

Introduction to Philosophy: Deliberation, Dialogue and Decision



Course Description

Philosophy comes from two Greek words: philo - love and sophia - wisdom. It's not so much a bunch of theories and ideas as a personal journey of reflection, conversation and writing. Through considering a variety of short fables, stories, poems, speeches and philosophical texts, we will enter into some of the major philosophical questions and concepts that have provoked deep reflection and dialogue over the centuries. Along the way, you will have the time and space to more deeply develop your own ideas on a variety of topics such as: What is Happiness? Am I free? What makes a human a human? Does everything eventually change or end? How do I know who I am? How should I relate to others? What is justice? Are people capable of governing themselves, or do they need a ruler? How do I figure out if something is true? Should I try to improve society? While you will learn a lot about what others have thought and written on these questions in the past, the most important aspect of this course will be the opportunity you have to become a philosopher - a lover of wisdom - and to put your new thinking skills to work in your own life.

Course Schedule

First Quarter

Intro Week Sept 3-6

Intro to Course

Ideas and Values: Questioning

** Would you rather be rich and miserable or poor and happy? * What do you think makes a human a human? * What are the ingredients for a happy life? * How can you die well? * Can you be free if someone tells you what to do? * What makes you you? * Are you the same person today as you were the day you were born? What about when you die?*

UNIT 1: Happiness and Human Nature

First Quarter

Week 1 Sept 9-13

Lesson 1 [Lesson Plan](#)

Text: ["The Rich Man and the Shoemaker"](#) (traditional French tale) retold by Jean de La Fontaine

Ideas, Values: Happiness, Wealth, Troubles

Writing Task: 1 paragraph - "Would you rather be the rich man or the poor shoemaker?"

Week 2 Sept 16-20

Lesson 2 [Lesson Plan](#)

Text: ["What Is in Our Control?"](#) from *The Manual* by Epictetus

Ideas, Values: Power, Freedom, Truth, Language

Writing Task: 3-5 paragraph blog post: "We have no control over our reputations..." Do you agree or disagree?

Week 3 Sept 23-27

Lesson 3 [Lesson Plan](#)

Text: ["The 4 Causes/ Asking 'Why?'"](#) from the *Physics* by Aristotle

Ideas and Values: Knowledge, Understanding, Purpose, Meaning, Agency

Writing Task: Using the graphic organizer, determine the 4 causes in relation to your own existence, and then reflect on which was the hardest of the 4 to determine.

Week 4 Sept 30- Oct 4

Lesson 4 [Lesson Plan](#)

Text: ["On Happiness"](#) from *Nicomachean Ethics* by Aristotle

Ideas, Values: Happiness, Virtue, Soul, Reason

Writing Task: 1 paragraph: What elements do you think are important to happiness, and how could you set about creating them in your life?

Quiz 1: Binder Review

UNIT 2: Identity

Week 5 Oct 7-11

Lesson 1 [Lesson Plan](#)

Text: "[Theme for English B](#)" poem by Langston Hughes

Ideas, Values: Truth, Perspective, Language

Writing Task: Write a page about you that comes out of you. Begin with a question about yourself that you would like to answer. Divide this page into four parts.

Week 6 Oct 14-18

Lesson 2 [Lesson Plan](#)

Text: "[The Seven Ages of Man](#)" from *As You Like It* by William Shakespeare

Ideas, Values: Age, Definition, Human, Progress, Time

Writing Task: Imagine you are a grandparent. Write a letter to your grandchildren explaining how one stage of Shakespeare's "seven ages of man" leads to another. Use evidence from the text as well as fictional examples from your life to support your explanation. (3-5 paragraphs)

Week 7 Oct 21-25

Lesson 3 [Lesson Plan](#)

Text: "[Theseus' Ship](#)" thought experiment adapted by Plutarch

Ideas, Values: Alteration, Essence, Identity, Journey, Paradox

Writing Task: Write a letter to a not-yet-determined fellow student in the class in which you define identity and explain your answer to Plutarch's question (*Theseus, though, sailed in only one ship. Which one?*) as it relates to your definition. (3-5 paragraphs)

Week 8 Oct 28-Nov 1

Lesson 4 [Lesson Plan](#)

Text: "[How It Feels to Be Colored Me](#)" essay by Zora Neale Hurston

Ideas, Values: Beauty, Definition, Equality, Perseverance, Same & Other

Writing Task: Memoir Essay on "How it feels to be me"

Second Quarter

Week 1 -2 Nov 4-15

Lesson 5 [Lesson Plan](#) [NEH Guide](#)

Text: "[Bartleby the Scrivener](#)" by Herman Melville

Ideas and Values: Free Will, Relationship, Unknowability, Creativity, Work, Empathy

[DelBanco Slide Presentation](#)

[DelBanco Webinar](#)

Quiz 2: Unit 2 Binder Review

UNIT 3: Being Relational

Week 3 Nov 18-26 (Thanksgiving)

Lesson 1 [Lesson Plan](#)

Text: [“The Happy Prince”](#) by Oscar Wilde and “The Giving Tree” by Shel Silverstein

Ideas, Values: Duty, Grief, Love, Relationships, Sacrifice

Writing Task: Essay: Select a character from each story and develop an essay focusing on comparing one of Oscar Wilde’s and Shel Silverstein’s ideas of Nature, Relationship, or Duty in the two stories as it relates to the characters you choose. (2 pages)

Week 4 Dec 2-6

Lesson 2 [Lesson Plan](#)

Text: [“The Social Me”](#) from *Psychology: The Briefer Course* by William James

Ideas, Values: Recognition, Value, Honor, Opinion, Acceptance, Truth, Identity

Writing Task: Letter: write a letter to one of your social selves explaining an anticipated or needed change. (3-5 paragraphs)

Week 5 Dec 9-13

Lesson 3 [Lesson Plan](#)

Text: [“Personal Making Present”](#) from *I and Thou* by Martin Buber

Ideas, Values: Communication, Community, Lifelong Growth, One and Many, Transformation

Writing Task: Translation to Modern English: What is necessary for genuine dialogue to occur in the 21st century? After reading and discussing an excerpt from Martin Buber’s *I and Thou*, work with a writing team to translate one paragraph of “Personal Making Present” into vigorous, modern English. Imagine that your paragraph will be posted to social media.

Week 6 Dec 16-20

Lesson 4 [Lesson Plan](#)

Text: from [“Of the Art of Conference”](#) by Michel de Montaigne

Ideas, Values: Conversation, Judgment, Learning, Understanding

Writing Task: How does purposeful conversation help us understand ourselves and others? Write a full paragraph in which you describe how conversation helps you understand yourself and others.

Quiz 3: Unit 3 Binder Review

CHRISTMAS BREAK

[Unit 4: The Person and the Polis](#)

Week 7 Jan 6-10

Lesson 1 [Lesson Plan](#)

Text: [“The Blind Men and the Elephant”](#) ancient Indian tale retold by John Godfrey Saxe

Ideas, Values: Collaboration, Perspective/Point of View, Experience, Truth

Writing Task: Write a paragraph in which you discuss how the blind men’s perspective or point of view contributes to understanding of the truth about the elephant. Support your response with evidence from the text. Write with an audience of younger students in mind. (1 paragraph)

Week 8 Jan 13-17

Lesson 2 [Lesson Plan](#)

Text: “[The Ring of Gyges](#)” and from *The Republic* by Plato

Ideas, Values: Freedom, Good and Evil, Responsibility, Perspective

Writing Task: How would being invisible affect the way people act? Write an essay in which you discuss three implications of your view of human nature for society. Discuss what form of government we should adopt and what sort of laws we should enact. Refer to the text to illustrate your arguments. (2 pages)

MIDTERM: Full Binder Review //// REGENTS WEEK: January 20-24

Third Quarter

Week 1 Jan 27-31

Lesson 3 [Lesson Plan](#)

Text: “[The Allegory of the Cave](#)” from *The Republic* by Plato

Ideas, Values: Justice, Leadership, Perspective, Wisdom

Writing Task: Write a letter to your closest friend or family member in which you clearly explain one thing that you will try to shed light on during this next school year. Describe an example of people seeing only the shadows of something, and what you see as the greater truth (in the light). Include at least one way that you may lead and enlighten others about this idea. (3-5 paragraphs)

Week 2 Jan Feb 2-7

Lesson 4 [Lesson Plan](#)

Text: from “[Pericles’ Funeral Oration](#)” as recorded by Thucydides

Ideas, Values: Beauty, Democracy, Wisdom, Empire, “Good Life”

Writing Task: Write a letter to your parent or guardian in which you share your ideas on what a good life is and how to achieve it. Refer to Pericles’ Athenian to illustrate your ideas.

Week 3 Feb 10-14

Lesson 5 [Lesson Plan](#)

Text: “[Causes Which Make Diversity of Opinion Advantageous](#)” from *On Liberty*, “Chapter 2: Of the Liberty of Thought and Discussion” by John Stuart Mill

Ideas, Values: Liberty, Language, Opinion, Part/Whole, Truth

Writing Task: Why does politics need a diversity of opinion to find the truth? After reading the excerpt from *On Liberty* by John Stuart Mill, write an essay in which you address the question and argue the need for diverse opinions in politics. Support your position with evidence from the text.

/// WINTER RECESS /// Feb 17-21

Unit 5: Justice and Law

Week 4-5 Feb 24- March 6

Lesson 1 Lesson Plan

Text: [The Apology of Socrates](#)

Ideas and Values: Law, Justice, Truth, Philosophy, Duty, Courage, Reasoning, Logic

Writing Task: TBD

Week 6-7 March 9-20

Lesson 2 Lesson Plan

Text: [Crito by Plato](#)

Ideas and Values: Courage, Duty, Justice, Law, Prudence, Government, Punishment

Writing Task: TBD

Week 8-9 March 23- April 3

Lesson 3 (2 weeks) [Lesson Plan](#)

Text: "[Letter from a Birmingham Jail](#)" by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Ideas, Values: Civil Disobedience, Democracy, Justice, Language, Law

Writing Task: Write a letter in the voice of MLK in which you address the question: "Under what circumstances might it be justifiable to break the law?" Argue from what you understand King's perspective to be. Support your position with evidence from the text. (3-5 paragraphs)

In Class DEBATE April 6-7

Quiz 5: Unit 5 Binder Review

EASTER BREAK /// APRIL 8 - 17

Fourth Quarter

Unit 6: Responding to Injustice

Week 1 April 20-24

Lesson 1 [Lesson Plan](#)

Text: "[Declaration of Independence](#)" by Thomas Jefferson

Ideas, Values: Democracy, Government, Independence, Liberty, Society

Writing Task: Revise Jefferson's first sentence from the second paragraph ("We hold these truths to be...") by adding those "unalienable rights" that you believe are the birthright of all human beings. In an essay, explain and support the rights you have listed. (2 pages)

Week 2 April 27-May 1

Lesson 2 [Lesson Plan](#)

Text: "[Ain't I A Woman?](#)" by Sojourner Truth (1851)

Ideas, Values: Argument, Gender, Equity, Race, Rhetoric

Writing Task: Write an essay in which you discuss the text and evaluate its use of rhetoric. Support your position with evidence from the text. Consider your audience to be fellow students interested in studying speech and rhetoric. Your audience wants to know if Sojourner Truth is someone to study when looking for historical examples of rhetoric. (2 pages)

Week 3 May 4-8

Lesson 3

Text: [Oration in Corinthian Hall by Frederick Douglass \(1852\)](#)

Ideas and Values: Liberty, Equality, Justice, Constitution, Rights, Rhetoric

Writing Task: TBD

Week 4 May 11-15

Lesson 4 [Lesson Plan](#)

Text: ["On Women's Suffrage"](#) - excerpt from a speech by Frederick Douglass (1870)

Ideas, Values: Equality, Gender, Rights, Rhetoric

Writing Task: Drawing on evidence from Douglass's speech for support, write an editorial to a local paper in which you make an argument for equal rights for a group of people in society that you think are not currently treated as equal. Once you have made your argument, suggest actions that your readers can take to rectify this injustice. (3-5 paragraphs)

SENIORS - FINAL Full Binder Review /// Seniors Last Day of Class - May 15th

[Unit 7: Narratives and Ideas](#) *

Week 5-6 May 18-29

Lesson 1

Text: ["Notes of a Native Son"](#) by James Baldwin

Week 7-8 June 2-12

Lesson 2

Text: ["Billy Budd. A Sailor"](#) by Herman Melville

Unit 7 Writing Task: Personal essay or short story

Choose three themes we have discussed this year and dramatize these themes through either a personal essay about your own life, or a short fictional story.

Quiz 7: Unit 7 Binder Review

FINAL: Full Binder Review

*** Seniors will complete this unit independently**

Course Components

Each week, we will primarily focus on one lesson that will be divided up into several components. Every lesson will have most of the same components. You will be required to keep *all* your materials and notes from the course in a course binder organized in sections by component. The 5 binder sections are provided here and additional information about each section is provided in the Grade Breakdown section later in the syllabus.

Course Component Binder Sections:

1. Pre-Seminar Content
2. Pre-Seminar Process
3. Seminar
4. Post- Seminar Process
5. Post- Seminar Content

Grade Breakdown

Pre-Seminar Content - 25%

Launch Activities
Inspectional Reading
Background Information and Vocabulary
Analytical Reading

Pre-Seminar Process - 10%

Purpose
Responsibilities
Personal Goal
Group Goal

Seminar - 30%

Opening Questions: Identify Main Ideas
Core Questions: Analyze Textual Details
Closing Question: Personalize and Apply Ideas

Post Seminar Process - 10%

Self Assessment
Group Assessment

Post Seminar Content - 25%

Transition to Writing
Writing Tasks

Launch Activities

Launch activities are fun, interactive activities that will introduce us to a new lesson. They can consist of debates, brainstorming, games, role-playing activities and more. They are designed to get you thinking about new ideas and to spur discussion and dialogue. Every weekly lesson will begin with a launch activity of some kind. Keep in mind that while launch activities are fun and engaging, they only allow a more superficial survey of the ideas we are considering. Therefore they will not constitute the main body of the lesson, but rather a short introduction.

Reading

Each weekly lesson in this course will be focused on one text. The text will range in length from a couple of paragraphs (more often) to several pages (less often). The text will be from a well-known essay, book, speech, poem, or story chosen for its capacity to open up complex and interesting ideas. Generally, we will review the text together twice, the first time quickly (Inspectional Reading) breaking it down into sections, and observing major details, and the second time more deeply (Analytical Reading), taking time to go through the text step by step in order to understand it and engage with its content. Our reading will always be accompanied by a study of unfamiliar or complex vocabulary in the text.

Seminars

Once we have deeply familiarized ourselves with the text, we will spend one full class period engaged in a Paideia Seminar. This type of seminar has a special structure designed to help you get the most out of the text and to clearly develop your ideas in dialogue with others. Before the seminar begins each student will choose a personal goal to focus on (i.e. address the person she is speaking to, speak at least three times, make a connection to a past discussion etc) and we will also focus on one class goal. During the seminar, I will speak only to facilitate discussion, asking questions and redirecting the conversation if it gets too far off track. Otherwise the entire discussion will be student-lead and you will practice engaging in a fruitful and thoughtful discussion without raising your hand. The seminar will open by focusing on big ideas in the text, and will then continue into core questions that help you deeply analyze the text. It will close with a question that helps you personalize and apply what you have learned in relation to your own experience. At the end of the seminar, you will be asked to evaluate how well you have achieved your personal goal as well as how well the entire class had achieved the class goal.

Writing Tasks: Why Write???

Writing both informally and formally is a crucial component of understanding, deepening, and communicating your ideas. In this course, writing tasks will be a core component of class time and we will spend as much time on them as we spend reading and discussing. Usually, assuming you use class time well, you will not have a burdensome amount of writing homework. Rather, your brainstorming, outline/structure, first draft and revision will be completed during class time and you will complete the final draft at home. Unless otherwise noted, completed writing tasks will be due at the beginning of class on the first class day of each week. They must be submitted as a hard copy, sometimes neatly handwritten and sometimes typed.

Quizzes and Exams

Unit Quizzes at the end of every unit, as well as Midterm and Final Exams, will be calculated by a complete review of the student's **binder**.

Both the student and the instructor will review the binder. The following rubric will be used to evaluate the binder:

A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Binder contains all components of the course (see “course components”)● Components are clearly organized in well-marked sections● Excellent, thorough, clear notes are included● All readings are well-annotated● All drafts, revisions and final copies of writing assignments are present● Seminars include personal goals and assessments
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Binder contains all components of the course● Components are organized in marked sections● Good and relatively clear notes are included for pre-seminar, seminar and post-seminar● Most readings are well-annotated● Most drafts, revisions and final copies of writing assignments are present● Most seminars include personal goals and assessments
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Binder contains most components of the course● Components are organized in sections● Notes are included for pre-seminar, seminar and post-seminar● Some readings are well-annotated● Some drafts, revisions and final copies of writing assignments are present● Some seminars include personal goals and assessments
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Binder contains few components of the course● Components are poorly organized● Few notes are included for pre-seminar, seminar and post-seminar● Few readings are well-annotated● Few drafts, revisions and final copies of writing assignments are present● Few seminars include personal goals and assessments
F	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Binder contains no components of the course● Components are not organized● No notes are included for pre-seminar, seminar and post-seminar● No readings are well-annotated● No drafts, revisions and final copies of writing assignments are present● No seminars include personal goals and assessments

