Welcome to adulthood!

Congratulations—you’re an adult now! But what does that even mean? The transition from high school to college brings with it new freedoms, but also new responsibilities, and lots of existential questions. When you are asked to “choose a major,” do you wonder if there is something that you’re “meant” to do? Do you have a “destiny,” or is your life up to you to decide? Are you on your way to finding happiness, fulfillment, and meaning? In this class, we explore the existential issues of adulthood through film, philosophy, and making our own movies about what it means to grow up.

Readings: I will provide class readings via hard copies and, when possible, on Blackboard.

Required films are on reserve at the library.
About the movies in this course:

Homework for this class includes watching movies, which will contain “mature” content. This means not simply that the films are sexually explicit (some are) but also that they are artistically and philosophically challenging.

You need to watch the assigned movies by the date they are listed on the course calendar. The DVD’s are on reserve at Cowles Library and available for overnight rental. To make sure everyone has access to the discs, you are encouraged to get together and watch the films in groups. You are also of course free to watch them though Netflix, Amazon Video, iTunes, etc. Many are available to stream online for free, or for a small rental price.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

• Watch and discuss a variety of movies that problematize issues of growing up, becoming an adult, and finding meaning in life.
• Read and discuss philosophical and literary writings on the question of meaning in life.
• Think critically about how course content relates to your actual life, as a new college student.
• Script and produce your own short film about becoming an adult, with resources from the Digital Storytelling Workshop.
Attendance

You are responsible for attending all sessions. If you miss a class, then it is your responsibility to find out what you missed, and to keep up-to-date on changes to the schedule of assignments. If you need information on what we talked about in class on a day that you missed, you should consult a classmate.

You begin the semester with 10 points in Blackboard for attendance. I will take roll every day, and you will lose 1/2 of a point of your attendance grade if you are absent. At the end of the semester, I will return one full point to you (i.e., you have two excused absences).

Presentation

You will sign up in groups of 2 to 3 to present on one of the movies we watch this semester and lead class discussion.

Movie Reviews

You will post a written response to each movie that we view to a discussion forum in Blackboard. In most cases, I will provide prompts or questions to guide your response.

Essay/portfolio

This FYS will focus on helping you learn to write college-level essays. We will work on various components separately and in stages (i.e., developing a thesis, preparing an outline, writing a first draft). Your writing portfolio will consist of these preliminary assignments for the final paper, as well as other incidental writing assignments we will complete over the semester. Sometimes I may ask you to write a short reflection in class, or I might give you a short-answer quiz over the readings; other times I might ask you to post written responses to Blackboard. All such written exercises are designed to help you process what you are learning and to deepen your engagement with the material. I will provide a Blue Book for keeping track of your in-class writings. I will grade these books, together with Blackboard material, at midterm and again at the end of the semester. However, as you prepare for your final paper, I will let you know what your grade will likely be, based on how your drafts are going. Hence, your final paper should be well on its way to completion, long before the end of the semester; and you should also have a good idea of what your grade on it will be, so long as you have given me the outlines and drafts that I assign in advance. Full instructions for the final paper will be provided separately.

Short film

You will create a “digital story” about your own experience of adulthood or what it means to grow up. This will involve writing a short script, recording a voiceover, selecting images and music to accompany the voiceover, and editing your final film version. Full details will be provided later. You can browse some digital stories at http://storycenter.org/stories/.

Grades

Your final grade will be based on:

- **Attendance:** 10%
- **Presentation:** 15%
- **Movie reviews:** 15%
- **Essay/writing portfolio:** 40%
- **Short film project:** 20%
Preparation Policies

You are responsible for 
attending all class 
sessions and coming to 
class prepared, having read 
(or watched) the assigned 
material, taken time to reflect 
on it, completed assigned 
study questions (if any), and 
in general having gathered 
your thoughts for class 
discussion.

You are responsible for being 
an active, not a passive, 
reader. This means paying 
attention to what you are 
reading, looking up 
vocabulary that you don’t 
know, and taking notes as 
you read, especially when 
you have questions.

You are asked to invest your 
time in this class—not 
because I am making you, or 
because I am giving you a 
grade, but because you are 
here in college to do valuable 
and meaningful things.

Participation Policies

All students are expected to 
come to class prepared, 
having read the assigned 
readings and having reflected 
on topics for class discussion.

Together, we foster a culture 
of openness and 
understanding in the 
classroom. It is our 
responsibility, together, to 
make sure that everyone feels 
comfortable speaking in class, 
raising questions, and having 
conversations.

Late Assignment 
Policies

Late assignments will not be 
accepted unless you contact me 
at least 24 hours in advance of 
the due date and let me know 
that you need more time. I will 
work with you to accommodate your schedule.

Integrity Policies

Plagiarism will not be 
tolerated and will result in an 
automatic zero. Students who 
plagiarize or otherwise violate 
Drake’s policies on academic 
integrity may also, at my 
discretion, be referred to the 
College of Arts and Sciences 
for disciplinary action.

Please review Drake’s 
policies on integrity at 
http://artsci.drake.edu/
node/87.
Policies Continued:

**Technology Policies**

Please do not use your computer in class, for any reason, unless specifically instructed to do so.

Please turn off your cellphone in class—do not, under any circumstances, take calls, send text messages, or check your email/facebook on your cell phone while in the classroom. If some unavoidable situation requires you to remain available via cell to someone outside the class, please step outside of the room to take your calls.

**Email Policies**

Send all correspondences to my gmail account. I try to respond to all emails as I receive them. However, I do not check my email after 5 pm, so if you email me in the evening, I will likely not respond until the next morning.

**Note:** The schedule of assignments provided with this syllabus is subject to change. I will announce all such changes in class, and I will update the course calendar in Blackboard on a regular basis. *This calendar will always have the most up-to-date information on what readings are assigned for each class period, and when assignments are due.* Remember, late assignments are not accepted without at least 24-hour notice, and it is your responsibility to pay attention in class and to check Blackboard to stay informed of any changes to due dates.

**Accommodations**

I am committed to making it possible for each student in this class to achieve his or her learning goals, whatever these may be. Please share with me any information that will help me do this, including any circumstances for which you may need specific accommodation. We can arrange for a variety of accommodations through Michelle Laughlin, the Disability Services Coordinator here at Drake. You may reach her at 515-271-1835, or at michelle.laughlin@drake.edu.

Send all emails to: kalmanson@gmail.com