

Great Thinkers and Problems of Western Philosophy

Name of the instructor: Stéfano Straulino

Type of Class Arrangement: Type 2 (While Type 2 is preferred, I'm open to Type 1 and Type 7 arrangements)

Course description and objectives: This is an introductory level course on the history of philosophy, through some of its most representative figures, from Socrates to Kant, and through some of its classic problems, for example: the problem of knowledge, truth, personal identity, the external world, etc. Every session is divided into two separate but related parts. The first part is dedicated to introduce the students into the philosophy of a great thinker, through the exposition and discussion of a (fragment of a) major writing of said thinker. The second part is used to approach a major philosophical problem: first, from the perspective of the text studied in the first part of the session but, secondly, from a more general and open perspective.

The objectives of this course are:

- 1) For the student to have a global vision of western philosophy.
- 2) For the student to read and discuss some of the major works of the main representatives of western philosophy.
- 3) For the student to understand and be able to analyze some of the most relevant philosophical problems.

Topics for each session:

Every session is divided into two 90 minute periods (following Type 1, 2 and 7 class arrangements):

Session	First Half	Second Half
1	Pre-Socratic Philosophy	What is philosophy?
2	Socrates	Error and self-deception
3	Plato	Plato's cave / What is knowledge?
4	Aristotle	Happiness and action
5	Thomas Aquinas	What is truth?
6	Descartes	Truth and certainty
7	Hume	Skepticism and personal identity
8	Kant	Mind and World

Teaching methods:

The preferred teaching methods for this course are text analysis and discussion, and the maieutic (Socratic) method. Therefore, the preferred form for this course is a seminar.

Assessment:

Two different kinds of assessments will be considered:

- 1.- Formative assessment. 30%

For almost every session there is a required text to be read. This will be taken into account either by reading quizzes or by participation in class discussions.

2.- Final assessment. 70%

This assessment is to be delivered as a paper. The student will be required to address, in the form of an essay, a philosophical problem, relying both on the authors discussed through the course and in hers/his own arguments.

Required readings:

Every required reading will be supplied by the course instructor

Session	Reading
1	<i>Pre-Socratic Fragments</i>
2	Plato, <i>First Alcibiades</i>
3	Plato, <i>Republic VII</i> (fragment) / <i>Theaetetus</i> (fragment)
4	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics I</i> (fragment)
5	T. Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologica</i> (fragment), <i>De Veritate</i> (fragment)
6	R. Descartes, <i>Discourse on Method</i> (fragment), <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> (fragment)
7	D. Hume, <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> (fragment), <i>A Treatise of Human Nature</i> (fragment)
8	I. Kant, <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> . (fragment)