

Introduction to Philosophy

Professors:

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Schedule: TBA

Assessment: 50% class participation, 50% oral exams

If the final grade for participation equals at least 7.5 on a 10 point scale, the student is exempt from the final oral exam.

In the first module (Carlsson, Wendland), the grade of participation is determined by a written test in the final session of the course. In the second module (McLoone, Heßbrüggen-Walter) the grade of participation is determined by two essays to be written over the course of the module.

Pre-requisites: No course requirements need to be met in order to register for this class. However, the ability to listen, read, and write in clear and coherent English is necessary.

Syllabus

The aim of the first module is to introduce students to various conceptions of the good life through a reading of key figures in the history of philosophy. Themes to be discussed include: happiness, virtue, pleasure, pain, freedom, responsibility, relativism, and the importance of philosophy for human flourishing. In the second module, we introduce foundational problems and concepts in the philosophy of science and applied philosophy (philosophy of information, philosophy of economics).

Course Plan: The first module will be divided into 9 lectures. The first lecture will be an introduction to philosophy via a reading of Plato's *Apology*. The following 8 lectures will be based on the assigned readings and they cover influential ideas in the history of moral philosophy.

The first module of the course will provide an introduction to classical philosophical problems and texts. We shall consider issues of the self or subjectivity in order to raise questions such as: Who am I? What does it mean to be a subject? And what is a human being?

- Week 1: Lecture: The Foundations of Philosophy: Death, Doubt, and Dialogue.
The Last Days of Socrates: The Apology, pp.37-67 [17a-42a]
Seminar: Discussion
- Week 2: Lecture: Skepticism and Moral Relativism: Just and Unjust Actions
The Republic: Book 1, pp.3-52 [327a-367e]
Seminar: Discussion
- Week 3: Lecture: Naturalism and Moral Realism: Just and Unjust Characters
The Republic: Book 2, pp.130-156 [427d-449a]
Seminar: Discussion
- Week 4: Lecture: Moral Virtue: Means and Extremes
The Nicomachean Ethics: Book 1, pp.1-27 [1094a19-1103a10]
Seminar: Discussion
- Week 5: Lecture: The Social Contract
Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ch. 13-14
Seminar: Discussion
- Week 6: Lecture: Duty for Duty's Sake
Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, section 1
Seminar: Discussion
- Week 7: Lecture: Universal Morality
Groundwork..., selections from section 2
Seminar: Discussion
- Week 8: Lecture: Morality and the Good Life
Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, selections from Essays 1 and 2
Week 9: Written Exam for Module 1
Seminar: Discussion

The second module is divided into 8 lectures. Its aim is to introduce students to foundational concepts and problems in the philosophy of science and applied philosophy. We will discuss how scientists aim to explain the world and to confirm their findings, how science is distinguished from 'pseudo-science' and what role models play in science. We will then apply these foundational insights to problems in information technology and economics. The aim is to discuss problems and concepts that are immediately relevant for the interdisciplinary study of management and digital innovation.

Week 10: Lecture: Explanation

Woodward, J. (2014) "Scientific Explanation," in E. Zalta (ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Seminar: Causal Explanation in Focus

Week 11: Lecture: Confirmation

Crupi, V. (2015) "Confirmation," in E. Zalta (ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Seminar: Bayesian Confirmation in Focus

Week 12: Lecture: Science and Pseudo-Science

Popper, K. (1963) "Science: Conjectures and Refutations," in J. Feinberg and R.S. Landau (eds.) *Reason and Responsibility: Readings in Some Basic Problems of Philosophy*. Wadsworth, pp. 292-296.

Seminar: Problems with Popper (and Solutions?)

Week 13: Lecture: The Role of Models in Science

R. Frigg and S. Hartmann (2012) "Models in Science," in E. Zalta (ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Seminar: Fictionalism

Week 14: Lecture: Markets

Herzog, Lisa, "Markets", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

Seminar: Sen A. "The Moral Standing of the Market". *Social Philosophy and Policy*. 1985;3.

Week 15: Lecture: Risks

Hansson, Sven Ove, "Risk", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

Seminar: Heinzerling, L., 2000, "The rights of statistical people.", *Harvard Environmental Law Review* 24: 189–207

Week 16: Lecture: Search Engines and Ethics

Tavani, Herman, "Search Engines and Ethics", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

Seminar: Kate Crawford, 'The Hidden Biases in Big Data', *Harvard Business Review*, URL: <https://hbr.org/2013/04/the-hidden-biases-in-big-data>

Week 17: Lecture: Social Media and Ethics

Vallor, Shannon, "Social Networking and Ethics", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.)

Seminar: Irina Raicu, "Do You Own Your Data?", URL: <https://www.scu.edu/ethics/privacy/do-you-own-your-data/>

Week 18: Final oral exams

Some General Internet Resources in Philosophy:

HSE library website: <http://library.hse.ru/>

Oxford University Library: <http://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/>

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/>

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu/>

UCD Philosophy Subject Guide: <http://libguides.ucd.ie/philosophy>

Course Methods:

Lectures and discussions, presentations and exams, will be used to teach students how to read, write, argue and think philosophically with regards to course-content.

Objectives and Competencies: In the first module, the student is required to carefully read, reflect upon, and question the ideas presented in work of Plato, Aristotle, and other influential philosophers. In the second module, the student is expected to reflect upon and evaluate central notions in the philosophy of science and applied philosophy with a special focus on digital technologies and basic economic concepts.

Learning Outcomes: Students should leave the first module with a basic understanding of moral philosophy and the debates philosophers have over the nature of the good life. They should also finish this part of the class with an open mind: that is, they should be open to seeing and thinking about the world in ways they did not previously. At the end of the second module, students should have a basic understanding of foundational problems in the philosophy of science (e. g. explanation and confirmation) and be able to reflect on how philosophical theories impact problems in the special sciences (philosophy of information, philosophy of economics).