

Brunswick School Department
E.L.A.
Grade 12: Meaning of Life 2.0

Course Overview

This semester course is designed for students interested in exploring what it means to live a “good life” -- one of purpose, hope, compassion and peace in a time of political, economic, and environmental uncertainty. Students will learn through readings and discussions based on the works of philosophers and enlightened thinkers from Socrates and Epictetus. Literary selections will include new research in contemporary psychology and neuroscience. Opportunities to learn will occur through journaling, nature walks, meditation, field trips, interviews and guest speakers. Students will hone skills in both literary and philosophical analysis and academic writing.

Essential Understandings

- Enquiry and discourse about the meaning and purpose of life have a longstanding tradition in both Eastern and Western philosophies.
- This same enquiry is relevant and vital today on a worldwide level, as well as on a personal level.
- The serious study and application of moral philosophy can help lead to a “life well lived.”
- Self-study is a valuable form of inquiry and can make for the best kind of research project.

Priority Standards and Performance Indicators

(as based on Maine Learning Results)

P.S. ELA-1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

- a. Notice and current grammatical and mechanical errors in writing.
- b. Write complete sentences.
- c. Apply standard usage to formal speaking and writing.

P.S. ELA-2 Cite Strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

- d. Analyze important quotations from the text in oral and written responses.
- e. Annotate the text.

P.S ELA-4 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence, with scaffolding.

- a. Select and limit a debatable thesis.
- b. Research evidence using credible sources.
- c. Select an appropriate organizational plan.
- e. Apply the standards of English conventions.
- f. Apply persuasive strategies.

P.S. ELA-5 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience.

- a. Create an effective introduction.
- b. Maintain a focus on the main idea throughout the body paragraphs.
- c. Write an effective conclusion.

P.S. ELA-7 Engage in a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas, using evidence from texts and other research, and referencing source material.

- a. Attentively listen to the words of a speaker.
- d. Use evidence to support a position
- e. Organize ideas clearly and logically.

Examples of Formative / Summative Assessments

- Essays (analytical, persuasive, and personal essays)
- Public Speaking and Presentations (individual and group)
- Close Reading exercises
- Summative Tests

Sample Texts and Materials/Resources

- *The Religions of Man* by Huston Smith
- Selected Works of Socrates
- Selected Works of Epictetus
- Selected Works of Seneca
- *The Meditations* by Marcus Aurelius
- *Selected Essays of Montaigne*
- *Walden* by Thoreau
- *Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl
- Selected Works of Wendell Berry
- Selected Works of Thich Nhat Hanh
- *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers* by Robert Sapolsky