**HZT4U - Philosophy: Questions and Theories**

**COURSE OUTLINE**

**Course Title:**Philosophy: Questions and Theories  
**Course Code:**HZT4U

Teacher: Mr. Rob D’Alessio Rob.D’Alessio@cdsbeo.on.ca   
**Grade:**12  
**Course Type:**University  
**Credit Value:**1  
**Prerequisite:**Any university or university/college preparation course in social sciences and humanities, English, or Canadian and world studies  
**Curriculum Policy Document:***Social Science and Humanities, The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 11 and 12, 2000*

**Course Description:**

This course addresses three (or more) of the main areas of philosophy: metaphysics, logic, epistemology, ethics, social and political philosophy, and aesthetics. Students will learn critical-thinking skills, the main ideas expressed by philosophers from a variety of the world's traditions, how to develop and explain their own philosophical ideas, and how to apply those ideas to contemporary social issues and personal experiences. The course will also help students refine skills used in researching and investigating topics in philosophy.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Unit** | **Titles and Descriptions** | **Time and Sequence** |
| Unit 1 | **Introduction to Philosophy**  In this first unit of the course, we will spend time looking at what truly makes a good philosopher. We will look at the elements of a definition, the various kinds of definitions that exist as well as the differences between these kinds of definitions. We will then look at arguments with the aim of understanding their structure as well as the two different kinds of arguments that exist. We will also look at ways to appraise an argument and, in particular, ways to discover faulty premises within an argument. We will then go on to look at the meaning of a fallacy and discuss various selected examples of fallacies and learn just why they are mistakes of reason. Finally, we will briefly look at the life of the ancient Greek philosopher, Socrates, the Socratic method as well as examining how the Socratic method might even be more useful to us today than it was thousands of years ago. | 11 hours |
| Unit 2 | **Metaphysics**  The Metaphysics unit will begin by describing the ideas of the ancient Greek philosopher, Plato. We will learn about his famous theory of the Forms and how it paved the way for all subsequent discussion regarding the mental and physical worlds or, more generally, the mind and body. Then we will look at the ideas of the ancient Greek philosopher, Aristotle. In particular, we will learn about Aristotle's particular conception of what is real in the world and how it corresponds and relates to Plato's theory of the Forms. Third, we will study the medieval Italian philosopher, Saint Thomas Aquinas. By looking at Aquinas' ideas we can see how he takes some of the views of Plato and Aristotle and combines them into a theory which he believes best explains the relationship between the mind (or soul, as he calls it) and body. Fourth, we will be introduced to the French philosopher, Rene Descartes, who is known to be the father of modern philosophy. In this section of the unit we will see how Descartes believed that he solved the question of whether to accept the existence of the mind or the body by accepting both as well as the serious problem that results from this position. Fifth, we will then look at the Dutch philosopher, Baruch Spinoza, who is known for his rather unorthodox views of God. In particular, we will see how his views on the mind and body are dramatically different than Descartes' and will learn about the important alternative theory within philosophy that Spinoza is known to defend. Sixth, we will examine Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's ideas, the German philosopher known for his rather peculiar theory about what really exists in the world. We will learn about the unique entity that he defends in particular as well as its relation to the mind and body in general. Finally, we will end the unit by studying the views of the Irish philosopher, George Berkeley, another philosopher known for his bold and very abstract views. We will learn about the specific theory that he defends as well as how his views are explicitly different than the other philosophers studied. The main aim of this unit will be to consider the metaphysical question of whether certain entities, such as the mind and body, really exist in the world. By studying each of the following seven philosophers, all of whom are widely regarded as the greatest philosophers of all time, you should be able to gain an understanding of both their theories in general as well as how their theories relate to and address this important metaphysical issue. | 18 hours |
| Unit 3 | **Epistemology**  In the Epistemology unit we will take the time to learn about and focus our attention towards several areas of concern in the study of knowledge. For instance, the unit will begin by describing the epistemological theories of the ancient Greek philosopher, Plato. We will learn about his distinction between belief and knowledge and how it paved the way for all subsequent discussion regarding the mental and physical worlds or, more generally, the mind and body. Then we will look at the epistemological theories of the ancient Greek philosopher, Aristotle. In particular, we will discover that Aristotle is reluctant to totally reject the role of belief and will learn how this reluctance is ultimately related to his theory of sense perception. Third, we will study the epistemological theories of the medieval Italian philosopher, Saint Thomas Aquinas. By looking at Aquinas's defence of the mental quality known as the phantasm we will learn how this quality plays a prominent role in his theory of how we can attain knowledge. Fourth, we will be introduced to the epistemological theories of the French philosopher, Rene Descartes. In this section of the unit we will be presented with the famous theory within philosophy that argues that knowledge comes from reason, namely, rationalism. Then we will go on to study the epistemological theories of the English philosopher, John Locke. In particular, we will learn about the famous theory within philosophy that argues that knowledge comes from experience, namely, empiricism and will learn how it differs sharply from the theory of rationalism. We will then examine the epistemological theories of the Scottish philosopher, David Hume. Here we will learn about the theory of scepticism and how Hume is primarily sceptical of reason and the theory of rationalism. Finally, we will end the unit by studying the views of the German philosopher, Immanuel Kant. In this final section we will learn about the high level of priority that Kant attaches to the role of reason and his consequent theory known as transcendental idealism. The main aim of this unit will be to examine some important epistemological theories as presented by some of the greatest philosophers of all time. By studying each of the above seven philosophers you should be able to gain an understanding of their philosophy in general as well as how their philosophy relates to and addresses fundamental questions concerning the study of knowledge. | 17 hours |
| Unit 4 | **Ethics**  In the Ethics unit we will take the time to discuss some of the directions that philosophers can take within moral philosophy. For instance, the unit will begin by discussing the ethical theory of the ancient Greek philosopher, Plato. In particular, we will learn about how his famous theory of the forms is related to the branch of ethics in particular as well as his important conception of the Form of the Good. Then we will look at the ethical theory of the ancient Greek philosopher, Aristotle. Here we will discover that, rather than following Plato's theory of the forms, when it came to living ethically Aristotle was more concerned about our choices and actions in life as well as the specific notion of virtue. Next we will study the ethical theory of the third major philosopher to come out of ancient Greece, Epicurus. In particular, we will see how Epicurus' ethical theory is distinct from that of Plato's and Aristotle's and we will pay close attention to the notion of pleasure, the concept at the foundation of all Epicurean philosophy. Fourth, we will be introduced to the ethical theory of the Italian philosopher, Saint Thomas Aquinas. We will learn how his ethical views are related to the theory within philosophy known as objectivism and, in particular, we will examine the main idea behind natural law theory. Then we will go on to study the ethical theory of the English philosopher, Jeremy Bentham. In this section of the unit we will be presented with the famous theory within ethics known as utilitarianism and will discuss Bentham's founding role with respect the theory. We will then examine the ethical theory of the American philosopher, John Rawls. Here we will learn about the famous theory within ethics known as contractarianism and we will discuss the ways in which Rawls is understood to be a contractarian philosopher. Finally, we will end the unit by studying the ethical theory of the Canadian philosopher, G. A. Cohen. In this final section we will learn about the famous theory within ethics known as egalitarianism and we will learn about the ways in which Cohen is understood to be an egalitarian philosopher. The main aim of this unit will be to examine some important ethical theories as presented by some of the greatest moral philosophers of all time. By studying each of the above seven philosophers you should be able to gain an understanding of their philosophy in general as well as how their philosophy relates to and addresses fundamental questions concerning the study of ethics. | 17 hours |
| Unit 5 | **Political Philosophy**  In the Political Philosophy unit we will take the time to discuss many of the different approaches to political philosophy as defended by some of the most famous and important political philosophers in the history of philosophy. For instance, the unit will begin by discussing the political philosophy of the ancient Greek philosopher, Plato. In particular, we will learn that a central part of Plato's overall political theory was focused on outlining certain conditions that he believed would lead to what he viewed as the ideal state. Then we will look at the political theory of the ancient Greek philosopher, Aristotle. Here we will discover that, rather than following Plato's goal of establishing the perfect state, what mattered more to Aristotle was the establishment of the proper function of the state for he viewed this as being the more important question. Next we will study the political theory of Thomas Hobbes. In particular, we will be introduced to the historical idea of the state of nature and will study exactly what the author of the famous idea had to say about it. As we will see, even today the concept of the state of nature is thought to provide the very reason why we should want government in our lives and why it is necessary and for this reason it is an imperative concept to study in any course in political philosophy. Then, in the next lesson we will go on to discuss the philosopher known as the father of liberalism, a theory which is easily said to be the most dominant political philosophy of the Western world, namely, John Locke. In particular, we will explore his ideas and learn how they are what provide the foundation of this massively influential political theory. Following that, we will discuss the philosopher regarded as the father of the important theory of conservatism, Edmund Burke. We will learn about some of Burke's main ideas and will see how they would become to be the founding principles within conservative thought. Then, we will discuss the philosopher who is the father of the major political theory known as Marxism, namely, Karl Marx. We will learn about the basic principles that Marx stood for and will come to understand how all of his ideas eventually became referred to under the general heading of Marxism. Finally, in the last lesson of the unit we will discuss the philosopher considered to be a key representative of the major and increasingly popular political theory known as libertarianism, namely, Robert Nozick. We will see how his ideas are deeply rooted in libertarian thought as well as how they are related to a particular form of anarchism, the theory that states that society can and should exist without government. The main aim of this unit will be to examine some of the most important political questions and theories as presented by some of the greatest political philosophers of all time. By studying each of the above seven philosophers you should be able to gain an understanding of their philosophy in general as well as how their philosophy relates to and addresses fundamental issues concerning the study of political philosophy. | 17 hours |
| Unit 6 | **Existentialism**  In this unit we will take the time to discuss many of the themes within existentialism as portrayed by some of the most famous and important existential philosophers. For example, we will begin the unit by studying the philosopher who is considered to be the father of existentialism, Soren Kierkegaard. In particular, we will consider the general belief of his works, namely, his notion of subjectivity, as well as some of his more specific beliefs concerning what he refers to as 'spheres of existence.' Then we will look at some of the existential themes within the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. Here we will be introduced to some key concepts within Nietzsche's philosophy and will try to understand how they might all fit together to form a coherent theory about ourselves. Next we will study the existential ideas found in the works of Martin Heidegger. We will look at what makes Heidegger an existentialist as well as his ideas concerning his special notion of being which he refers to as 'Dasein.' Then in the next lesson we will go on to discuss the existential ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre. In particular, we will study his concepts of freedom and choice as well as his idea that consciousness is really just nothingness. Following that, we will discuss the work of Simone de Beauvoir and discover what specifically makes her an existentialist. In order to do so, we will learn about her views on ethics as well as her rejection of the traditional notion of femininity. Then we will discuss Maurice Merleau-Ponty and the existential themes found within his philosophy. In particular, we will learn how significant the body is to his philosophy and why he believes it is so crucial to gaining a comprehensive understanding of ourselves and our world. Finally, in the last lesson of the unit we will discuss Albert Camus and the existential themes presented in his works. Here we will see how, more than anything, he devotes his time to understanding the question of how one should be said to exist in an ultimately absurd world. The main aim of this unit will be to examine some of the most important existential ideas and themes as presented by some of the greatest existentialists of all time. By studying each of the above seven philosophers you should be able to gain an understanding of their philosophy in general as well as how their philosophy relates to and addresses fundamental issues within existentialism. | 17 hours |
| Unit 7 | **Conclusion**  In this final unit of the course we are going to look at how the subject applies to the real world, that is, we are going to talk about philosophy and how it relates to everyday life. After all, philosophy does indeed have real life implications and it is important to know that the subject has both a meaning and relevance that reaches far outside of the philosophy classroom. For example, as you might have experienced in some of your other courses, it is quite common for philosophy to be discussed in other subjects as well. In fact, philosophy is not only discussed in other subjects but, quite frequently, it is what provides the very foundation for which many subjects are built upon. Furthermore, it is important to realize that philosophy also exists and is very much alive within the media. One just has to pick up a newspaper to see the philosophical significance of many current issues. There is also very much to be said about those current philosophers who are making a difference in the field of philosophy as we speak. This just proves how great philosophy is not something that was produced generations ago but is, rather, still very much alive and being created today. Also relevant with respect to philosophy and everyday life is the issue of being able to find a job in the field. As a student of philosophy, for instance, it is important to know and understand what kinds of options are available to you were you to decide to seriously pursue the subject. Finally, another consideration to bear in mind when discussing the relationship between philosophy and the real world is the perhaps rather popular notion that philosophy has no relevance to the real world. Even though these particular kinds of comments are ultimately criticisms of philosophy, they, nonetheless, prove how philosophy has an undeniable impact on the world. In this concluding unit, then, we will spend time looking at each of the above concerns. First, we will see how philosophy is associated with other subjects and will discuss the relationships between philosophy and religion, philosophy and science and philosophy and literature and poetry. Then we will look at how philosophy is discussed in the media. We will look at three articles found online and discuss some of the interesting and relevant points of each article. Next we will take some time to discuss some well known contemporary philosophers. We will learn about the kinds of influence that they have had on philosophy today and why their thoughts and ideas will likely continue to have an influence in the future. Then we will go on to look at some of the different types of jobs that a person can enter into with a philosophy degree. While the most obvious career path for students of philosophy might be thought to be the continuation of philosophical study at advanced levels, in fact, there exists a wide range of different careers that many philosophy students commonly pursue. Finally, in the last lesson of the course, we will highlight some historical thinkers who have been rather critical of philosophy and will come to see what kind of weight, if any, these thinkers' criticisms might have. The future of philosophy will also be discussed and the course will end on a positive and optimistic note defending the vast usefulness of this very important subject. This concluding unit should help to shed light on some of philosophy's more practical aspects as well as its exact role within the real world and everyday life. It might be popular to think that philosophy has no practical relevance to real life, however, it will be the main aim of this unit to dispel this notion and to emphasize that philosophy has just as much relevance as any other subject that you may study in school. | 11 hours |
|  | **Culminating Activity** | 2 hours |
|  | **Total** | **110 hours** |

**Teaching / Learning Strategies:**

The nature of the social science and humanities curriculum calls for a variety of strategies for learning. The social science and humanities curriculum is designed both to engage students in reflective learning and to help them develop practical skills. Students are expected to learn and apply the inquiry skills and research methods particular to the discipline, and to conduct research and analysis using both traditional and technological resources. Since the over-riding aim of this course is to help students use language skillfully, confidently and flexibly, a wide variety of instructional strategies are used to provide learning opportunities to accommodate a variety of learning styles, interests and ability levels. These include:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Direct Instruction | Independent research | Directed Reading Activities |
| Comparative Essay Writing | Writing Processes | Writing to Learn |
| Journal Writing | Independent Reading | Expressing Another Point of View |
| Interviews | Guided Internet Research | Guided Writing |
| Brainstorming | Response Journal | Media Analysis |
| Role Playing | Creative Writing |  |

**Assessment and Evaluation Strategies of Student Performance:**

**Assessment** is a systematic process of collecting information or evidence about a student's progress towards meeting the learning expectations. Assessment is embedded in the instructional activities throughout a unit. The expectations for the assessment tasks are clearly articulated and the learning activity is planned to make that demonstration possible. This process of beginning with the end in mind helps to keep focus on the expectations of the course. The purpose of assessment is to gather the data or evidence and to provide meaningful feedback to the student about how to improve or sustain the performance in the course. Scaled criteria designed as rubrics are often used to help the student to recognize their level of achievement and to provide guidance on how to achieve the next level. Although assessment information can be gathered from a number of sources (the student himself, the student's course mates, the teacher), evaluation is the responsibility of only the teacher. For evaluation is the process of making a judgment about the assessment information and determining the percentage grade or level.

Assessment is embedded within the instructional process throughout each unit rather than being an isolated event at the end. Often, the learning and assessment tasks are the same, with formative assessment provided throughout the unit. In every case, the desired demonstration of learning is articulated clearly and the learning activity is planned to make that demonstration possible. This process of beginning with the end in mind helps to keep focus on the expectations of the course as stated in the course guideline. The evaluations are expressed as a percentage based upon the levels of achievement.

**Overall Expectations: HZT4U**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Metaphysics** | |
| Overall Expectations | |
| 160.050.01.01 | summarize the main questions, concepts, and theories of metaphysics; |
| 160.050.01.02 | evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of responses to some of the main questions of metaphysics defended by some major philosophers and schools of philosophy, and defend their own responses; |
| 160.050.01.03 | demonstrate the relevance of metaphysical questions and theories to everyday life; |
| 160.050.01.04 | illustrate how metaphysical theories are presupposed in other subjects. |
| **Logic and the Philosophy of Science** | |
| Overall Expectations | |
| 160.050.02.01 | identify the main questions in formal and informal logic, and in the philosophy of science; |
| 160.050.02.02 | apply logical and critical thinking skills in practical contexts, and in detecting logical fallacies; |
| 160.050.02.03 | demonstrate an understanding of how philosophical questions apply to disciplines such as physics, mathematics, and psychology; |
| 160.050.02.04 | evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the responses to some questions of natural and social sciences defended by some of the major philosophers and schools of philosophy, and defend their own responses. |
| **Epistemology** | |
| Overall Expectations | |
| 160.050.03.01 | identify the main questions, concepts, and theories of epistemology; |
| 160.050.03.02 | evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of responses to some of the main questions of epistemology defended by some major philosophers and schools of philosophy, and defend their own responses; |
| 160.050.03.03 | demonstrate the relevance of philosophical theories of epistemology to concrete problems in everyday life; |
| 160.050.03.04 | explain how different epistemological theories apply to subject areas such as psychology. |
| **Ethics** | |
| Overall Expectations | |
| 160.050.04.01 | demonstrate an understanding of the main questions, concepts, and theories of ethics; |
| 160.050.04.02 | evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of responses to ethical questions and moral problems defended by some major philosophers and schools of philosophy, and defend their own responses; |
| 160.050.04.03 | illustrate the relevance of philosophical theories of ethics to concrete moral problems in everyday life; |
| 160.050.04.04 | demonstrate an understanding of how philosophical theories of ethics are implicit in other subjects. |
| **Social and Political Philosophy** | |
| Overall Expectations | |
| 160.050.04.01 | demonstrate an understanding of the main questions, concepts, and theories of social and political philosophy; |
| 160.050.04.02 | evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the responses to the main questions of social and political philosophy defended by some major philosophers and schools of philosophy, and defend their own responses; |
| 160.050.04.03 | identify instances of theories of social and political philosophy that are presuppositions in everyday life; |
| 160.050.04.04 | demonstrate the relevance of social and political philosophy to other subjects. |
| **Aesthetics** | |
| Overall Expectations | |
| 160.050.04.01 | demonstrate an understanding of the main questions, concepts, and theories of aesthetics; |
| 160.050.04.02 | evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of responses to some of the main questions of aesthetics defended by some major philosophers, and defend their own responses; |
| 160.050.04.03 | illustrate the relevance of aesthetics to other subjects. |
| **Research and Inquiry Skills** | |
| Overall Expectations | |
| 160.050.04.01 | correctly use the terminology of philosophy; |
| 160.050.04.02 | identify the main areas of philosophy, and analyse philosophical arguments within them; |
| 160.050.04.03 | demonstrate an understanding of the unique character of philosophical questions; |
| 160.050.04.02 | effectively use a variety of print and electronic sources and telecommunications tools in research; |
| 160.050.04.03 | effectively communicate the results of their inquiries. |

**The Final Grade:**

The evaluation for this course is based on the student's achievement of curriculum expectations and the demonstrated skills required for effective learning. The percentage grade represents the quality of the student's overall achievement of the expectations for the course and reflects the corresponding level of achievement as described in the achievement chart for the discipline. A credit is granted and recorded for this course if the student's grade is 50% or higher. The final grade for this course will be determined as follows:

* 70% of the grade will be based upon evaluations conducted throughout the course. This portion of the grade will reflect the student's most consistent level of achievement throughout the course, although special consideration will be given to more recent evidence of achievement.
* 30% of the grade will be based on a final evaluation administered at the end of the course. This final evaluation will be based on an evaluation of achievement from all four categories of the Achievement Chart for the course and of expectations from all units of the course.