Duquesne University  
McAnulty College and Graduate  
School of Liberal Arts  

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Basic Philosophical Questions  
UCOR 132-07  
MWF 12:00-12:50  
College Hall 222  

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Office hours: Mondays & Wednesdays 3:00-4:00 pm, or by appointment.  

Philosophy, the “love of wisdom,” asks fundamental questions about the true nature of the self, of things, and of the world. What sort of thing am I? How can I live a good life? What are things like and how can I know them? Can life be meaningful if God does not exist? In this introductory philosophy course, we will read important texts by different philosophers to see how they answer these kinds of questions. In Plato’s dialogue Charmides we will ask what temperance or self-control is and what kind of knowledge it requires. In the ethical philosophies of Epicurus and Epictetus we will ask what the good life is and how we can free ourselves from suffering. Dogen’s Zen teachings will help us understand the ethical and philosophical value of practicing meditation. In the Meditations we will see René Descartes piece together the foundations for a new philosophy. Jeal-Paul Sartre’s existential philosophy will challenge our dogmatic ideas about God and the Self. With Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler, and Susan Stryker, we will think about how our different sexual identities, sexualities, and gender identities affect our experiences of the world. We will end by reading Frantz Fanon’s account of his experience as a racialized subject. Along the way, we will pay close attention to why these philosophers believe the things that they do by asking what kinds of experiences and assumptions underpin their philosophical positions and seeing how they argue and make good cases for these positions. In this way, we will learn how to engage different perspectives charitably and on their own terms, and how to challenge and defend our own positions.