

Course Description:

In this course we will consider the nature of the human condition as one in which we seek to find meaning and fulfillment in life. We will look for answers to this “quest” for meaning both in the texts we read and within ourselves in the hopes that we can determine what makes us whole, or complete, human beings, and how that wholeness might be achieved out of apparent “brokenness.”

Course Purpose:

The purpose of this course is to help us understand the human condition and to make it better.

Course Goals:

1. To achieve what has been stated above, i.e., that each student develop an understanding of what wholeness is in general and how that might be achieved.
2. Students should also gain insight into their own selves to determine where they are in relation to where they would consider themselves whole persons.
3. Students should also improve on their ability to critically reflect on a given text and to express that reflection in a cogent way through writing and discussion.

Required Texts:

Campbell, *Brother to a Dragonfly*

Haidt, *The Happiness Hypothesis*

Gibson, *The Vigil: A Poem in Four Voices*

McBride, *The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother*

Articles may be added as their relevance becomes apparent in conversations.

Requirements:

Discussion (10%)

Every class period your participation is being evaluated. Note that I understand that some people are hesitant to communicate in a large group and I will make arrangements during class to make it easier for those students. Please note that just because a student speaks in class she does not receive the highest marks. As a colleague often says, not every comment is equal in insight. Here are some guidelines for discussion. Make an effort to engage your classmates in critical dialogue. Pay attention to what your neighbors say, respond with appropriate criticism, and be willing to receive the same type of criticism. A comment that causes your neighbors to think further about a topic or idea will earn high marks. If the conversation heightens so that everyone becomes engaged in the discussion, then the question posed and the responses given show critical thinking on the fly and will result in the class receiving high marks. If I have to ask the questions and lead the entire time, the class will receive low marks. The scale for Discussion grading is 6-10. Arrival in class gives you a six (6). Listening quietly but looking distracted earns you a seven (7). Listening quietly and looking interested gives you a seven-point-five (7.5). Listening and taking notes gives you an eight (8). Listening and making notes, with an

occasional good comment earns you an eight-point-five (8.5). Listening and taking notes, with several good comments means you receive a nine (9). Listening well and commenting in such a way that alters the class discussion in a significant, positive way earns you appreciation from the professor and a nine-point-five (9.5). Ten (10) is at the discretion of the professor and considered rare. Doing homework for another class, engaging in text messaging, or completely absent will result in a zero (0). I will drop five discussion grades.

Leading Class Discussion (15%)

Students, working in pairs, will be responsible for leading class discussion three times during the course of the semester. A sign-up sheet will circulate on the first day of class. You will be graded on your ability to devise an interesting and relevant opening question, to direct conversation in meaningful ways, and to keep the discussion focused. No one will be allowed to present twice in the same week. Also, no one is allowed to present twice on the same text. If there are “open days” and you wish to replace an earlier grade, you may present for a fourth time. These assignments will be graded using the same number system as Discussion.

On the day that you lead class discussion you must hand in a hard copy of at least three questions you plan to ask the class. Under each question you pose, list relevant passages from the text that you believe will help the class work through the question. Finally, for each question, explain the reasons why you think the question is good. What issues are you trying to explore with that question? What themes does it highlight? In what ways will it help us focus our reading? In what ways will it help us clarify our thinking?

Discussion: A Note

In this course we will be discussing material you have read. The works we will be reading easily lend themselves to lively discussion. This will be our pleasure and our challenge, a challenge to keep the discussion focused. Keep in mind that each individual has an individual view, and each view should be allowed to be expressed. You are encouraged, in fact required, to bring your own position and view to the discussion. Treat others’ views as you would want yours treated. It is also important that no one person dominate the discussion. The richness of the class will only be realized if everyone has a chance to participate in the discussion. This may not happen every day, but it needs to happen often. Be mindful of others, and let everyone have a chance to speak.

Essays: (75%)

You will write four (three during the term and one for the final exam) six-page essays for this course. More will be said about the papers in class. All written work must be typed, double-spaced, using 1-inch margins, and 12 pt. NewTimes Roman font. Papers are due at the specified time and date on the assignment sheet. **You will submit all essays via attachment to e-mail.** Late papers will be penalized 10 points for each 24 hour period after they are due; more than five days late results in a 0, no exceptions.

Though there is a subjective element in grading essays versus grading a multiple choice test, there are standard conventions to follow. Complete sentences are a must. If sentences are not complete, the fragments and comma splices will be highlighted in **RED**. Punctuation and clarity matter. If you see **YELLOW**, then there is a problem with one of the stated issues or an organizational issue causes the essay to be unclear. The other two colors I use (**GREEN** and **PURPLE**) signify that I like the way you articulated the point or I have a question but there is nothing grammatically wrong with the sentence(s). If you think the content is the most important point, then we need to talk. If the reader has to fix the errors, then the point is lost. Great “content” will never overcome poor grammar skills. Sometimes I can be forgiving if the mistakes do not distract from the overall point of the essay; however, if I am having to stop often to fix mistakes the essay has problems that no content argument can overcome. As for the subjective nature of grading essays, please read and then re-read the section below “What will I have to do to make a good grade?”

Students bear sole responsibility for ensuring that papers or assignments submitted electronically to a professor are received in a timely manner and in the electronic format(s) specified by the professor. Students are therefore obliged to have their e-mail client issue a receipt verifying that the document has been received. Students are also strongly advised to retain a copy of the dated submission on a separate disk. Faculty members are encouraged, but not required, to acknowledge receipt of the assignment.

Grades:

10% Discussion

15% Lead Discussion

15% Essay 1

20% Essay 2

20% Essay 3

20% Essay 4

Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor to discuss her or his progress as often as desired. Grades will not be discussed over the phone, via e-mail, or with anyone but the student involved. If you have any questions, please e-mail or call me.

Scale: 100-90 A; 89-88 B+; 87-80 B; 79-78 C+; 77-70 C; 69-65 D; 64 and below F

What will I have to do to get a good grade? (Altered from Colin Harris, Professor, CCPS, Mercer)

Mercer's grading system is set up to reflect certain levels of involvement and performance. The C and C+ range of grades reflects the performance one would expect of someone in college. It means the course requirements have been met in a satisfactory way. The B and B+ grades recognize an above average level of involvement and performance in the course. This means that the student has more than met the minimum standards for the course and has shown some initiative in taking charge of her or his learning own learning experience. The A grade represents a level of seriousness and excellence in involvement and performance that is the best students can produce.

In a course such as this one, it is more difficult to measure the quality of performance than it would be in a more concrete subject area. What I can do is tell you some things I have noticed about students whose work in this course has been above average and superior. I hope these observations will be helpful to you in thinking about your own involvement.

1. Above average and excellent students attend and participate alertly in class sessions. An occasional absence is necessary; however, there is a clear difference between necessary and causal absence. Alert participation means serious involvement in our study, not necessarily just talking in class. The fact that some persons are less vocal than other does not mean that their participation is less. It may be more. Students who participate in group learning and are concerned not only for their own learning process but also for what they can contribute to their fellow learners seem to be those who do the best work. I would like for you to call or email me before an absence, if you can, or as soon as possible afterward so that we can stay caught up with the work we are doing together. On a rather sour note, more than two absences could be cause for failure in this class.

2. Above average and excellent students tend to spend six to eight hours outside of class preparing for and reflecting upon each class section. Many, of course, "get by" with less; but that is often the difference between adequate and excellent.

3. These students tend to be "active" rather than "passive" learners. This means that they engage the subject matter as partners in dialogue rather than merely as receptacles of information. The active learner asks questions of the subject and takes initiative in pursuing related lines of inquiry.

4. Above average and excellent students seem to be persons who are willing to change and grow

in their understanding. They have what might be called “critical flexibility,” which means that they do not remain rigidly fixed to particular patterns of thinking, nor do they change just because they encounter something new. Rather, they constantly test their thinking according to the truth they discover. They are more concerned to grow in understanding than they are to prove certain ideas right or wrong.

Cellular Phone and Pager Usage

Out of courtesy for all those participating in the learning experience, all cell phones and pagers must be turned off before entering any classroom, lab, or formal academic or performance event. If this becomes a problem, the teacher reserves the right to remove the phone and/or the student from the class. Reading text messages in class will result in a zero on the highest weekly grade for each incidence.

Students with Disabilities:

“Students requiring accommodations for a disability should inform the instructor at the close of the first class meeting or as soon as possible. The instructor will refer you to the ACCESS and Accommodation Office to document your disability, determine eligibility for accommodations under the ADA/Section 504 and to request a Faculty Accommodation Form. Disability accommodations or status will not be indicated on academic transcripts. In order to receive accommodations in a class, students with sensory, learning, psychological, physical or medical disabilities must provide their instructor with a Faculty Accommodation Form to sign. Students must return the signed form to the ACCESS Coordinator. A new form must be requested each semester. Students with a history of a disability, perceived as having a disability or with a current disability who do not wish to use academic accommodations are also strongly encouraged to register with the ACCESS and Accommodation Office and request a Faculty Accommodation Form each semester. For further information, please contact Carole Burrowbridge, Director and ADA/504 Coordinator, at 301-2778 or visit the ACCESS and Accommodation Office website at <http://www.mercer.edu/disabilityservices>” * (07/13)

Honor Code:

All of the members of this class will conduct themselves according to the guidelines of the Mercer Honor System as outlined in the Lair. Specifically within the context of essays, the thoughts and/or words of other people must be fully acknowledged with appropriate notes. Plagiarism, even inadvertent plagiarism, is a serious offense. If you any questions about proper citation of sources, talk to the instructor before submitting a paper. Your own work for another course may not be submitted for a grade in this course.

Class Schedule (I reserve the right to change the schedule as necessary.)			
Week	Date	Readings	Assignments
1	Aug. 21 Aug. 23	Course Introduction Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book I http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.1.i.html	
2	Aug. 26 Aug. 28 Aug. 30	<i>Cars</i> <i>Cars</i> <i>Cars</i> Discussion	Essay #1
3	Sept. 2 Sept. 4 Sept. 6	NO CLASS Haidt, Ch. 1 & 2 Haidt, Ch. 3 & 4	
4	Sept. 9 Sept. 11 Sept. 13	Haidt, Ch. 5 & 6 Haidt, Ch. 7 & 8 Haidt, Ch. 9 & 10	
5	Sept. 16 Sept. 20 Sept. 22	Haidt, Ch. 11 Documentary: "Happiness" TBD	
6	Sept. 23 Sept. 25 Sept. 27	Campbell, 1-38 Campbell, 38-64 Campbell, 67-98	
7	Sept. 30 Oct. 2 Oct. 4	Campbell, 98-139 Fall Break	Essay #2
8	Oct. 7 Oct. 9 Oct. 11	Campbell, 143-189 Campbell, 189-228 Campbell, 229-268	
9	Oct. 14 Oct. 16 Oct. 18	<i>Big Fish</i> <i>Big Fish</i> <i>Big Fish</i> Discussion	
10	Oct. 21 Oct. 23 Oct. 25	Gibson (1-34) Gibson (35-63) Gibson (64-84)	
11	Oct. 28 Oct. 30 Nov. 1	Gibson (85-116) <i>The Secret Lives of Bees</i>	Essay #3
12	Nov. 4 Nov. 6 Nov. 8	<i>The Secret Lives of Bees</i> <i>The Secret Lives of Bees</i> Discussion McBride (1-43)	

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13	Nov. 11 Nov. 13 Nov. 15	McBride (45-83) McBride (85-128) McBride (129-176)	
14	Nov. 18 Nov. 20 Nov. 22	McBride (177-211) McBride (213-247) McBride (249-285)	
15	Nov. 25 Nov. 27 Nov. 29	TBD Thanksgiving Break Thanksgiving Break	
16	Dec. 2 Dec. 4 Dec. 6	Presentations Presentations Wrap-up	
17	Dec. 12	12pm	Essay #4