Instructor: Andrew Y. Lee (ayl305@nyu.edu or andrew.yuan.lee@gmail.com)
Time: MWTR 1:30pm-3:05pm
Location: 5 Washington Pl, Room 302
Office Hours: After class or by appointment

Course Description:

This course will examine a variety of philosophical issues pertaining to life and
death. These include questions such as: What makes for a good life? Is death
intrinsically bad? What is the nature of a person? What are our moral obligations to
persons spatially or temporally distant from us? This course will not teach you how you
ought to live your life, but it will teach you how to reflect critically on some
fundamental philosophical issues. Readings will be primarily comprised of contemporary
texts and articles.

Assignments and Grading:

Attendance and Participation: 20%

Attendance and participation are an important part of the class. If you must miss
a class (e.g., due to sickness, family emergency, etc), please let the instructor know
ahead of time. If you miss a class, please submit an extra short response paper on a
reading you have not already written to make up for the missed class.

Short Response Papers: 30%

There are ten short response papers due throughout the course. The response
papers should be structured as follows. First, give a summary of an argument from the
readings. Second, discuss either an objection you have to the argument, a point you
think is unclear in the argument, or reasons you find the argument persuasive. Each
response paper should be about 1-page long. Aim to be clear, explicit, and precise,
rather than original or deep.

Response papers are due approximately every other class session, and may be on
any of the readings since after the last response paper was due (e.g., the short response
paper due on 5/24 may be on either the Introduction or Chapter 1 of the Hurka book).
Responses should be sent via e-mail to the instructor before 12pm on the day that they
are due (e.g., the first response paper is due at 12pm on 5/24). Please title your e-mail
“[First Name] [Last Name] Response Paper [#]” (e.g., “Barack Obama Response Paper 1”).

Final Exam: 20%
There will be a final exam on the last day of class (June 30th). The exam will consist of short answer and short essay questions. I will give a study sheet for guidelines on what to study.

Final Paper: 30%
There will be a 5-page final paper due by midnight on July 3rd. The final paper should explicate an argument from the readings and critically assess that argument. Like the response papers, you should aim to make the final paper clear, explicit, and precise, rather than original or deep. You are encouraged to discuss your paper with the instructor beforehand. The link below is a useful resource for learning how to write a good philosopher paper:

http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html

Texts Required:

2. Death / May, Todd / 2014

Readings outside of these two books will be sent via e-mail by instructor.

Reading Schedule:
(Bolded dates indicate when short response papers are due)

Week 1: Life
5/24: The Best Things in Life (Ch. 1) / Thomas Hurka / 2011
5/25: The Best Things in Life (Ch. 3) / Thomas Hurka / 2011
5/26: The Best Things in Life (Ch. 4) / Thomas Hurka / 2011

Week 2: Life
5/31: The Best Things in Life (Ch. 5) / Thomas Hurka / 2011
6/1: The Best Things in Life (Ch. 7) / Thomas Hurka / 2011
6/2: The Best Things in Life (Ch. 8) / Thomas Hurka / 2011
Week 3: Life
6/7: The Experience Machine (Anarchy, State, and Utopia) / Robert Nozick / 1974

Week 4: Death
6/14: Death (Ch. 1) / Todd May / 2014
6/15: Death (Ch. 2) / Todd May / 2014
6/16: Death (Ch. 3) / Todd May / 2014

Week 5: Persons
6/20: The Absurd / Thomas Nagel / 1971

Week 6: Morality
6/27: Famine, Affluence, and Morality / Peter Singer / 1972
6/29: Overpopulation and the Quality of Life / Derek Parfit / 2004
6/30: Final Exam

7/3: Final paper due by midnight