

Holy Family Academy
Ad Veritatem per Fidem et Rationem

Philosophy
Syllabus 2017-2018

Mr. Gillis

Description

Philosophy has a unique place among the many paths of learning. Whereas some sciences lead to greater knowledge or information, philosophy, *the love of wisdom*, is “directly concerned with asking the questions of life’s meaning and sketching an answer to it.” (*Fides et Ratio*) T.S. Eliot notes the excellence of wisdom by asking, “Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?”

Wisdom imparts insight into human nature. Pope John Paul begins his encyclical *Fides et Ratio* by linking the origins of philosophy to the ancient Greek emphasis on self-knowledge:

The admonition *Know yourself* was carved on the temple portal at Delphi, as a testimony to a basic truth to be adopted as a minimal norm by those who seek to set themselves apart from the rest of creation as ‘human beings,’ that is as those who ‘know themselves.’

Human beings gain self-knowledge by exploring the fundamental questions that have been asked in every culture throughout world history: *Who am I? Where do I come from and where am I going? How can I be happy? What is goodness? Why is there evil? What is love? Is death the end? What is there after this life?*

Seeking wisdom is the activity of a lifetime and an essential part of the human condition; therefore, human beings are called to exist in a continual state of wonder, for without wonder “men and women would lapse into deadening routine and little by little would become incapable of a life which is genuinely personal.” (*Fides et Ratio*) Put in Socratic terms, the philosophical life is the examined life, and the unexamined life is not worth living.

In this Philosophy class students will have the opportunity to examine life by discussing the fundamental questions raised in carefully selected readings. By reading, reflecting, discussing, presenting, and writing the students will be able to formulate their own answers to the fundamental questions under the guidance of some of the world’s great thinkers.

Objectives

There are two main objectives of this course. First, for students to read philosophical texts carefully and demonstrate an understanding of the author’s view; second, for students to cultivate the philosophical habit of examining life fearlessly and with great confidence in the truth.

Scope and Sequence

Since philosophy is concerned with the fundamental questions of human existence, the scope of this Philosophy class is the whole of existence. Josef Pieper explains:

To philosophize means, we said, to direct one's view toward the totality of the world... What is peculiar and distinctive about a philosophical question is that it cannot be posed, considered, or answered (so far at least as an answer is possible) without "God and the world" also coming into consideration, that is, *the whole of what exists*.

Therefore, the questions addressed in this course concern nothing less than “God and the world.”

The sequence of readings is designed to address five questions: “What is philosophy?” “Is it natural for human beings to live in community?” “What is the good life?” “Can we really know anything?” And finally, “Is morality objective?”

Book List

Aquinas *Treatise on Law* / Gateway Editions

Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* / Dover Thrift Edition

Frankl, Viktor *Man’s Search for Meaning* / Beacon Press

Golding, William *Lord of the Flies*

Philosophy Handbook (Selections from Aristotle, Descartes, De Tocqueville, Freud, Hobbes, John Paul II, M.L. King, and C.S. Lewis)

Plato *Apology, Crito* in Six Great Dialogues / Dover Thrift Editions

Grading

Participation	10%
Oral Presentations	10%
Final Exam	10%
Short Essay	20%
Persuasive Paragraphs	50%

The instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus subject to notification.