

LIVING A GOOD LIFE



November 15-20, 2009
Cavallo Point, San Francisco Bay

Syllabus

Background Reading:

Why am I attending the seminar?

John R. O'Neil, *The Paradox of Success*, Chapter 6, "Deeper into Renewal: The Retreat"
David Whyte, *The Heart Aroused*, "Taking the Homeward Road: The Soul at Midlife"
Pablo Neruda, *We Are Many*

Pre-seminar homework:

Draw a "Life Line" of your life's journey, illustrating where you have been and the significant turning points of your life phases. This personal exercise is meant to help you reflect on your experiences. (It will not be shared with the group.)

Session I: HUMAN NATURE & THE JOURNEY (Sunday evening)

What makes us human? What is our common life journey? What constitutes an examined life? How do we now make use of this time of our lives? What do we want to accomplish this week?

Readings:

Plato, *The Rings of Gyges*

Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*

Mencius, *Human Nature*

Session II: HUMAN NATURE & THE JOURNEY (Continued) (Monday morning)

Readings:

Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*

Matthieu Ricard, *Happiness: A Guide to Developing Life's Most Important Skill*, Introduction and Chapters 1-2

Session III: HUMAN NATURE & THE JOURNEY (Continued)
(Monday afternoon)

Readings:

Alan Jones, John O'Neil: *Seasons of Grace*, Chapter 14, "Journey of the Soul"

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, Chapter 3,
"Enjoyment and the Quality of Life"

Roger Walsh, M.D., Ph.D., *Staying Alive*, Introduction and Chapters 7-10

Session IV: COMMUNITY and SOCIETY
(Tuesday morning)

What is the role of right work in your current life? How can we serve others? How can we create the opportunity for others to lead the good life? What role does philanthropy play in leading a good life? How do community service, optimism, and gratitude fit in a good life?

Readings:

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden and Civil Disobedience*, selection from "The Village"

Carolyn G. Heilbrun, *The Last Gift of Time: Life Beyond Sixty*, selection

Sue Bender, *Plain and Simple*, Prologue and Chapters 1-5

James O'Toole, *Creating the Good Life*, "Norton Tennille, David Guggenhime, Ann Bowers, John Wood" selections

Paul Newman and A.E. Hotchner, *Shameless Exploitation: In Pursuit of the Common Good*, Chapters 18 and 24

Martin Luther King, Jr., *Letter from Birmingham City Jail*

Session V: COMMUNITY and SOCIETY (Continued)
(Tuesday afternoon)

A guided walk through natural beauty.

Session VI: FAMILY & FRIENDS
(Wednesday morning)

The role of mentors and friends? How do we resolve the tensions between family and work? To what extent are primary relationships necessary for happiness throughout the trajectory of life?

Readings:

T.S. Eliot, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*

Adrienne Rich, "An honorable human relationship . . ." from *Arts of the Possible: Essays and Conversations*

Stanley Kunitz, "The Layers" in *The Collected Poems*

Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving*, selections from Chapter 2, “The Theory of Love”
James Hollis, *The Middle Passage: From Misery to Meaning in Midlife*, Chapters 5 & 6

Session VII: FAMILY & FRIENDS (Continued)
(Wednesday afternoon)

Talk with special guest

Session VIII: LEISURE and LEGACY
(Thursday morning)

What are we to pass on to the next generation? Why do we resist doing what will make us happy? Is that all there is? When do we feel closest to the truth? What makes us resist the truth?

Readings:

James C. Rettie, “But a Watch in the Night”: A Scientific Fable

Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Ozymandias*

William Shakespeare, *Sonnet 60*, “Like as the waves make toward the pebbled shore . . .”

Andrew Marvell, *To His Coy Mistress*

George Gordon, Lord Byron, “Fragment”

W.H. Auden, *Who’s Who?*

Session IX: NATURE, ART and CREATIVITY
(Thursday afternoon)

Why did Carl Jung say, “The first half of life is preparing for the second, and the second must be the creative half?” Can creativity heal us?

Readings:

Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself,” selection, in *Americans’ Favorite Poems*, edited by Robert Pinsky and Maggie Dietz

Annie Dillard, *The Writing Life*, Chapter 5

Winston S. Churchill, *Painting as a Pastime*

Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *Gift from the Sea*, Chapter 7

Wayne Booth, *For the Love of It: Amateuring and Its Rivals*, selections from the Overture and Chapters 3, 5, 7, 11

Session X: THE GOOD LIFE – OPEN MIND
(Friday morning)

What does it mean to lead a good life? What is true happiness? How to cultivate an open, clear mind? In order to be happy, what should we be doing that we are not doing now? What's next? How do we find balance and equilibrium?

Readings:

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, selections

Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I, Chapters 8-11

Robert Frost, The Road Not Taken

Mary Oliver, "West Wind #2," in *Ten Poems to Open Your Heart* by Roger Housden

Mary Oliver, "The Summer Day" in *Americans' Favorite Poems*, edited by Robert Pinsky and Maggie Dietz

Isaiah Berlin, *Notes on Prejudice*
