

Introduction To Philosophy

All UG

Course Category: Minor

Schedule of Offering: Odd Semester

Course Sub-category: Skill Development **Course Credit Structure:** 3

Course Stream: Philosophy and Psychology **Total Hours:** 45

Course Code: PS033

Lecture: 45hr;**Tutorial:**0;**Practical:**0

Instructor: R. Venkata Raghavan

Maximum Intake: 20

1. Introduction

With little exaggeration, has it been said that Philosophy is the mother of all disciplines. The seeds of several questions, which we today call 'scientific' are in Philosophy. In fact, as soon as a branch of Philosophy develops a well-defined set of problems and a method to inquire into those problems, it breaks off from the parent and becomes a 'science' in its own right. It is also said that Philosophy is the discipline in which asking the question is more important than giving the answer. For millennia, philosophers have been asking the same questions, only they have gotten more sharper. So, what is this thing called Philosophy? What are its major areas or sub-disciplines? What are some of the eternal problems philosophers have been trying to address? Why is it important to develop a philosophical acumen? These are some of the problems we will try to address in this course.

We will follow an archived course from edx.org: Introduction to Philosophy: God, Knowledge and Consciousness (url: <https://courses.edx.org/courses/course-v1:MITx+24.00x+2T2018/course/>). Students must register to the website (which is free) and watch the video lectures before coming to class.

2. Course Objectives

- To understand the general nature of Philosophy.
- To conduct a closer examination of some of the specific problems of Philosophy.
- To develop the ability to think philosophically about some of the problems of Humanity.

3. Pre-requisites

None.

4. Readings

The following text books will be used as background reading:

1. The Big Questions: A Short Introduction to Philosophy, Robert C. Solomon, Kathleen M. Higgins, 10th Edition, Cengage Learning, 2016.
2. An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis, John Hospers, 4th revised edition, Routledge, 2013

Apart from the above, specific readings for each lecture as prescribed in the online course will be used for discussion. All these are available on the edx.org website or are accessible via the University's library network.

5. Module-wise topics

The same modules as set out in the online course will be followed:

1. Introduction: What is Philosophy? (6 sessions)

Topics:

- Tentative definition of Philosophy and its major branches
- How to do Philosophy: An introduction to logic and argumentation.

Readings:

- i. 'Concepts and Conceptual Frameworks', in *The Big Questions*
- ii. 'Philosophical Plumbing,' Mary Midgley. *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 33:139-151 (1992)
<https://philarchive.org/archive/MIDPP>

2. God (9 sessions)

Topics:

- The Ontological Argument of St. Anselm
- The Design Argument of William Paley and its refinement by Roger White
- The Problem of Evil

Readings:

- i. Chapter 2-5, Proslogion, Anselm of Canterbury 1077
- ii. Chapters 1-2, Natural Theology, William Paley 1800

- iii. "The Argument from Cosmological Fine Tuning", Roger White 2012
- iv. "Evil and Omnipotence", J.L. Mackie 1955
- v. Selection from Kumaraila Bhatta's Ślokavārtika (Sambandhākṣepaparihāra) in *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy* edited by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore

3. Knowledge (9 sessions)

Topics:

- JTB Definition of Knowledge and the Gettier Problem
- Descartes' Skepticism
- The Problem of Induction

Readings:

- i. "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?", Edmund Gettier 1963
- ii. Meditation I from *Meditations on First Philosophy*, René Descartes 1641
- iii. Chapter III of *Fact, Fiction, and Forecast*, Nelson Goodman 1955

4. Mind and Consciousness (6 sessions)

Topics:

- Qualia and first person experience
- The Hard Problem of Consciousness

Readings:

- i. "Epiphenomenal Qualia", Frank Jackson 1982
- ii. "Minds, Brains and Programs", John Searle 1980

5. Free Will (9 sessions)

Topics:

- Free Will and Determinism
- Free Will as the ability to act otherwise

Readings:

- i. "The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism", Peter Van Inwagen 1975
- ii. "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility" from *The Importance of What We Care About*, Harry Frankfurt 1988

6. Personal Identity (6 sessions)

Topics:

- The Psychological Criterion of Personal Identity Over Time
- Animalism

Readings:

- i. Chapter 27 (XXVII) of Essays Concerning Human Understanding, John Locke 1690
- ii. Chapter 6 of Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man, Thomas Reid 1785
- iii. "Personal Identity", Derek Parfit 1971
- iv. "An Argument for Animalism", Eric Olson 2003

6. Pedagogy

This course will be run on flipped classroom model. Students are expected to see the lecture videos and read the relevant background reading before coming to class. One of the students will introduce the topic to the class and we will discuss the problem from there. The classroom will thus be used mainly for discussion of the problem rather than lecturing. The course will use Moodle extensively to upload course content, assignments, grading etc. Primary mode of communication will be email.

7. Evaluation Pattern

Following is the evaluation pattern for this course

- End-sem exam (may be a 3 hour, on-campus exam or a take home exam depending on prevailing situation under COVID-19 regulations): 30%
- Assignments (average of at least 7. All written assignments): 30%
- Mid-semester oral viva: 20%
- Term Paper (to be submitted on the end of the penultimate week of the course): 20%

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. If a student is found plagiarising in the assignment/term paper, they will get zero marks for that assignment/term paper. Submission of term paper is mandatory to pass the course.