

This is an assignment in a 1000-level PWOL course I developed for the spring 2021 semester. I thank the many PWOL Network members for their inspiration, ideas, and resources. Whatever flaws this assignment has are entirely my own. If you have feedback or wish to chat, I invite you to contact me: damon.boria@franu.edu

PWOL Exercise Project

Purpose: This course introduces philosophy as an examination of how we ought to live and the purpose of this assignment is to provide opportunities for some philosophical exercise (what Pierre Hadot, following the Ignatian tradition, calls “spiritual exercises”).

Goal: The goal is to twice spend three days intentionally exercising a philosophical way of life and then creating a 300-400-word reflection on the experience.

Audience: You are recommended to write the reflection as a diary entry, with yourself as the audience. Imagine that you are trying to teach yourself the philosophy, which means finding a way to communicate the philosophy in an authentic way that you understand.

Steps:

1. Pick two exercises from the menu below. Identify two backup exercises just in case plan A has to be scrapped.
2. Identify the dates that you will dedicate to each exercise. Identify backup dates for the backup exercises. You are strongly recommended to embark on the exercise only after the relevant philosophy is discussed in class.
3. Do the exercises.
4. Following each exercise, write a 300-400-word reflection on the experience. The reflection must be (a) a retrospective on how you did the exercise and (b) an evaluation (i.e. a positive or negative judgment) on the value of the philosophy (philosophical idea(s)).
5. Proofread and finalize your reflection.
6. Optional: For a bit of fun, feel free to include an image (must be created by you) that represents your experience. Some ideas are a photograph, a brief video, a meme, and a song. Please make sure the image does not violate the University’s Student Code of Conduct.
7. Submit an electronic copy of your reflection using the link on Moodle prior to the start of class on the due date.
8. Optional: Do up to two additional exercises for up to ten extra credit points each.

Grading scheme: 25 points possible

20 points: Content

- For full points, carefully, thoroughly, and clearly fulfill the criteria. The reflection must make a convincing case that the exercise was completed. Philosophical ideas must be accurately portrayed. The evaluation must be insightful.

5 points: Writing standards and organization

- For full points, meet the highest writing standards. Write clearly and effectively. Avoid spelling, grammar, and other mistakes that may distract the reader. Use appropriate commas and

paragraph breaks. Communicate a clear sense of beginning, middle, and end, while also making clear transitions that establish connections among all elements of the text. Use respectful and professional language.

Menu of PWOL exercises

1. Epicurus
 - Epicurus teaches the following: “Of all the means which are procured by wisdom to ensure happiness throughout the whole of life, by far the most important is the acquisition of friends.” Spend three days intentionally nourishing your friendships (or at least one). Consider trying to make a new friend! Note that this exercise does not require violating the social distancing practices we have adopted to combat the pandemic.
2. Socrates
 - Socrates lived the examined life primarily by questioning those who claimed to know stuff/be wise. He often asked the following two questions: (1) What do you mean by that? In other words, he asked his interlocuter to define a concept at the heart of their dialogue (e.g. justice, beauty, piety). (2) What evidence do you have for that? In other words, he asked his interlocuter to provide evidence (i.e. to offer good reasons, to justify) a claim. Spend three days intentionally questioning people in this Socratic way. Note that Socrates upset a lot of people with this practice, to the point that he was executed for it! Choose this exercise only if you can do it safely!
3. Aurelius/Epictetus
 - Spend three days listing things in your daily life into the following three categories of the trichotomy of control as described by William Irvine: (1) things over which you have complete control, (2) things over which you have no control at all, and (3) things over which you have some but not complete control. Following Stoic advice, try to modify your life accordingly (if necessary).
4. Confucius
 - Spend three days doing the “quiet sitting on a chair” exercise as explained in the reading assignment from Bin Song. You should do it at least once a day.
5. Rousseau
 - Develop a safe walking plan and spend three days implementing that plan. Pick a safe place. Walking around FranU’s campus, at a park, a designated trail, or a sidewalk is recommended. Do not walk along a road. Tell someone where you are going and when. Bring a phone for safety (but don’t let it distract you on the walk). Take at least one walk per day. While walking, reflect, remember, and engage your feelings like Rousseau.
6. Thoreau
 - Spend three days visiting a safe place to observe nature. Options include FranU’s campus, a BREC park, and your own yard. See nature like Thoreau did. Take notes on what you see.
7. Schopenhauer
 - Spend three days listing the noise pollution in your life. At least once each day, intentionally listen to music solely for the aesthetic experience. Do nothing else while listening. Approach the listening like therapy. Put careful thought into what music you

choose. Are you going to stick with music you already know and enjoy or are you going to try something new that you hope might work better for creating the experience that Schopenhauer hopes we get from music?

8. Nietzsche

- Nietzsche wrote that the only god he could believe in was one who dances. Spend three days intentionally making some time for dancing (at least once each day). Dance alone or dance with others (on the condition that you do not violate your social distancing practices). Dance for the aesthetic experience. Approach the dancing like therapy. Accompanying music is, of course, welcome.