

Course Outline Introduction to Philosophy

Course Description:

In this course, students will learn about traditional issues and problems of philosophy. Topics include the existence of God, the nature of knowledge and belief, minds, personal identity, free will and responsibility, the nature of morality, and the meaning of life. Students will also gain a basic understanding of philosophical methodology, including how to read and write philosophy, how to construct and evaluate arguments, and how to utilize thought experiments. The course material for this course is drawn from both historic and contemporary readings.

Course Texts:

I am aware of the financial impediments posed by acquiring materials for class. To remove this potential barrier to your academic success, all readings are free-to-use and made available electronically.

Course Reading Schedule:

Day 1: Introduction

Day 2: Reading and Writing Philosophy; University Resources

Reading: 1,000 Word Philosophy, “How to Read Philosophy”

Reading: Harvard Writing Center, “A Brief Guide to Writing the Philosophy Paper”

Day 3: Logic, Arguments, and Philosophical Methodology

Reading: James Rachels, “Some Basic Points About Arguments”

Day 4: The Existence of God – The Cosmological Argument

Reading: Thomas Aquinas, “The Five Ways”

Day 5: The Existence of God – The Ontological Argument

Reading: Anselm, “Proslogion”

Reading: Guanilo, “A Reply on Behalf of the Fool”

Day 6: The Existence of God – The Teleological and Pragmatic Argument

Reading: William Paley, “The Argument from Design”

Reading: Blaise Pascal, “Pensées”

Day 7: The Existence of God – The Problem of Evil

Reading: William Rowe, “The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism”

Day 8: Knowledge

Reading: John Pollock, “A Brain in a Vat”

Reading: G.E. Moore, “Proof of an External World”

Day 9: Knowledge

Reading: Edmund Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”

Day 10: Minds

Reading: René Descartes, “Meditations”

Day 11: Minds

Reading: Marina Gerner, “What Did Mary Know?”

Day 12: Minds

Reading: Thomas Nagel, “What is it Like to be a Bat?”

Day 13: Minds

Reading: Laura Ruggles, “The Minds of Plants”

Day 14: Personal Identity

Reading: John Locke, “The Prince and the Cobbler”

Day 15: Personal Identity

Reading: Daniel Dennett, “Where Am I?”

Day 16: Free Will and Moral Responsibility

Reading: Galen Strawson, “The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility”

Day 17: Free Will and Moral Responsibility

Reading: Susan Wolf, “Sanity and the Metaphysics Responsibility”

Day 18: Relativism

Reading: James Rachels, “The Challenges of Cultural Relativism”

Day 19: Divine Command Theory

Reading: Plato, “Euthyphro”

Day 20: Utilitarianism

Reading: John Stuart Mill, “Utilitarianism”

Day 21: Deontology (and Rights)

Reading: Onora O’Neill, “Kantian Approaches to Some Famine Problems”

Day 22: Virtue (and Care) Ethics

Reading: Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics”

Day 23: Justice

Reading: Plato, “Apology”

Day 24: Justice and Civil Disobedience

Reading: Martin Luther King Jr., “The Letter from Birmingham Jail”

Day 25: Death

Reading: Travis Timmerman, “A Dilemma for Epicureanism”

Day 26: Death

Reading: David Blumenfeld, “Living Life Over Again”

Day 27: Death

Reading: Ben Bradley, “Existential Terror”

Day 28: The Meaning of Life

Reading: Albert Camus, “The Myth of Sisyphus”

Day 29: The Meaning of Life

Reading: Thomas Nagel, “The Absurd”

Day 30: The Meaning of Life

Reading: Susan Wolf, “The Meaning of Lives”