***Assignments from PHL 112: How Should We Live?***

***Ann J. Cahill, Fall 2017***

***Group Work****.* For several weeks in the middle of our semester, you will be working primarily in groups of 8-10 students. The first task of your group is to determine what kind of philosophical expertise you would like to develop during this section of the class; some groups might choose to develop expertise in a particular school of philosophy (utilitarianism, for example, or critical race theory), while others might choose to study a particular field (for example, bioethics, environmental philosophy, or epistemology) or topic (for example, the death penalty). I will help each group to identify a focus for their work, ensuring that developing that particular expertise will assist you in completing the assignments associated with the group work. During the group work weeks, I will assign specific texts to each group, in response to their ongoing discussions. Thus, each group will be reading different texts.

Some assignments related to the group work will be evaluated collectively, while others will be evaluated individually; see the list below. When assignments are evaluated collectively (that is, when the group is graded as a group), I reserve the right to change the group grade for individuals who perform either significantly above or significantly below expectations.

Group Assignments*.*

* *Process*. Each group will email to me a weekly progress report, which summarizes the work completed in the group that week. Details should include which texts each person read; an evaluation of the quality of the conversations in the group that week; a list of papers written, both collectively and individually (for example, all Annotations/Responses that individual members of the group completed, any Existential Essays written and/or curated, etc.). While these progress reports will not be graded individually (that is, each progress report will not receive an individual grade), I will respond to each of them with my sense of how the group work is progressing, and ways that its process could be improved. A final process grade will be determined at the conclusion of the group work, and will be worth 100 points.
* *Existential Challenges*. As human beings, we encounter challenges that are opportunities (sometimes quite unwelcome!) to question who we are, who we can be, and who we will be. These challenges can take the form of experiences, realizations, new knowledge, quandaries, and unsettling ideas, and often force us to interrogate our values. That is, they impose upon us questions about what matters, and how what matters shapes our responsibilities, our possibilities, and our responses to those challenges. For this assignment, each group is to produce brief (no more than one page, double-spaced, per challenge) descriptions of two distinct existential challenges. These challenges must represent authentic problems that resist easy or neat solutions or responses, and they must be realistic. The Existential Challenges will be evaluated based on their level of difficulty, realism, and potential to instigate substantial discussions that can be informed by philosophical texts. They will also be evaluated on the basis of the clarity and organization of their writing. Together, these two Existential Challenges will be worth 50 points; however, if one of the challenges is chosen for the next phase of the class, it will be awarded an extra ten points.
* *Curated Existential Essays*. After individual Existential Essays have been completed, each group will receive an anonymized group of Existential Essays from another group in the class. The group must then evaluate the Existential Essays, and choose the best one, which will then be assigned as required reading for the whole class. For each Curated Existential Essay, the group must provide a description of the process by which the paper was chosen and a justification for the choice. This assignment will be graded on the quality of the process (was it fair? Did it utilize appropriate criteria, and did it apply them well? Did it provide for the participation of all the group members?) and the quality of the justification of the choice. Each Curated Existential Essay will be worth 30 points, for a total of 90 points.