

76102 Course Description and Schedule

Advanced First-Year Writing courses are designed for students who have demonstrated an understanding of academic writing that most incoming freshmen have not. Because of the students' level of preparedness, the Writing & Communication Program provides intensive, advanced courses for students to work closely with senior faculty within the English department. Advanced courses assume that students have established strong reading and synthesizing skills, as well as a demonstrated interest in writing and communication, prior to entering Carnegie Mellon. The course topics shift each semester. Students enroll and are admitted through an application process that takes place before the Fall semester of each year.

76-102 A: MWF 1:00PM-1:50PM

Professor: Stephen Wittek

Writing the Good Life: Perspectives on Flourishing

What is a good life? Is a good life synonymous with happiness? Is there a method for achieving a good life? And how do we define “good” in such a question? Is it cultural, personal, ethical, performative? Various academic disciplines and traditions focus on this question—and the practical implications, for us, are clear. Immanuel Kant said that there is inevitable tension between virtue and happiness, hence the need for a philosophy of a good life and its relationship to values. Philosophers like Meghan Sullivan would have us explore a reflective method for thinking through “big questions” so that we arrive at “loving attention and making meaning” to find our truth. Psychiatry professor Robert Waldinger and psychology professor Marc Schulz, based upon their longitudinal study of happiness, would tell us that the very simple answer to “a more meaningful and satisfying life” is relationships. Professor Laurie Santos draws us to strategies from theories of mind and the science of well being. What happens when we embed technology and progress into a narrative of the good life? Or Faith? Justice? Suffering? Sexuality? Intergenerational perspective? The discussion can bring us encouragement and sometimes, perhaps, sheer exhaustion.

This advanced academic research writing course uses questions about the good life to introduce students to communication methods to know the self and our campus community and to facilitate meaningful engagement with our community. In pursuit of the question “What is my good life?”, students will encounter a variety of oral, written and visual communication tasks, ranging from reflective pieces, research interviews, a research synthesis, a multimodal proposal, a poster, and public presentations. Within the course, we will use digital tools for feedback on our writing, including those that use GenAI. *If students do not wish to participate in a rigorous team writing project, they should not enroll in this section.*