

The Meaning of Work
Religious Studies 2400/ FaithWork 2400/ Philosophy 2400
Fall 2010

Meeting Times: TTh 10:00-11:15am **Meeting Place:** CC 21
Professor: Darby Ray **Office:** CC 16
Office Hours: W 10am-Noon, or by appointment
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Email: raydk@millsaps.edu (This is the best way to reach me.)

Course Description

The question of the meaning of work is probably as old as human existence. It stretches across time and continents and engages a wide range of philosophical, theological, social, psychological, and organizational themes and theories. Most of us spend most of our waking hours working, yet we rarely pause to consider what it's really about, or should be about. This course is intended to be such a pause—a moment to stop and reflect on the phenomenon that is arguably at the foundation of human civilization and the human psyche.

When we stop to think about work, we may find ourselves awash with questions: Why do we work? If we had the choice, would we prefer *not* to work? Do some or all of us have that choice? Is work a primal curse, a saving grace, a neutral necessity? Are certain kinds of work or ways of working better or more meaningful than others? Is work necessary for healthy self-esteem and social well-being? Who should benefit from work? Can work be organized and valued to enhance workers' fulfillment and the health of the planet? Does capitalism necessarily alienate workers from meaning and self-fulfillment? Is it on a collision course with nature? Can everyone have meaningful work, or must some of us settle for less? Are we called to certain kinds of work by our gifts and talents and/or by God? Is the notion of "calling" or "vocation" an elitest one? Do we have a responsibility to serve a greater good than mere self-interest with our work? The list goes on. . .

A one-semester course cannot hope to answer all the questions, but we're going to give it our best shot! Toward that end, we will read and discuss books and articles, present new ideas to each other, explore our own work history, identity, and hopes, watch films, and consider the stories of a range of workers. In other words, we will sample materials from an array of sources and perspectives in our attempt to understand the significance of work in human life. In particular, we will explore the varied ways in which work and American life/identity co-determine each other. Throughout this process, we will work to develop our analytical and rhetorical skills by reading carefully, summarizing accurately, making arguments, marshaling evidence, and expressing our positions eloquently and persuasively. You and I will be partners in learning as we traverse a wide-ranging set of texts, ideas, and experiences. I hope you're ready to work on work. I know I am!

Required Texts

These texts are available for purchase in the Millsaps bookstore:

Working in America, edited by Amy S. Wharton

Working by Studs Terkel

Nickel and Dimed by Barbara Ehrenreich

The Wal-Mart Effect by Charles Fishman

Course Connect- A critically important course feature. Go to Course Connect > Faith & Work > Meaning of Work for electronic readings, quizzes, and assignment updates.

Expectations/Requirements*

I *hope* you will throw yourself into this course and reap the rewards of passionate engagement. At the very least, I expect you to give the course your serious attention. In particular, I expect you to attend to the requirements and criteria listed below.

(1) Attendance (0%)

I expect your *regular and punctual attendance* at all class meetings. Absences in excess of three will result in the lowering of your final grade by one-third letter grade per absence. In addition, significant and/or repeated tardies will each be treated as one-half an absence.

(2) Daily Class Participation (10%)

Depending on the teaching method used, **different kinds of class participation are appropriate**. For instance, lectures should elicit active listening and/or note-taking; alternatively, group work requires a commitment by each individual to serve the good of the group; finally, class discussion calls for respectful listening and informed, thoughtful, and regular oral contributions.

Students interested in earning a grade of C or better in this category should come to each class meeting with:

- * the assigned text(s) for the day;
- * any written or oral work assigned for the day;
- * their thinking caps on!

(3) Reading Quizzes (15%)

Most of our discussions in class will be based on assigned readings. To enter the discussion, you must have completed the reading. To "encourage" and reward consistent completion of daily reading assignments, there will be short quizzes on most assignments. Most reading quizzes will be available on Course Connect and should be completed before class.

(4) Connections (10%)

About once every two weeks you will attempt to reflect in writing on connections you see between assigned readings and your own life. These writings will be informal and autobiographical. They will be graded on the depth, seriousness, or creativity of thought they reflect.

(5) Exams (20% each = 40% total)

There will be three exams designed to test your ability to recall, synthesize, and reflect critically on the content and import of material covered in assigned readings and in lectures and discussions. Your work on the exams will be evaluated in terms of command of material, complexity of thinking, clarity and organization of ideas, and persuasiveness of argument.

(6) Paper (25%)

At the end of the semester you will attempt to write a well-informed and thoughtful 6-8 page paper in which you consider one or more of the course's themes, questions, and/or texts in some detail. The paper will be a combination of exposition, analysis, argument, and personal reflection. More information and instruction will be forthcoming.

You are strongly encouraged to engage in a process of draft writing and revising as you complete

your paper, using the resources of the Writing Center where appropriate. Only the final draft will be submitted for a grade.

Note: 5% of the paper grade will be based on a Pre-Writing exercise.

Note: In general, written work will be evaluated in terms of command of material, clarity and organization of ideas, persuasiveness of argument, complexity of thinking, creativity of thought, elegance of expression, and grammatical correctness. Specific writing skills to focus on include Diction, Evidence, and Documentation, as well as Synthesis. For definitions of these terms, refer to the Millsaps College Writing Pyramid (last page of this syllabus).

Grading

While I hope you will work long and hard on this course and its assignments, you should know that when it comes to written work and oral presentations, you will be graded on the *quality* of the work you produce, not the effort you put into it. In most cases, effort correlates with quality: Rarely can someone put forth very little effort and still create a high quality product. At the same time, let us simply admit to the fact that some of us have to work a lot harder than others to make the same grade. In addition, some of us may find that our intellectual talents are better suited for one subject matter than another, or for one type of assignment instead of another, or that our talents don't really blossom until a later stage in life. Whether we like them or not these kinds of realities are simply the stuff of life. I will not, as an evaluator of your work, lie to you by telling you your work is better than it is. On the other hand, I would be pleased as punch if every single person in this class submitted high quality work all the time and hence earned a grade of "A" in the course. All that being said, here is what letter grades mean in this course:

A grade of F means the work you have done on the assignment basically fails to respond to it.

A grade of D means your work speaks to the assignment but still does not meet its minimum requirements. Your paper has serious problems.

A grade of C means you have successfully met the minimum requirements of an assignment. Your paper has no major problems of any kind, but there is still much for you to do to better your grade. Your work on that paper is average.

A grade of B means you have succeeded in important ways. Your work has gone beyond the minimum requirements of the assignment. For example, you have demonstrated adequate mastery of complex materials; you have successfully balanced description with analysis; well-chosen evidence is offered in support of your assertions and interpretations; you express yourself clearly, coherently, and meaningfully. Your work on that assignment is good.

A grade of A means you have produced a highly impressive, exemplary assignment. You have demonstrated complex thinking and excellent mastery of materials; you have presented your thesis coherently and persuasively; you have organized your thoughts effectively; and you have supported your interpretations meticulously. An A assignment is also one that is excellent in style and voice or tone. And in an A assignment, attention to form (spelling, punctuation, grammar, documentation) is as rigorous as it is to the content. Your work on that paper is superior.

Complex thinking is often termed "critical thinking". This term does not refer to the act of being critical. Rather, critical thinking is thinking which is able to incorporate multiple points of view, addresses problems which may have no neat and simple answers, tolerates ambiguity, finds connections, and is not reliant on others' assessments. Critical thinkers can subject their own assumptions to rational inquiry and are able to be self-assessors.

Daily Schedule*

- 8/24 Making Connections
Due next class: work history/identity exercise and assigned reading
- 8/26 Work History & Identity Exercise
Gregory Pence's typology of work
Amy S. Wharton, "General Introduction" to *Working in America*, xiii-xvii
- 8/31 **Classical Greek Views of Work**
Plato, from *The Republic*
Aristotle, from *Nicomachean Ethics* and *The Politics*
- 9/2 **Biblical Insights Into Work**
Ray - chapter 2 of manuscript-in-process
Bring a Bible to class if you have one.
- 9/7 **The Reformation (of Work): Luther**
Martin Luther, from "Freedom of A Christian"
Connections #1 due
- 9/9 **The Reformation (of Work): Calvin(ism)**
John Calvin, from *Institutes of the Christian Religion*
William Perkins, "A Treatise of the Vocations or Callings of Men"
- 9/14 **The Protestant/Puritan Work Ethic**
Benjamin Franklin, "The Way to Wealth"
Daniel Alexander Payne, "Welcome to the Ransomed"
Max Weber, TBA
- 9/16 Transition Day
- 9/21 **Exam**
- 9/23 **Early Capitalism**
Adam Smith, from *Wealth of Nations*
Frederick Taylor, "Fundamentals of Scientific Management" (Wharton, ch. 6)
Harry Braverman, "The Division of Labor" (Wharton, ch. 7)
- 9/28 **Capitalism and Alienation**
Stephen Meyer, "The Evolution of the New Industrial Technology" (Wharton, ch. 3)
Video: Henry Ford's Model T
Karl Marx, "Alienated Labour" (Wharton, ch. 4)
Video: Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*
Terkel 29-32, 164-68

- 9/30 Walter Powell, "The Capitalist Firm in the Twenty-First Century" (Wharton, ch. 9)
 Steven Vallas and John Beck, "The Transformation of Work Revisited: The Limits of Flexibility in American Manufacturing" (Wharton, ch. 13)
 Terkel 289-93
- 10/5 **Success(?)**
 Andrew Carnegie, "The Gospel of Wealth"
 Richard Sennett, "The Corrosion of Character"
 Terkel 405-13, xlv-xlix
Connections #2 due
- 10/7 No class. Instead, enjoy the inauguration of Robert Wesley Pearigen as the 11th President of Millsaps College. Woohoo!
 Read ahead in *The Wal-Mart Effect*.
- 10/12 **Wal-Mart's "Success"**
 Charles Fishman, *The Wal-Mart Effect*
- 10/14 Fishman, *The Wal-Mart Effect*
Connections #3 due
- 10/19 No class. Fall Break.
- 10/21 Transition day
 Lilly Internship information visit
 Review what we've covered thus far in the course and develop two thoughtful exam questions—questions you think would be fair but challenging. Bring your questions in writing. Be prepared to share them with others and to offer some thoughts about how one might go about answering each of your questions.
 Terkel _____
- 10/26 **Exam**
- 10/28 **Late Capitalism**
 Vicki Smith, "Structural Unemployment. . . in the Turbulent Economy" (Wharton, ch. 10)
 Simon Head, "On the Digital Assembly Line" (Wharton, ch. 12)
 Vicki Smith, "Employee Involvement, Involved Employees: Participative Work Arrangements in a White-Collar Service Occupation" (Wharton, ch. 14)
- 11/2 **Women at Work**
 Ann Crittenden, "How Mothers' Work Was 'Disappeared'" (Wharton, ch. 2)
 Harriet Presser, "Toward a 24 Hour Economy" (Wharton, ch. 35)
 Arlie Russell Hochschild, "Love and Gold" (Wharton, ch. 37)
Connections #4 due

- 11/4 **One Woman's Work Journey**
Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*, section one
Morgan Spurlock, "30 Days"
- 11/9 Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed*, sections two and three
- 11/11 **Catholic Social Teachings**
Laborem Exercens (On Human Work) - in everyday language
http://www.osjspm.org/majordoc_laborem_exercens_translation.aspx
Michael Naughton, "Distributors of Justice: A Case for a Just Wage"
Read one of the studies on living wage presented by the U.C. Berkeley Labor Center at <http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/livingwage/>. Be prepared to offer a brief summary of your article in class. (What was studied? What did the researchers conclude?)
Check out your home state or county: www.livingwage.geog.psu.edu/
- 10/16 **Cooperative Capitalism**
Robert Gilman, "Mondragon: The Remarkable Achievement"
William Grieder, from *The Soul of Capitalism*
- 11/18 **Connections #5 due**
BBC documentary, "Mondragon" (view in class)
- 11/23 Pre-Writing exercise
- 11/30 **Contemporary Christian Insights**
Jim Wallis, "The Poor You Will Always Have with You?"
Terkel ____
- 12/2 Ray, "It's About Time: Reflections on a Theology of Rest"
- 12/7 **Paper due** at 4:00pm

** Assignments are subject to change at instructor's discretion.*

Please see me asap if you have a documented learning disability so we can discuss how best to accommodate you.

Please note: No **electronic devices** should be used in my classroom without my permission.

ACADEMIC HONOR CODE of MILLSAPS COLLEGE

Millsaps College is an academic community dedicated to the pursuit of scholarly inquiry and intellectual growth. The foundation of this community is a spirit of personal honesty and mutual trust. Through their Honor Code, the students of Millsaps College affirm their adherence to these basic ethical principles.

An Honor Code is not simply a set of rules and procedures governing students' academic conduct. It is an opportunity to put personal responsibility and integrity into action. When students agree to abide by an Honor Code, they liberate themselves to pursue their academic goals in an atmosphere of mutual confidence and respect.

The success of the Code depends on the support of each member of the community. Students and faculty alike commit themselves in their work to the principles of academic honesty. When they become aware of infractions, both students and faculty are obligated to report them to the Honor Council, which is responsible for enforcement.

The pledge signed by all students upon entering the College is as follows:

As a Millsaps College student, I hereby affirm that I understand the Honor Code and am aware of its implications and of my responsibility to the Code. In the interests of expanding the atmosphere of respect and trust in the College, I promise to uphold the Honor Code and I will not tolerate dishonest behavior in myself or in others.

Each examination, quiz, or other assignment that is to be graded will carry the written pledge: "**I hereby certify that I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment. (Signature)**" The abbreviation "Pledged" followed by the student's signature has the same meaning and may be acceptable on assignments other than final examinations.

It is the responsibility of students and faculty to report offenses to the Honor Code Council in the form of a written report. This account must be signed, the accusation explained in as much detail as possible, and submitted to the Dean of the College.

The Honor Council, 2010-2011

Students:

Mark Herndon, Chair
Oliver Galicki, Vice Chair
Lamees El-Sadek
Sameer Goel, Sergeant – At – Arms
Suzanne Glemo
Alex Lawson

Faculty:

Ms. Ashleigh Powers, Faculty Secretary
Dr. Susan Taylor
Dr. Lynn Raley