“What then must we do?” Leo Tolstoy (quoting Luke) asked in 1886, writing about greed, exploitation, and poverty in the slums of Moscow. (Not much, he decided.) Men and women have been asking similar questions about myriad issues since men and women began asking questions. How should we act? How should we behave? What standards or schemes should we follow? What ideas, what motives, what values should govern our actions?

We will see how some important writers, philosophers, artists, historical figures, and others, mainly from the past two hundred years, have addressed these questions.

Readings will likely include Plato, Jesus, Darwin, Marx, Tolstoy, Nietzsche, Freud, Berlin, Camus, Frankl, and LeGuin. We may also view a film or two, perhaps The Last Station and Reds.

Class format: directed discussion.

Required work: A variety of writing assignments including some brief responses, some quizzes, perhaps a few short essays, one longer essay, and a final examination.

Participation in class discussion will count for approximately 30% of your grade.