

Introduction to Philosophy

Instructor: Shahin Kaveh

Email:

Office: Room ---, hours: ---

Phone:

Class schedule: ---

Class location: ---

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to the oldest and most enduring intellectual enterprise in human history. On one view, philosophy is the discipline which has given birth to most of the disciplines we recognize as independent sciences today. On another view, philosophy is the study of the deepest and most fundamental questions, such as “what is knowledge?”, “how do we know the world?”, “what is there in the world?”, and “what is the relation of human beings to the world and society?”. In this course, we will discuss these questions through a partly historical, partly topical study of various philosophers and schools of thought in philosophy.

Course Schedule:

A Little History:

- **Session 1** - Introduction: traditional personal introduction, what is philosophy?, when and where it all began (ancient Greece)

No reading assignment

- **Session 2** - Plato

Selections from Plato's Republic

- **Session 3** - Plato

Selections from Plato's Meno

- **Session 3-4** - Aristotle

Selections from Aristotle's Metaphysics

- **Session 5** - Middle ages and the modern era: medieval history and philosophy, Renaissance, Protestantism, industrial revolution, French revolution

Medieval Philosophy, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

Knowledge and Science (“Epistemological Problems”):

- **Session 6-7** - Rationalism: Descartes (and maybe some Leibniz)

Selections from Descartes' Meditations

- **Session 7-8** - Empiricism: Locke and Hume
Selections from Hume's Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding
- **Session 9-10** - Kant
Selections from Past Masters Series: Kant
- **Session 11** - Three major forms of reasoning (deduction, induction, abduction)
Selections from Godfrey-Smith's Theory and Reality
- **Session 12** - Falsificationism: the crucial asymmetry, falsifiability, ad hoc corrections
Selections from Ladyman's Understanding Philosophy of Science
- **Session 13** - Constructivism: paradigms and convergent thinking, theory-ladenness of observation,
Selections from Kuhn's The Structure of Scientific Revolutions
Selections from Hanson's Patterns of Discovery
- **Session 14** - Constructivism: meaning variance and incommensurability
Sankey's Incommensurability - An Overview
- **Session 15** - Nietzsche: truth and attitudes towards life
Selections from Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil
- **Session 16** - Nietzsche: knowledge as metaphor
Nietzsche's On Truth and Lie In the Extra-moral Sense

What the World is Made of (“Metaphysical Problems”):

- **Session 17** - Personal identity: different views on personal identity
Selections from Perry's Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality
- **Session 18** - Individual and Society: Hegel and Marx
Selections from Past Masters Series: Marx
- **Session 19** - Individual and Society: Freud
Selections from Freud's Civilization and Its Discontents
- **Session 20** - Individual and Society: Heidegger and existentialism
Selections from Dreyfus's Being-in-the-world
- **Session 21** - Free will: determinism and soft determinism

Selections from d'Holbach's Of the System of Man's Agency

- **Session 22** - Free will: indeterminism and agency theories

Selections from Taylor's Freedom and Determinism

- **Session 23** - The existence of God

Selections from Aquinas's Treatise on God

- **Session 24** - The existence of God

Selections from Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion

A Closer Study of a Systematic Thinker:

- **Session 25-28** - Systematic philosophers deal with various philosophical issues such as epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, etc., based on a single core of ideas. We will study the views of a systematic philosopher that you choose from the following options:

- Plato
- Descartes
- Kant
- Marx
- Nietzsche