

INTRODUCTORY PHILOSOPHY

CORE QUESTIONS IN PHILOSOPHY

YONSEI INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Philosophy is one of the oldest intellectual pursuits in human civilization. Philosophers ask about the nature of things in a very general, abstract way. Philosophers try to discover the answers to their questions through careful understanding of the concepts involved in their questions and discovering arguments that rationally support answers to their questions. Philosophers thereby ask about the nature of things by carefully understanding concepts and constructing arguments. In this class you will learn yourself to ask some of the most fundamental questions about the nature of reality and existence that philosophers have asked. You will learn to think like a philosopher about philosophical questions.

Why should you want to learn to think like a philosopher? Some of you will find it intrinsically rewarding. I know I do. But I also know some of you will find it frustrating. Sometimes I feel that way too. Either way, you will want to learn to think like a philosopher for at least two reasons, if not more. First, even though you didn't know it, you already think a little bit like a philosopher, for you have opinions about many—if not all—of the deepest philosophical questions. The questions, you'll see, are some of the oldest questions that, in many ways, define human civilization. You'll then learn to do what you've already been doing, just much better. Second, philosophers are especially good at dealing with evidential ambiguity and thinking through both sides of an issue, thinking outside of the box, and putting a number of seemingly unrelated ideas together in creative ways. Thinking like a philosopher should make you smarter. So those are two reasons to think like a philosopher, even if (or especially because) it challenges you along the way.

What questions will we address in this class? Here's a list of some of the core questions:

- What is philosophy?
- What is an argument? What are the different kinds? How do we evaluate them?
- What is the nature of God? Can we prove that God exists?
- Why does He allow us to suffer?
- What can we know? Can we be certain of anything?
- What is the nature of our knowledge of the world? Can we trust our senses?
- What do we know about the unobserved? Can we trust induction?
- What is knowledge in general? Can we define knowledge?
- What is freedom of the will? Is *free* choice possible in a deterministic universe?
- What is the nature of the mind? How is your mind related to your body? Could your mind be uploaded into the cloud? Can you survive the death of your body?
- What is the nature of the person? Why do persons remain the same over time? Can you survive the death of your body?

Here's a list of some of the learning outcomes I hope for you to accomplish from taking this class:

- An understanding of philosophy as a discipline, especially its core questions.
- An understanding of the core concepts in philosophy.
- An understanding of the main positions on some of the central questions in philosophy.
- An understanding of the main arguments for and against the main positions.
- An understanding of the method of philosophical analysis and argument.
- An understanding of the structure of arguments.
- The ability to write a paper explaining and defending a philosophical position.

TEXTBOOK

Our textbook is *Philosophy: Asking Questions—Seeking Answers*, by Stephen Stich and Tom Donaldson, Oxford University Press, 2019. ISBN 978-0-19-932996-0. You should arrange to purchase a hardcopy or an electronic copy before. You can purchase the textbook online from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Kyobo, or directly from Oxford University Press.

REQUIREMENTS

ATTENDANCE. Attendance is important in this class. In addition, YISS policy states that student who miss 7 or more meetings automatically fail. I'll take attendance daily.

PARTICIPATION 20 points: Participation is very important to your learning. We will engage in a number of practice quizzes, opening and closing questions, small group discussions, and open class discussion. Questions during breaks, before or after class, outside of class, or by email all count too. Participation will be recorded on a daily basis.

FOUR GRADED QUIZZES 20 points (5 points each): We will allow 30 minutes for a quiz. Think of these as short exams.

MIDTERM & FINAL 40 points (20 points each): A major outcome of the class is mastery of some of the central concepts and arguments in philosophy. The exams will assess how much you have mastered.

TERM PAPER (20 points). 4-5 pages. Nothing makes you think harder than having to write out your thoughts clearly and concisely. Throughout the course you should be drafting paragraphs (practice short essays) on some of the major concepts and arguments in the class. This will help you master the material and prepare for exams. It will also help you prepare for writing your term paper. I will provide a rubric for the paper as well as specific choices for the topic. (If you need to write a longer paper for transfer credit, let me know.)

GRADE SCALE

98-100	A+	77-79	C+
94-97	A	73-76	C
90-93	A-	70-72	C-
87-89	B+	67-69	D+
83-86	B	67-69	D+
80-82	B-	60-62	D

COURSE OUTLINE

WEEK ONE: INTRODUCTION

What is Philosophy? What are Arguments?

Readings: S&D, Chapters 1, 2 & Appendix B

[First Quiz: Last Day of Week One](#)

WEEK TWO: GOD & SUFFERING

Arguments for the Existence of God & the Problem of Suffering

Readings: S&D, Chapters 3-4

[Second Quiz: Last Day of Week Two](#)

WEEK THREE: CERTAINTY

Descartes, Sensory Knowledge, and Induction

Readings: S&D, Chapters 5-7

[MIDTERM: Last Day of Week Three](#)

WEEK FOUR: KNOWLEDGE & CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

How to analyze Concepts

Readings: S&D, Chapter 8

[Third Quiz: Last Day of Week Four](#)

WEEK FIVE: THE MIND-BODY PROBLEM & FREE WILL

Are we free? What is the mind, and how is it related to your brain?

Readings: S&D, Chapter 10 and then Chapter 9

[Fourth Quiz: Last Day of Week Five](#)

WEEK SIX: THE PERSISTENCE OF PERSONS

What are you? Can you survive your death?

Readings: S&D, Chapter 11

[TERM PAPER: Due Sunday at 10PM, turn in via YSCEC
\(Remember, the DO date is not the DUE date\)](#)

[FINAL EXAM: Last Day of the Term](#)