

Introduction to Philosophy



Faculty	Course Type	Credits	Prerequisites	Semester
Mr. Aditya Nain	General	4	None	Any

Brief Overview

This course is designed as an 'Introduction to Philosophy' and presupposes no exposure to the subject on the part of the students. It focuses on the conceptual birth of Philosophy and through this hopes to shed some light on questions which have occupied philosophers ever since. While this course will touch upon and include Indian Philosophy at various points, it is primarily centered on the western Philosophical tradition.

The course is conceptually divided into 3 modules, using the 20th Cent. German Philosopher Karl Jaspers' schematization of the three aspects or stages of philosophical inquiry: Wonder, Doubt and Awareness. The 1st stage is that of asking and answering questions about the nature of 'things'; the 2nd stage is of doubting one's answers and looking for certainty; the 3rd is when the philosopher becomes aware of himself and inquires into happiness and the good life. Through these modules / units, Metaphysics, Epistemology, Logic & Ethics will be introduced to the students, who will obtain a foundational understanding of each.

Not only are students introduced to the questions, concepts and uses of philosophy, they also get a glimpse into thinkers and ideas that have been instrumental in shaping our world today, in a direct or indirect manner.

Students will, amongst other things, find out who wrote 'One can't step into the same river twice', what its significance is and why it is such a popular saying to date; the origins of what we call 'physics' and 'metaphysics' in the 'natural philosophy' of the Greeks; they will come across the origin of the distinction between knowledge and belief in the philosophical context; Seminal texts in the history of ideas such as Plato's 'Republic' & Aristotle's 'Nicomachean Ethics' & 'Physics' will be examined; the infamous and widely misunderstood Epicurus will be studied

and discussed in detail. But this course is not only about the past. Contemporary understandings of Philosophy will be examined and students will be given an idea of the shape that philosophy and philosophers have taken on.

Apart from lectures, the course would include

- Regular Group Discussions based on particular texts / ideas.
 - Relevant movie & documentary screenings to support various topics and to foster thought & discussion.
 - Written research assignments and group presentations.
1. The first module introduces the concept of natural philosophy and the intellectual break from mythology in ancient Greece. The question of 'what there is', which is posed as the fundamental question of Philosophy, is introduced and its significance for later philosophical and scientific thought is examined. Once this question has been introduced, we would then move into the study of knowledge and the sources thereof.
 2. The second module introduces logic and the method of enquiry as dealt with by the ancients and moderns alike. Logic, as a formal field of enquiry, is introduced and contextualized. Students will gain an understanding of concepts such as truth and validity, syllogistic logic, propositional logic and modality.
 3. Module three deals with questions of 'ethics', i.e. 'How must one live?' 'What is good?' 'What constitutes the good life?' and so on. Major theories in the field of ethics will be introduced, understood and discussed. Ancient Greek Philosophy, Indian Philosophy and other modern and contemporary philosophies will be talked about and explored in order to encourage students to read further in this area of thought.