SYA 7933: Seminar on Wisdom, the Individual, and Society

Spring 2021
Class: Wednesdays 3-6 p.m. on Zoom through e-Learning

Instructor

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Zoom open office hours for general questions: Wednesday after class
Zoom private office hours: Tuesday and Wednesday 1:45-2:45 p.m. and by appointment (Please email me to schedule your individual appointment during those times, so that you do not have to wait in the Zoom “waiting room”)
WWW: http://users.clas.ufl.edu/ardelt

Course Content

What are the benefits of wisdom for individuals, organizations, and societies and why is wisdom not more prevalent in modern life? In this seminar, we will study the philosophical, sociocultural, and neurobiological foundations of wisdom and provide an overview of the different ways wisdom has been defined, conceptualized, and assessed. We will learn how wisdom develops and how it might be nurtured and taught. We will also discuss how wisdom is related to morality and spirituality. Then we will explore the benefits of wisdom for individuals and organizations. We will investigate the role of wisdom in the political and social sphere and conclude by reviewing the challenges of studying and applying wisdom in modern life.

In addition to scholarly discussions about wisdom, we will also practice living wisely by following a different ancient Greek philosophy each week and reflecting on the experience.

Student Learning Outcomes

Content Objectives: Students will learn about the current state of wisdom research and how wisdom can benefit individuals, organizations, and society. Students will also learn how to apply wisdom in everyday life by practicing ancient Greek philosophies.

Communication Objectives: In written and oral form, students will discuss current wisdom research and ancient Greek philosophies and the benefits and obstacles of applying wisdom in modern life.

Critical Thinking Objectives: Students will critically evaluate current wisdom research and the benefits and costs of applying wisdom in modern life.
Required Readings

*Theoretical Study of Wisdom*

Sternberg, R. J., & Glück, J. (Eds.). (2019). *The Cambridge handbook of wisdom*. Cambridge University Press. [https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108568272](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108568272)


Both books are available as e-books through the UF library.

All additional readings are available in e-Learning.

*Applied Wisdom*


Requirements

**Readings and Class Participation:** An interaction between students and instructor will be the basis of most classes. Hence, it is absolutely essential that you read the assigned material in advance so that you are able to participate in class discussions.

For each class, starting after our first meeting, you will prepare one or more questions based on the assigned readings and write down possible answers to those questions or issues that should be considered when attempting to answer those questions. Questions and answers should contain a heading that identifies the reading(s) that inspired the question(s). Each set of questions and answers is worth **1 point if you write at least 300 words of original text** (excluding headings and quotations) for a total of 11% of your final grade. You will have 13 opportunities to submit a Q&A entry, but you only need to submit 11 entries.

Q & A entries for each class are to be submitted via e-Learning in Canvas after the file has been saved as a Word document (*.doc or *.docx). The deadline for submission is noon each Wednesday for which there are readings assigned (except for the first day of class), so that I have time to compile a list of questions for discussion before class. For general information about e-Learning in Canvas visit [https://elearning.ufl.edu/keep-learning/](https://elearning.ufl.edu/keep-learning/).

To submit your MS Word file in e-Learning, go to the University of Florida e-Learning Support Services home page at [http://elearning.ufl.edu](http://elearning.ufl.edu) (bookmark this page). To sign into e-Learning in Canvas, click on the “Log in to e-Learning” link using your assigned Gatorlink username and password. If you do not have a Gatorlink ID or if you cannot remember your Gatorlink login information, go to the Gatorlink website at [http://gatorlink.ufl.edu](http://gatorlink.ufl.edu) or to the CIRCA Help Desk in the Hub (phone: 392-HELP) for assistance.
After you have successfully logged into e-Learning, click on our class folder. For further assistance please contact e-Learning Support Services at (352) 392-4357 or email: learning-support@ufl.edu

To submit a Q & A entry via e-Learning, navigate to our course and click on Assignments in the menubar. Assignments can be displayed in the order they are due or by type. Do the following to submit a Q & A entry:

**Step 1:** Click the Q & A entry you want to submit.
**Step 2:** Click on the “Submit Assignment” link.
**Step 3:** To upload your file, click the Choose File button. Browse for a file to upload.
**Step 4:** Check “This assignment submission is my own, original work”
**Step 5:** Click Submit Assignment when you are done. After you have submitted your work, you will see information in the Sidebar about your submission. If you choose, you may resubmit another version of your assignment using the Re-submit Assignment link.

To view your grades, click on Grades in the menubar.

In addition and to prevent the instructor from doing all of the talking during class, you will serve as the discussion leader for two class sessions, which will be rewarded with 10% of the final grade (5% for each class session). There might be more than one discussion leader for a given topic. As discussion leader, you will have the privilege to ask your most “burning” questions about the class topic first and participate in the overall class discussion. To receive full credit, you need to demonstrate that you have read all of the assigned material for the class topic.

**Attendance:** Attendance of class is required because non-attendance by several students at a time will destroy the dynamic of the class. Students who miss all or part of a class session must inform me by email about their absence.

**Zoom Etiquette:** Turn on your video during Zoom meetings. Do not use your electronic devices to take or receive calls, text messages, or view material unrelated to the course during the Zoom meeting. Always be respectful of the ideas of others. If you disagree with the opinion or view of a classmate, express your own comments in a way that is respectful. Be open-minded!

**Applied Wisdom Assignments:** You will follow a different ancient Greek philosophy for one week each week during the semester (without engaging in any unlawful or harmful activity) and write about your experience (600 words minimum each week). Number your answers as follows:
1. Describe the philosophy you followed this week in detail: What did the philosophy require you to do?
2. What exactly did you do to follow this philosophy? Give concrete examples.
3. What were the obstacles you encountered when you tried to follow this philosophy? Give concrete examples.
4. What did you learn by following this philosophy? Give concrete examples.
5. How would you need to change your life if you wanted to follow this philosophy for more than a week?
Each assignment submission should contain a heading that identifies the philosophy you followed. **You will earn 4 points for each submission if you answer each of the 5 questions in sufficient detail and write at least 600 words of original text** (excluding headings and quotations) for a total of 40% of your final grade. You will have 12 opportunities to practice wise living, but you only need to submit 11 entries.

Submit assignments via e-Learning in Canvas after the file has been saved as a Word document (*.doc or *.docx). **The deadline for submission is noon each Wednesday** (except for the first day of class), so that I have time to read your answers before class.

**Final Wisdom Paper:** For your final wisdom paper, you will explore a societal issue (e.g., racism, sexism, ageism, global warming, gun control, criminal justice, death penalty, health care, economic inequality) from the perspective of wisdom. You will write about potential wise solutions and obstacles to implement these solutions. The term paper is due on April 21 at 3 p.m. and should be between 12 and 20 pages long (excluding references). You will present a summary of your term paper during the class meeting on April 21. Detailed instructions for the term paper can be downloaded in e-Learning.

**Cheating:** I define copying parts or all of an author’s or another student’s work, allowing another student to copy parts or all of your work, or simply duplicating parts or all of your prior submissions as cheating. **WARNING: Students who are caught cheating in this way will fail the class immediately!**

**Exams:** There are no exams in this course. 😊

**Grading**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>% of Final Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion leader</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q &amp; A for class discussions</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied wisdom assignments</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term paper</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation of paper</td>
<td>10%</td>
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I will not grade on a curve, i.e. your grade will depend on your absolute performance, not your performance compared to other students.

The points that you will earn can be translated into letter-grades as follows:

- 92.5 - 100.0 = A
- 90.0 - <92.5 = A-
- 87.5 - <90.0 = B+
- 82.5 - <87.5 = B
- 80.0 - <82.5 = B-
- 77.5 - <80.0 = C+
- 72.5 - <77.5 = C
- 70.0 - <72.5 = C-
- 67.5 - <70.0 = D+
- 62.5 - <67.5 = D
- 60.0 - <62.5 = D-
- <60.0 = E
Requirements for class attendance, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the online catalog at: https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx

**Student Evaluations**

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/.

**Resources**

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center by visiting disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

**Help with Writing:** If you need help with writing, you can visit the University Writing Center (https://writing.ufl.edu/faculty/getting-help-for-your-students/) in 302 Tigert Hall.

**Important phone numbers and contact information**

University counseling services and mental health services: 392-1575 or https://counseling.ufl.edu/
Student Health Care Center: 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information or visit https://shcc.ufl.edu/
University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies

Your well-being is important to the University of Florida. The U Matter, We Care initiative is committed to creating a culture of care on our campus by encouraging members of our community to look out for one another and to reach out for help if a member of our community is in need. If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu so that the U Matter, We Care Team can reach out to the student in distress. A nighttime and weekend crisis counselor is available by phone at 352-392-1575. The U Matter, We Care Team can help connect students to the many other helping resources available including, but not limited to, Victim Advocates, Housing staff, and the Counseling and Wellness Center. Please remember that asking for help is a sign of strength.
Tentative Class Schedule

Introduction

01/13 - Why do we need wisdom?

Applied wisdom

Part I: What is wisdom and how can it be assessed?

01/20 - Philosophical, sociocultural, and neurobiological foundations of wisdom


Applied wisdom

01/27 - Conceptions of wisdom


Applied wisdom


02/03 - The differences between personal wisdom, general wisdom, practical wisdom, and wise reasoning


Applied wisdom


02/10 - Cultural perspectives on wisdom


Applied wisdom

02/17 - Measures of wisdom

Applied wisdom

Part II: How can society nurture the development of wisdom?

02/24 - The development of wisdom


**Applied wisdom**


**03/03 - Nurturing wisdom**

Sternberg, R. J. (2019). Where have all the flowers of wisdom gone? An analysis of teaching for wisdom over the years. In R. J. Sternberg, H. C. Nusbaum, & J. Glück (Eds.), *Applying wisdom to contemporary world problems* (pp. 1-20). Palgrave Macmillan.


**Applied wisdom**

03/10 - Morality, spirituality, and wisdom


Applied wisdom

Follow Buddha’s or Jesus Christ’s philosophy.

Part III: What are the benefits of wisdom for individuals and organizations?

03/17 - Wisdom, emotions, and well-being


Applied wisdom

**03/24 - Wisdom at work**


**Applied wisdom**


**Part IV: What is the role of wisdom in the political and social sphere?**

**03/31 - Wisdom in the political sphere**


Applied wisdom


04/07 - Wisdom in the social sphere


Applied wisdom


Review and conclusion

04/14 - The challenges of studying and applying wisdom

Sternberg, R. J., & Glück, J. (2019). Why is wisdom such an obscure field of inquiry and what can and should be done about it? In J. Glück & R. J. Sternberg (Eds.), The Cambridge handbook of wisdom (pp. 783-796). Cambridge University Press.


Applied wisdom


04/21 - Class Presentations of Term Papers