

## OLLI at DU On Campus Syllabus – Spring 2024

A philosophical reflection about human life, growth and pursuing potential.

Tuesday Mornings In-Person; Six weeks

Instructor: Roscoe Hill

**RECOMMENDED BOOKS OR MATERIALS:** Required: A Road Less Taken by Roscoe Hill (Amazon Paperback)

A Road Less Traveled is a network of interrelated aspirational stories that come to mind while walking a 25-day pilgrimage. There are many story-characters, not all of whom are human. The stories' Main Characters appear in Days 1-4 and keep appearing frequently thereafter. Supporting Characters appear later and less frequently.

There are two especially important Main Characters: "pursuing our potential" and "pilgrim thinking." Pursuing our potential includes helping others pursue their potential" – in different words, pursuing our potential includes taking good care of ourselves (this is called "wisdom") so that we can take good care of others ("the fruit of wisdom"). The focus is not on Me, it is on Others – on "the care and share values." This triggers many wisdom stories over many days, drawing on our 2,500-year wisdom tradition wisdom teachings rooted in ancient China, India, Israel and Greece.

Pilgrim thinking is about making life choices. Camino pilgrim choices (what to carry in the pack, what route to take, how treat this blister, how cross this stream) and life pilgrim choices – daily choices (what to wear, what to eat, how to deal with people) and long-term choices (whether to stay in school, how to choose friends; whether to marry, who?, whether to have a child or an abortion; what career to pursue, where to live, etc.). Making camino and life choices is not rocket science and does not require advanced degrees, high end theories or algorithms.

- **Session #1** – read Days 1-4 (47 pages) which introduce the main characters: pursuing our potential includes helping others pursue theirs, which draws in the care and share values; pilgrim thinking and the burning bush; the growth flame; our inherited kit of life tools; the wisdom triplets are part of those inherited tools, with the potential to create habits and develop character.
- **Session #2** – Days 5-8 (45 pages). Embryos and the growth flame. Epictetus and the Serenity Prayers. We share similarities with our paleolithic ancestors. Locusts in Germantown. Transactional Religion. Lightning strikes nearby. Jefferson Bible.
- **Session #3** – Days 9-12 (44). One-sentence-theology. Debates about human nature. The image of God doctrine. Human activities and pleasure pyramids. Pilgrim Ann's encounter with narco-traffickers in Mexico leads to a wisdom discussion.
- **Session #4** – Days 13-16 (57). Tearful grief session regarding deaths of two wives. Methodist Jim finds us dinner and a place to sleep. "Recovering theist" and "wince words." Maggie (Cherokee) and her husband Robert (Osage). A brief recollection of students in Dharamshala, India.

Confucius: “take care of the common people.”

- **Session #5** – Days 17-21 (48). “Recovering theist lunches.” More Confucius. A real comic book superhero serves us dinner. Axial Age teachers. Descartes-Hume-Buddha regarding Self and No-Self. The founding of ancient Athens four way of life schools (Academy, Lyceum, Garden, Stoicism). Confucius: “I wish I could be silent”
- **Session #6** – Days 22-25 (41). Visit winery, arrive in Dutzow. Pillow: the king’s three questions. An elderly widow says no to our sleeping on the church floor, invites us to her house for supper and real beds. D-24 is about a kindred spirit: the so-called first skeptic, Pyrrho of Elis. An alternative view of Pyrrho is presented – that he is NOT a theory level skeptic BUT a living level pilgrim thinker. We arrive on D-25 at the St. Rose school in St. Charles! Fantasy interview: “Please tell us about A Road Less Traveled” – leads to 12 stories that hopefully capture the high points of these pilgrimage reflections. Q and A follows the stories. It is over.