



**TYNDALE**  
University College

**PSYC 3943**

## **Positive Psychology of Meaning**

**Fall 2006, Room 2083, Mondays, 6.30 – 9.30 am**

**Instructor: Paul T. P. Wong, Ph.D., C. Psych.**

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**Office Hours: Mon, Wed, Thurs 2 – 5 pm**

**Website Address: [www.meaning.ca](http://www.meaning.ca)**

**Commuter Hotline: 416-226-6620 Ext. 2187**

Class cancellations due to inclement weather or illness will be announced/posted on the commuter hotline.

**Mailboxes:** Every student is responsible for information communicated through the student mailboxes. A mailbox directory is posted beside the mailboxes.

### **I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course is organized around the proposition that people are meaning-seeking and meaning-making creatures, motivated to lead a life that is happy, fulfilling and worth living. This course examines contemporary research on meaning as the central construct in different areas of positive psychology, such as life satisfaction, health, and resilience. It also explores the clinical implications of the meaning advantage.

### **II. COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

- Understand the nature and functions of meaning and purpose
- Become familiar with the different measures of meaning
- Understand the role of meaning in emotion, cognition and motivation
- Understand the role of meaning in coping with adversities
- Discover the meaning and purpose of your own life

In addition to course-specific goals, there are four general learning objectives:

- (1) Practice effective **communication**, both orally and in writing in order to articulate one's ideas in a clear, concise and compelling manner.
- (2) Sharpen **academic intelligence**, such as distillation, analysis, synthesis and generation of new ideas.
- (3) Develop **social-emotional intelligence**, such as experiencing and applying the psychological knowledge in one's personal life
- (4) Cultivate **spiritual intelligence**, learning how to integrate faith with learning in order to grow spiritually.

The above objectives are designed to equip students with conceptual tools, scientific knowledge and practical skills so that they can gain a deeper understanding of themselves, others and human existence in general. Such understanding is essential in leading a fulfilling and productive life.

### **III. REQUIRED TEXTS:**

- Wong, P. T. P. & Fry, P. S. (1998). *The human quest for meaning: A handbook of psychological research and clinical applications*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

### **IV. SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS:**

- Frankl, V. E. (1985). *Man's search for meaning: Revised and updated*. New York: Washington Square Press.
- Relevant research articles will be assigned

## V. COURSE EVALUATION:

Mid-term exam -----	20 %
Final exam -----	30 %
Annotated bibliography -----	10 %
Essay -----	10 %
Major project -----	20 %
Class participation -----	10 %
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	100 %

**Exams:** Mid-term exam will be made up of short answer items and multiple choice questions based on materials covered. Final exam will be consisted of short answer items and essay questions.

**Annotated bibliography:** Should contain summaries of 4 recent journal references on such topics as the meaning and positive affects, meaning and health, meaning and optimal functioning, meaning and suffering, meaning and recovery from trauma, meaning and achievement, meaning and work, meaning of love, meaning of happiness, and purpose of life. For more topics, [http://www.meaning.ca/meaning\\_research/topic\\_bibliography.html](http://www.meaning.ca/meaning_research/topic_bibliography.html)

**Essays:** The essay should be around two thousand words, dealing with any issue related to meaning and purpose. Each essay must contain at least 3 journal references in the last five years.

**Major project:** The project can be either based on research or application. It can be done either individually or in groups of two or three students.

**Class participation:** Evaluation is based on attendance, participation in class sessions, and peer review of each other's essays.

**Students are responsible to keep a backup print copy of all assignments.**

**To encourage engagement,** students are expected to be active partners rather than passive recipients in the pursuit of knowledge. In order to facilitate participatory and experiential learning, the course will employ a number of learning strategies, such as seminars, tutorials, journaling, peer reviews, and co-operative projects.

## VI. COURSE OUTLINE:

<u>Week</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Required readings</u>	<u>Assignments &amp; Exam</u>
1	Sept.11	Ch.1 Meaning making	
2	Sept.18	Ch.2 Meaning-seeking	
3	Sept.25	Ch. 3The sense of coherence	
4	Oct.2	Ch. 11, 14 Purpose in life	
5	Oct.9	Thanksgiving (No Class)	
6	Oct.16	Ch.4 Life satisfaction	Annotated bibliography

7	Oct.23	Ch.6, 12 Measuring meaning	
8	Oct.30	<b>Mid-term exam</b>	
9	Nov.6	Ch.7 Meaning Construction	
10	Nov.13	Ch.10, 13 Personal goals	
11	Nov.20	Ch.8, 15 Resilience	Essay due
12	Nov.27	Ch.16 Self-confrontation	
13	Dec. 3	Ch.18 Spirituality and meaning	Major project due

**The final exam will be held during exam week, Monday December 11– Monday December 18 (including Sat.), as scheduled by the Registrar.**

## VII. BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- Baumeister, R. F. (1991). *Meaning of life*. New York: Guilford.
- Reker, G. T., & Champerlain, K. (Eds.). (1999). (Paperback). *Exploring existential meaning: Optimizing human development across the life span*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Schneider, K. J., Bugental, J. F. T., & Pierson, F. J. (2002). *The handbook of humanistic psychology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Seligman, M. E. (2004). *Authentic happiness*. (Paperback) New York: Free Press.

## VIII. RESOURCES

[www.meaning.ca](http://www.meaning.ca)  
[http://www.meaning.ca/links/positive\\_psychology\\_links.html](http://www.meaning.ca/links/positive_psychology_links.html)  
<http://www.ppc.sas.upenn.edu>  
[www.scholar.google.com](http://www.scholar.google.com)

*Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*  
*Journal of Counseling Psychology*  
*Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*  
*Journal of Clinical and Consulting Psychology*  
*Journal of Humanistic Psychology*

Please refer to the *Tyndale Academic Calendar* for policies regarding academic honesty and dishonesty. It is the student's responsibility to acquaint him or herself with these guidelines of academic integrity.

Sears, Patricia. *Tyndale University College Essay Writing Guide*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Toronto: Tyndale, 2005.