

# **INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY**

**Summer 2022**

## **Instructor:**

Michael Starling

**e-mail:** michael.starling25@uga.edu

## **Course Description**

Some recurring questions in the history of philosophy concern the nature and value of knowledge – what constitutes knowledge as opposed to belief or opinion, how does one acquire knowledge, and what is the purpose of it? This course will be a survey of some prominent perspectives on knowledge through the lens of pedagogy, or educational theory. In the course we will consider the following questions: Why should one pursue an education? What is the purpose of learning? Is it merely for the acquisition of knowledge, or something further? Is a formal education something that everyone ought to seek, even if they are not inclined to do so? If education is a right, what sort of measures should be taken by a society to secure that right for its citizens?

## **Students' Learning Objectives**

At the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- Understand the major ideas of the various thinkers encountered in class, and the problems they are attempting to address
- Understand the historical development of these ideas
- Recognize and analyze a philosophical argument
- Engage in critical analysis of their personal views and how they affect their lives

## **Course Structure**

The course is organized into weekly units of material which address its central theme. Discussion is a critical part of not only an engaging learning environment but also the philosophical discipline. Weekly meetings will consist primarily of the following: a brief (35-50 minute) lecture, small group discussions using guiding questions provided by the instructor (30-45 minutes), personal reflection and writing time (30-45 minutes), and student-led discussion (30-45 minutes).

Prior to these weekly Friday sessions, students will be provided readings to complete before the session. Completing the reading prior to each session is paramount, as our classroom discussion will be based around analysis of the arguments and ideas of the text assigned.

## **Assignments**

In this course, assignments will be designed to encourage student reflection and discussion. Each week, 3-5 students will be asked in advance to prepare one Discussion Question which will be used to facilitate the student-led discussion. These questions can express the student's confusion

or curiosity about the material, the relation of that week's material to prior readings in the course, or questions about a concept's practical application. They should be written in such a way as to promote an open discussion with the other students. Each student will be asked to provide these discussion questions approximately twice throughout the course.

Students will also be expected to write a 1-page Reflection Essay on the material each week, to be turned in at the end of the class meeting. These reflections can be in response to prompts provided by the instructor, or they can address the student's own concerns or confusion regarding the text.

In lieu of a final exam, students will be asked to write a term paper of approximately 4 pages answering a prompt provided by the instructor. The prompt will be provided in advance of the due date, and class time will be set aside for students to engage in peer review and editing.

All assignments will be graded Pass/Fail.

### **Deviations**

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

### **Elements of Grade, Grading Scale, and Written Response Grading Criteria**

<b>Elements of Grade</b>	<b>Grade Percentage</b>
Discussion Questions (2)	35%
Weekly Reflections	35%
Term Paper	30%

<b>PHIL2010 Reading Schedule</b>	
<b>Week 1 (6/3)</b>	<p><b>Topics:</b> “What is knowledge and how do we acquire it?” &amp; Recognizing &amp; Analyzing Arguments</p> <p><b>Required Readings:</b> Plato’s <i>Meno</i> &amp; <i>Republic</i> (selections)</p>
<b>Week 2 (6/10)</b>	<p><b>Topics:</b> “What is the distinction between practical and theoretical knowledge?” &amp; Recognizing &amp; Analyzing Arguments (cont.)</p> <p><b>Required Readings:</b> Aristotle’s <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (selections) &amp; <i>Metaphysics</i> (selections)</p>
<b>Week 3 (6/17)</b>	<p><b>Topics:</b> “What is the best way to educate a human being?” &amp; Deductive Argument Strategies</p> <p><b>Required Readings:</b> Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s <i>Emile</i> (selections)</p>
<b>Week 4 (6/24)</b>	<p><b>Topics:</b> “What is the best way for a nation to educate its citizens?” &amp; Deductive Argument Strategies (cont.)</p> <p><b>Required Readings:</b> Mary Wollstonecraft’s <i>Vindication of the Rights of Woman</i> Ch.XII</p>
<b>Week 5 (7/8)</b>	<p><b>Topics:</b> “Is practical or theoretical knowledge more valuable?” &amp; Inductive Argument Strategies</p> <p><b>Required Readings:</b> Booker T Washington’s <i>Up From Slavery</i> Ch. 8; WEB Du Bois’s <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> “Of the Coming of John”</p>
<b>Week 6 (7/15)</b>	<p><b>Topics:</b> “What education is required for active participation in the community?” &amp; Inductive Argument Strategies (cont.)</p> <p><b>Required Readings:</b> Virginia Woolf <i>A Room of One’s Own</i> (selection)</p>
<b>Week 7 (7/22)</b>	<p><b>Topics:</b> “How does the educational system reflect our values?”</p> <p><b>Required Readings:</b> Paulo Freire’s <i>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</i> Chs. 1 &amp; 2</p>
<b>Week 8 (7/29)</b>	<p><b>Topic:</b> “Indoctrination, ideology, and the hope of an education”</p> <p><b>Required Readings:</b> Louis Althusser’s <i>Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses</i> (excerpts) &amp; bell hooks’s <i>Teaching to Transgress</i> (selections)</p>