Duquesne University
McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts
Spring 2021

Basic Philosophical Questions UCOR 132 – 18 Online
Jan 21, 2021 - May 05, 2021
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Office hours:
--Drop-in hours over Zoom: M & T between 2:00 – 3:00pm. I am also available by appointment.

Course Description:
This course will introduce some of the fundamental questions of philosophy through selections from Plato, Descartes and Iris Marion Young. The reading materials are selected with the goal of providing a basis for understanding central concepts and debates in philosophy.
Some of the questions we will address are as follows:
-- Who should rule the state? What sort of characteristics must a person have if she/he is to govern the state well?
--Who is a philosopher?
--What is knowledge?
--Is there a distinction between knowing something and having an opinion about something?
--How do we get to know the things we know about reality? Is it by looking at and touching things or by abstract thinking like mathematicians do?
--Is there anything at all that we can know for certain?
--Are poor people poor because they don’t work hard enough?
--Do we have a responsibility for the fact that some people live under poor conditions?
--Do we have a responsibility with respect to the wrong things our ancestors did in the past?
Please notice that this course is more about thinking things through than the memorization of a bunch of facts. Our goal is to think methodically and as honestly as possible on questions that have significance for human life by receiving help from other thinkers that also thought about these issues.

Learning Objectives
By the end of this course students will be able to:

1. Tell some of the basic problems of philosophy
2. Recognize and perform the Socratic Method of Questioning
3. Analyze, evaluate, and create arguments
4. Develop a sensitivity against plagiarism
5. Recognize the distinction between knowing a thing and having an opinion about a thing
6. Distinguish different possible sources through which we get to know reality
7. Explain what structural injustice is
8. Thematize the distinction between guilt and responsibility