

Philosophy - An Introduction

Week 1-4: Introduction to Philosophy

Does God exist? Are there moral principles that all human beings should follow? Can we ever know anything for certain? How should society be organised? These are some of the topics that we will explore on this course. The course aims to present some of the central ideas in philosophy and examine some of the great philosophers throughout history. The main topics covered will include: Ethics, Political philosophy and Philosophy of Religion, and Existentialism.

Ethics or Moral Philosophy

This is probably the biggest field within philosophy today because it has wide practical relevance to everyday common issues. Ethics can be applied to the fields of business, medicine, the media, the environment and so on and controversy still rages over the issues of Abortion, Euthanasia, human rights, stem cell research and other areas. Philosophers examined here include Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, Immanuel Kant, Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill.

Topics covered:

- ♣ Virtue Ethics
- ♣ Kantian Ethics
- ♣ Utilitarianism
- ♣ Applied Ethics.

Week 4-6: Political philosophy

Political philosophy is closely related to Ethics. This concerns our political institutions and how they serve the needs of the citizens in our democracy. What are the principles upon which these political institutions are founded? Are they based on social justice, fairness, human rights and freedom, the principles that are enshrined in our democracy? And what do we mean by these concepts such as justice, freedom and so on which are so widely used by politicians and commentators. Political philosophy examines both these political institutions and also the meaning and use of the political concepts that are used. Philosophers examined include Plato, Rousseau, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and John Rawls.

Week 7-8: Philosophy of Religion

Topics Included:

- Religious experience and how it may be described
- The arguments for the existence of God
- Miracles, the problem of evil and other key issues Philosophers examined, Aristotle, Aquinas, David Hume, Paul Tillich and Martin Buber.

Existentialism

Existentialism is one of the most influential and popular movements in 20th century philosophy. Key existentialist thinkers are Sartre, Heidegger, Camus and Kierkegaard. It had a huge influence in Europe not only in philosophy but in art, literature, psychology, and culture generally.

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