

Foundations of Philosophy

This course aims to introduce students to the main concepts and ideas of the key thinkers in the history of Western philosophy. Using extracts from core texts, students will develop an awareness of the important philosophical issues and the responses they have generated. Central philosophical themes are explored, and the problems raised are studied in relation to these thinkers and ideas. Themes include: Metaphysics, The Existence of God, Existentialism, Empiricism, Rationalism, and Humanism. The writings of Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Hegel and Kierkegaard, amongst others, will be examined. Students are not expected to read key texts in their entirety.

Week One: Classical Greek Philosophy – Introduction to pre-Socratic philosophy. Platonic dualism and the theory of 'forms'. Critique of rhetoric. Materialism and Aristotle's 'Four Causes'. Plato and Aristotle on purpose, virtue and the soul. Extracts are drawn from Plato's 'Republic' Bks. VII and X and Aristotle's 'Metaphysics' Bks. Zeta and Theta.

Week Two: Modern Philosophy from Descartes to Hume - The debate concerning whether knowledge is derived from reason or experience. The origins of the debate in Plato and Aristotle. Descartes on innate ideas and the limitation of the senses. Locke's 'tabula rasa'. Hume on causation and experience. Extracts are drawn from Descartes' 'Meditations' and Hume's 'An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding'.

Week Three: The Enlightenment and German Idealism – Kant's 'solution' to the empiricism and rationalism debate. German Idealism and the nature of consciousness: Kant, Fichte and Schelling. Schelling on art. Hegel's phenomenology and the philosophy of history. Extracts are drawn from secondary literature.

Week Four: Existentialism, Subjectivity and the Self – Kierkegaard's response to Hegelian philosophy. Faith and truth as subjective modes of existence. Heidegger on 'being'. Self-deception and authenticity in Sartre and Heidegger. Nietzsche on morality and religion. Sartre's critique of Freud. The self and others. Extracts will be taken from the works of Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre and Nietzsche.

Suggested core texts

The Great Philosophers Stangroom & Garvey Arcturus Press 2005 ISBN: 1848370180

Philosophy: The Basics Warburton Routledge 2004 ISBN: 0415327733

Philosophy: The Classics Warburton Routledge 2006 ISBN: 0415356296

If you are unable to obtain books locally, they may be ordered from

<http://bookshop.blackwell.co.uk>

or

www.amazon.co.uk