The Life Worth Living Program is an effort to revive critical discussion in universities and the broader culture about the most important question of our lives: What is a life worth living?

Today, more than at any previous time in history, the question of the good life—what makes for a flourishing life—is a pressing one. This question once came pre-answered—by culture, by religion, by tradition—but these days, we each have to ask and answer for ourselves: What is the good life? What does it mean to live a flourishing life? These are difficult questions that require intellectual muscles many of us have never developed; we need one another’s help to ask and answer them well.

The Life Worth Living Program exists to revive critical discussion about this most important question. Through our courses, research, student fellows program, and campus and community events, we aim to facilitate conversation across important and enduring lines of difference on questions of meaning and purpose at Yale and around the world.

What does it mean for life to be led well? to go well? to feel good?

The first question you need to ask yourself is this: Have you made an extraordinary mistake by choosing to take this course? Many a life has been ruined—by which I mean saved—by asking these questions and taking them seriously.

—Matt Croasmun to students on the first day of the Life Worth Living course

I am no oracle and don’t want to be one, so don’t expect me to tell you what the truth is. But your question is mine, so let us examine it together. Come, let us go. We are not alone in asking that question, and who knows what others might be able to tell us. Besides, what is more enjoyable and instructive than a good conversation?

—Rob Riemen’s Socrates in Nobility of Spirit
Teaching for Transformation

The core of the program is the undergraduate course, Life Worth Living. The course draws upon a range of philosophical and religious traditions to help students develop habits of reflection that will equip them for the lifelong process of discerning the good life. In addition to seminar readings from the foundational texts of each tradition, the course engages guest practitioners of the various religious traditions examined and offers a weekend retreat that invites students to reflect on their own worldview and approach to the questions under consideration. The course has proven tremendously popular, receiving more than 450 applications.

Freshman Seminar: Education & Life Worth Living

Alongside our core course is a class for freshmen that invites them to consider at the very beginning of their undergraduate education: What sort of person do you want to become and how is your college education going to help you become that person? We see this as a course that could be fruitfully adapted for secondary schools in order to help high school students frame their approach to the college admissions process.

“For real, this class changed my life.”
— Life Worth Living Student

Going Global

Our classes are shaping courses at the University of Sydney, University of Sheffield, Colby College, Notre Dame, Hong Kong University and top prep schools in the United States.

Life Worth Living

Articulating the Good Life Across Difference

With the generous support of the John Templeton Foundation, we have convened an extraordinary team of scholar-practitioners of the world’s great religious and philosophical traditions, including Prof. Peter Singer, HRH Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad of Jordan, and long-time collaborator of the Dalai Lama, Prof. Paul Jeffrey Hopkins. Together this team is producing a book of descriptions of the good life oriented around the Life Worth Living project’s three aspects of the good life: life led well, life going well, and life feeling good. This book will serve as a textbook for the Life Worth Living course at Yale and beyond—and provide a resource for community groups and individuals to ask the question of the good life in the company of the world’s great traditions.

The Future of Life Worth Living

The importance and urgency of the questions we’re asking drives us to have ambitious dreams for our program. Over the next three years we would like to see:

- 10 new colleges and secondary schools adopt Life Worth Living courses
- LWL offered in the prison context
- 30 new LWL instructors trained through summer teacher-training symposia offered for faculty graduate students, secondary school teachers, clergy, and community leaders
- Enrollment in Life Worth Living courses worldwide grow at 50% year-over-year
- A trade book to be published alongside the LWL textbook

Beyond the classroom, the Life Worth Living program convenes conversations about meaning and purpose across important and enduring lines of difference. On Yale’s campus, these events are facilitated by our Yale undergraduate fellows, a committed group of students from multiple religious and non-religious backgrounds.

Beyond Yale, Life Worth Living videos have been watched by more than 150,000 people.