**WELCOME to IDS 142: LIVING a LIFE of SIGNIFICANCE**

**COURSE SYLLABUS AND POLICIES**

**FALL 2022**

**“Happiness is not a destination. It is a way of travelling.” Roy L. Goodman?**

**Invitation to the Course: Welcome to BSC and to Living a Life of Significance!**

Birmingham-Southern states that its mission to prepare students “for lives of significance.” Our mission statement asserts that, “The College fosters intellectual and personal development…by challenging students to engage their community and the greater world, to examine diverse perspectives, and to live with integrity.” No specific definition or prescription for living a life of significance is provided—thus inviting exploration and discussion about how the mission translates to one’s specific situation. What exactly does it mean to live a life of significance? By what criteria does one assess the achievement of significance? How and in what ways does one engage the community, examine diverse views, or live with integrity? How do the learning experiences and choices in college relate to crafting and living a life of significance? These questions—about the meaning, purpose, and aims of schooling and life—are age old questions, confronted by each generation, each person, and each community. This course takes up these questions as a way of exploring the implications of joining a community of learners at Birmingham-Southern who prioritize living a life of significance. By the end of this course, you will have articulated for yourself what it means to live a life of significance and identified specific strategies for creating that life.

**Instructor:** Andy Gannon

**Contact Information:** agannon@bsc.edu

**Office:** Stephens Science Center 230

**Office Hours for Student Visits:** M-F 8-10 AM; W,Th 3-4:30 PM. Drop-ins welcome.

**Class meets:** Tues. and Thurs. 12:30 – 1:50 PM in Humanities Center 117

**COVID Policy**: We will not start the semester wearing masks or distancing in class, but we will have to be flexible if the need to change arises. Students are asked to follow BSC Covid protocols which are based on CDC recommendations and that they isolate for 5 days if they test positive and continue to wear the mask for an additional 5 days.

**Learning Outcomes**

*In this course, we will work on:*

* Framing useful questions about learning and living a life of significance
* Drawing inferences based on experiences and observations
* Comparing, analyzing, and synthesizing across different examples and cases
* Evaluating and critiquing situations based on justifiable criteria
* Making short-term and long-term plans for effective learning and living a life of significance, including how to:
  + read, study, and manage time effectively
  + reflect on curricular and co-curricular engagement choices
  + identify and access mentors and mentoring relationships
  + engage responsibly, respectfully, and critically with a community of learners
  + articulate the relationships between learning in college and subsequent career and professional achievements and civic contributions

**Overview of Course Organization**

The course is divided into three units, each of which adds to and builds on what it means to live a life of significance. Unit 1 explores what living a life of significance means to you based on your own experiences and your analysis of interviews, podcasts, and other materials. Unit 2 further investigates how others have lived their lives and by implication how they have defined living a life of significance. In the third unit, we evaluate the extent to which specific communities support or constrain the possibility of living a life of significance. As part of this unit, you craft a flexible curricular and co-curricular plan for your time at BSC and living a life of significance.

**Main Assignments & Assessments**

Each assignment is described in full on Moodle.

Assignment 1: Defining the Life of Significance 12%

Assignment 2: Interview Project 15%

Assignment 3: Group Synthesis Presentation 12%

Assignment 4: Significance in Community 15%

Assignment 5: Curricular and Co-Curricular Plan 15%

Responsibility 1: Mini-Assignments – Quizzes, Quick responses, etc. 15%

Responsibility 2: Attendance, Participation, & Engagement 16%

**Resources to help you**

Oliver Burkeman, *Four Thousand Weeks: Time Management for Mortals*.

Although it has “Time Management” in its title, this book is really anti-time management, or at least, time management by thinking about what things in your life are the most significant and focusing on them while ignoring others.

Student-selected chapters from John Green, *The Anthropocene Reviewed: Essays on a Human Centered Planet.*

This book is a “symphony of essays” about the assumptions and contradictions created by human societies in the current age. Later in the semester, students will select some of the essays to focus on in detail. Student pairs will present their take on and lead class discussion on one of those essays as we focus on how communities determine the significance of people and their lives, both common (*Piggly Wiggly*) and distant (*The Hotdogs of Baejarins Beztu Pylsur*) phenomena.

You are automatically enrolled on the course Moodle page. It has Chapters from *The Anthropocene Reviewed* and other resources for you. It will be the main way for you to get information about the course and to submit assignments.

**Birmingham-Southern College Classroom Communities**

**Teaching Philosophy**

Our courses are about your success and my role is to do all I can to ensure that success. All students, given the right resources and conditions, can learn and succeed in this course and at BSC. I will work to provide the necessary resources and guidance to ensure everyone in the class can achieve at a high level. That includes structured use of class time, thought-provoking assignments and challenges, and articulated criteria for success. We have high expectations— you can and will be motivated to strengthen your critical thinking, writing, and oral communication skills and will take up the challenges presented by the assignments. We will collaborate to refine and clarify the work we are doing together. Your perceptions, enthusiasm and input are necessary and will inform the direction of the class. The questions we raise together through our collaborative investigations are more important than the answers.

**Statement of Inclusion & Equity**

IDS 142 supports an inclusive learning environment where diverse perspectives are recognized and respected. As outlined in the Birmingham-Southern mission, the College challenges students to engage in their community and the greater world, to examine diverse perspectives, and to live with integrity. Assignments outlined in the course syllabus will address diversity consideration for communities, why those communities exist, who they serve, and how their practices reflect their values.

**Honor Code**

Much of the work in this class will be collaborative in nature so it is expected that you will discuss assignments with your classmates. However, when you turn in work as your own, you need to be sure that what you have written is your understanding of the concept and not simply copied from another source. You must properly cite and reference all sources. If you are unsure how to do this properly, please reach out to me. If you are found in violation of the Honor Code by the Honor Council, you will receive no credit for the assignment, test, or quiz in question.

**Accessibility Statement**

Students with a disability that qualify under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and require accommodations should be registered with BSC’s Accessibility Office. If you are registered for academic accommodation, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss any accommodation that may be necessary. During this discussion you are not expected to disclose any details concerning your disability though you may do so at your discretion. If you have a disability but have not yet registered, please contact Dr. Sandra Foster, Assistant Director of Accessibility Services and Resources, at 205-226-7909 (x1909) or [smfoster@bsc.edu](mailto:smfoster@bsc.edu), or visit Norton 228. Keep in mind that no accommodation will be made unless and until the instructor receives official notification from the College. **The above is the official policy statement of the college. But here is how I like to think about it – if there is something that is preventing you from doing your best in this class and succeeding, please let me know and I will try to find a way to take that barrier down for you and for every other student. For example, if you are having trouble hearing me, I will find a way to reorganize the classroom so that you and every other student can hear me. DrG**

**Title IX**

Birmingham-Southern College is committed to the creation and maintenance of a safe and healthy learning environment for students and the campus community. The College forbids any type of sexual or gender-based misconduct among its students, faculty, and staff. The College encourages all members of the academic community to report suspected sexual and gender-based misconduct to the appropriate authorities so that it can be investigated, remedied, and eliminated. BSC forbids retaliation against any person who has opposed, reported, or participated in an investigation concerning sexual or gender-based misconduct. See the BSC Title IX website ([www.bsc.edu/titleix](http://www.bsc.edu/titleix)) for more information, including a link to file an online report form and information about how and to whom to report in person. If you or a peer have experienced such misconduct, the Title IX webpage also includes information about the numerous resources available on campus and in the local community with whom the College encourages you to seek support. Confidential resources include counseling and health care providers, our Chaplain, and numerous faculty and staff members who are trained in assisting students by answering questions and helping them navigate their choices in seeking further support and the reporting process.

**BSC Resources for Success for Writers and Readers**

Located in Humanities 102, the Writing Center offers in-person and virtual peer-to-peer tutoring and a quiet, supportive lab space to work on writing assignments. The Writing Center’s tutors are students from a wide variety of majors on campus and have the range to address student writing needs with discipline specificity. Supervised and assisted by Writing Center directors, our tutors provide one-on-one consultations for any student at any point in the writing process. During these consultations, tutors do not “edit” papers; instead, they assist students in addressing any potential writing issues, including content development, grammar usage, and citation formatting. Each tutorial is about 30 minutes long, free of charge, and available on a drop-in basis. There is no limit to how many tutorials a student may attend. Once logged in, a director will take your information and pair you with a tutor for your 30-minute tutorial.

The Writing Center is open Sunday-Thursday, 2pm-8pm. To ensure a full 30-minute tutorial time slot, students are encouraged to be mindful of assignment-heavy weeks, keep track of due dates, and visit the Writing Center at their earliest availability during open hours. Please contact Dr. Anna Williams or Laura Tolbert (writingcenter@bsc.edu) with any questions or requests for virtual appointments. We will have a class visit from Writing Center Tutors.

**IDS 142: LIVING a LIFE of SIGNIFICANCE**

**COURSE SCHEDULE FALL 2022**

Updated 11/10

Assignment 1: What does it mean to live a life of significance?

Week 1

Thursday Aug. 25 Introductions, Syllabus and Classroom Agreements

Metacognition Exercise

Partner Discussion: Who do I think has led a life of significance?

Each person shares with class a description of a life they feel is significant.

Free Writing Exercise on what a life of significance is.

Before Monday at 5 PM, please post a < 1.5 min. Flipgrid with your responses to these questions:

* + - * What is your name?
      * What do you like to be called (name and pronouns)?
      * From where do you come?
      * What is your family like?
      * What do you value enough to struggle with?
      * What excites you most about your future at BSC?
      * What scares you most about your future at BSC?
      * What is most important to you as a student?
      * What do you expect people will learn about you once they get to know you?
      * Extracurricular hobbies/activities

Week 2

Before Class on Tuesday, watch all the Flip Grids and bring in a question for 3 of the people.

Tuesday Aug. 30 Answer Flipgrid questions.

Discuss initial thoughts about lives of significance and do 7 min. freewriting exercise on what is a life of significance. We will watch a TED talk: Ronald Sullivan - How I help free innocent people from prison in class. Then have a Chalk Talk and discussion. Take 5 min. to write to yourself about how your definition has changed and/or something you learned.

Before class: Read Introduction and Ch. 1 - The Limit-Embracing Life in Burkeman and take Moodle quiz

Thursday Sep. 01 Discus Intro and Ch. 1 and the Curse of Competency and Managing Expectations.

Guests from Writing Center and ARC. Discuss outlining before writing. Start annotated outline of your draft of “Defining a Life of Significance” and share with a partner for feedback. Use feedback to improve it and turn in at next class. What criteria you use (and why) are important and what you don’t use (and why) are just as important.

Week 3

Sept. 5 Labor Day—No Classes

Before class: Read p. 237-8 in Burkeman (“Decide in advance what to fail at”) and read/watch a podcast/story about Learning from Failure (see links on Moodle).

Tuesday Sept. 06 Divide into groups of 4 and share the epic fail you read about. Divide into new groups and tell a story about how you failed at something. Get anonymous peer feedback on outline and flesh out your explanation of criteria and examples. Discuss how to cite and why?

Before Class: read Ch. 2 (Burkeman). Submit draft of Assignment 1.

Thursday Sep. 08 Discuss Ch.2 - The Efficiency Trap. Get peer feedback on Assignment 1 draft in class.. Attend Academic Bootcamp earlier that day and discuss in class.

Week 4

Sep. 12 Mon. Scheduled one on one conferences on drafts (8 – 11 AM)

Sept. 13 Tues Scheduled one on one conferences on drafts in class.

Before class: Read Ch. 3 (Burkeman) Facing Finitude. Also find something online to read about the value or the worthlessness of the Liberal Arts education.

Thursday Sept. 15 Discuss Facing Finitude and Liberal Arts. Brainstorm in groups: How would I tell my grandmother what the liberal arts are and why it is useful? How could I explain the Liberal Arts to a friend who went to a large research institute? What would I ask a recent BSC alum if I wanted to know more about the liberal arts? What would I ask an older BSC alum if I wanted to know more about the liberal arts? Also discuss Wellness and its relevance to performance.

Sept. 16 (Fri.) Due: Assignment 1

Please upload your final version of essay to Moodle by 11:59 p.m.

Assignment 2: How do others live a life of significance?

Week 5

Before Class: Reread Review Ch. 3 (Burkeman) “Facing Finitude” and find a quote in it that you like or disagree with and write it down and bring it with for discussion.

Tuesday Sept. 20 Continue to discuss wellness and ask students for examples of how they practice wellness in their lives. Relate Wellness to stress reduction and improved performance. Pass out Monday Mood. The value of listening. Students do listening exercise with partner. Introduction of Assignment 2. Do Stop, Start, Continue exercise.

Before Class: Read parts of Semistructured interviewing & Qualitative Research Interview on Moodle

Thursday Sept. 22 The value and ethics of interviewing. Overview of IRB/Ethics policies. Students discuss: What makes a good interview vs. a bad interview? Then watch Podcast (Atomic Habits Interview) and analyze interviewing skills.

Week 6 Activities

Before class: Read Ch. 8 - *You are Here* (Burkeman)

Tuesday Sept. 27 Conducting an Interview ppt. Students do listening exercise with partner. Then do 5 min. freewriting exercise on the experience/value of listening. Discuss *You are Here* (Bring quote that you identify or disagree with). Group Exercise: Networking skills: Plan A, B & C and related to possible qualifications you are looking for and potential interviewees. Discuss importance of mentors. How to write an email requesting someone to let you interview them. Beta test of the administration of student evaluations.

Before class: Read Ch. 11 - *Staying on the Bus* (Burkeman), focus/patience exercise

Thursday Sept. 29 Discuss patience exercise. Do mindful walking exercise., moving meditation, and mindfulness. Use quote from Thich Nhat Hanh about meditation. Discuss *Staying on the Bus.* Identify potential interviewees and draft questions for class this week. What are the questions you would ask in your interview? Practice interviewing friend or family member. Discuss how to write up interviews.

Week 7

Tuesday Oct. 4 Conduct Practice Interview and do patience exercise on your own time this week

Oct. 6-9 Fall Break

Week 8

Before Class: Upload write-up of practice interview and Patience Exercise to Moodle

Tues. Oct. 11 Review Assignment 2 Instructions. Identify potential interviewees and draft questions for class this week. Group Exercise on interviewing tips.

Before Class: Create Interviewing Tips .ppt with group and bring to class.

Wednesday Oct. 13 Students present interviewing tips ppts. Discuss how to write up interviews. Discuss progress. Go over the concept of the Anthropocene Reviewed. Students pick chapters to present.

Assignment 3: Group Project: Interview Synthesis and Reflection

Week 9

Before Class: Read Ch. 5 The watermelon problem (Burkeman)

Tuesday Oct. 18 Presentations prep. Students Pick groups and start comparing notes on interviews. Determine type of presentation and make outline. Discuss Reading – what have you done/not done on the internet that was a waste of time? Review “Prove me wrong.”

Before Class: Read Ch. 10 The Impatience Spiral (Burkeman)

Thursday Oct. 20 Presentations prep. Students Pick groups and practice presentations on interviews. Discuss reading – what examples have you experienced in your life? What can you do about other people’s impatience? Begin discussion of Assignment 4 – What is a community?

Week 10

Oct. 24 (Monday) Assignment 2 Due at 11:59 PM

Before Class: Read Ch. 5 Ch. 13 Cosmic Insignificance Therapy (Burkeman) and selection on Ethnographic Research (posted this morning)

Tuesday Oct. 25 Review Assignment 3: Group Project: Interview Synthesis and Reflection.

Student groups work on presentation and make outline. Discuss *4,000 Weeks* Reading.

Before Class: Read Selection on Ethnographic Research and read (Moodle) or listen to Letter from Birmingham City Jail.

Thursday Oct. 27 Student groups finish Assignment 3 presentation and practice it. Discuss *Letter from Birmingham City Jail*. To what community was this letter addressed? How did Dr. King feel that the community was letting him down? Continue discussion of Assignment 4 – What is a community?

Week 11

Class will attend library research session this week during class time.

Tuesday Nov. 1 Library research session. In class group presentations, Assignment 3. Graded by peers and instructor. Review Discussion *Letter from Birmingham City Jail*. To what community was this letter addressed? How did Dr. King feel that the community was letting him down? Continue discussion of Assignment 4 – What is a community? To what communities do you belong? Which one would you want to investigate? Library visit on how to research communities.

Thursday Nov. 3 In class group presentations, Assignment 3. Continue discussion of Assignment 4 – Ethnographic Research. Discuss selection on terms/definitions and ethics and objectivity of ethnographic research. What is a community? To what communities do you belong? Which one would you want to investigate? Discuss Ethnographic Research.

Assignment 4: Significant Communities

Week 12

Before Class: Assignment 4 Initial Task due. Bring your description of the community you want to investigate and 4 questions you want to find out about it

Tuesday Nov. 8 Discuss descriptions of the communities you want to investigate and 4 questions you want to find out about it to class. After each student has presented and discussed students will have the opportunity to form teams of 2 – 4 to work together on researching the same community. Student led discussions of selected chapters from *The Anthropocene Reviewed.* Student groups work together on proposal for Assignment 4. Student groups turn in proposal by 11 PM. What is the community you will research and what is you research plan? Include at least 4 different avenues you will pursue in your research.)

Thursday Nov. 10 Student led discussions of selected chapters from *The Anthropocene Reviewed.* Student groups work together on Assignment 4, writing detailed research plan and work on Community Investigations. Introduce Assignment 5.

Assignment 5: Curricular and Co-Curricular Plan for Living a Life of Significance

Week 13

Before Class: Read Ch. 14. The Human Disease and the Afterword: Beyond Hope (Burkeman)

Tuesday Nov. 15 Discuss Summary and Conclusion of Burkeman book. What is your take home message from this book? With what parts do you thoroughly disagree? Introduce Assignment 5.

Thursday Nov. 17 Assignment 4 Presentations if students chose this option. Discuss Assignment 5. Curricular and Co-curricular plan for living a life of significance. What format should this take? Students work on outlines of Assignment 5.

Week 14

Tuesday Nov. 22 Assignment 4 Presentations if students chose this option. Students review drafts of Curricular and Co-curricular plan and give peer feedback..

Week 15

Before class see video of the PBS show “Finding Your Roots” with Henry Louis Gates, “All in the Family” (Season 5 Episode 10) on reserve in the BSC Library.

Tuesday Nov. 29 . Discuss this video in class. Assignment 4 Presentations if students chose this option

Student Survey

Note: This survey is for the instructor’s use only. Please be assured that all information is completely confidential. Feel free to withhold any information you do not feel comfortable sharing, however.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Year at BSC:\_\_\_First Year\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Major (if known):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Which pronouns do you prefer?

Do you have any learning challenges, concerns, or academic accommodations of which you would like the instructor to be aware? If you answered “yes,” do you have a plan and/or assistance in dealing with your particular challenges? (If you would like to consult with the instructor about developing a learning strategy that might assist you in successful completion of the course, please make an appointment.)

Identify your strengths and challenges as a student. What are the particular academic skills you would like to develop over the course of this class?

Is there anything else you would like the instructor to know about you as a student?

Do you have any particular areas of interest or real life experiences regarding the topic of this class?