

Sahar Joakim
Course Design
Introduction to Philosophy 1050-15
1 January 2017

Course Description

Philosophy is about thinking, careful and logical thinking. This course is an introduction to thinking carefully according to logical rules of reasoning. Students will be working together as a class to understand the nature of philosophical questions and precisely how to approach answering those questions. Students will also learn how to charitably evaluate thoughtful answers.

The first quarter of coursework is to read the assigned text for the next class meeting. The second quarter of coursework is to write reflectively on the reading. The first half of class is spent in lecture. I speak on the material read for that day clarifying difficult concepts and bringing to light questions or concerns that arise from that text. The second half of class is spent discussing those topics. So, only half of the work required for this course will take place in the classroom as the course is designed to enforce four main activities throughout the semester: read, think, discuss, write; where the reading and writing takes place outside the classroom.

Starting the first day of class, students are assigned homework. After each lecture, students have until midnight to log onto Blackboard and post a short paragraph reflecting on (1) what ideas stood out as important from lecture; **and**, (2a) explain why this is a serious philosophical issue **or** (2b) explain a potential response to the issue. I read these reflections daily, sometimes providing comments. Students are welcome to comment on one another's posts. In the following class session, I clarify what looked to be obscure from reading the posts and answering remaining questions before moving on to the next topic.

The course is designed to begin with topics that most people find essential to their lives: marriage, love, friendship, character traits in general. Beginning with these common notions makes it easier for first time philosophers to apply rules to their reasoning since many have already thought about these topics. Moreover, beginning the course with common notions upon which students have previously thought makes the application of evaluative tools easier as well as more exciting. Only after considering old notions like marriage and friendship with our new logical tools logic and rules for reasoning do we begin reading more complex and unfamiliar concepts such as metaphysics and epistemology. To approach these more complicated philosophical topics, we turn to the Greek philosopher Plato; most of western philosophy is said to be but a footnote to Plato's text.

Goals and Objectives

My goal is to have my students learn the historical development of philosophical thought. The corresponding objective is to have my students leave the class being able to synthesize information. My goal is to have my students leave basic logical forms of valid arguments. The corresponding objective is to have my students leave the class being able to formulate valid arguments, also to analyze the arguments of others for validity and soundness. Logical reasoning is a critical skill for any person living among others, no matter what else is going on in their life. Upon completing the course, students demonstrate how to determine the validity of arguments, how to evaluate the soundness of their ideas, and will have gained value for philosophy in general: returning to their field

with an enriched ability to read well, reflect often, analyze and synthesize information, and to write concisely.