



SATURDAY ENRICHMENT SPRING 2022

Philosophy for Young Learners

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Course Description

In this course we engage in the social practices of philosophy and critical thinking through use of prompts and open-ended discussion. We draw on a range of philosophical traditions to guide student-led investigations into big ideas and ask fundamental questions about the world and our place within it. Students will practice identifying and asking philosophical questions using philosophically provocative books, games, videos, and other materials and activities designed to guide and focus our discussion and community building. This course builds from the interests of students as we work together to make sense of timeless thought experiments, paradoxical situations, and personally relevant ethics. Through peer discussion and experienced facilitation, children are invited to participate in social deliberations that support critical thinking skills in reasoning, reflection, and respectful social interaction with others whose viewpoints may differ from their own. Appropriate for new and returning philosophers, this will be a space for deep, collaborative, and fun philosophical investigation.

Learning Outcomes

- What students will know:
 - Critical reflection can help us reach deeper understanding.
 - Collaborative inquiry is essential to meaningful knowledge.
 - Everyone is capable of meaningful questioning and participation in dialogue.
- What students will understand:
 - What makes a “good” reason; how to justify reasons with evidence.
 - There is seldom one “right answer” to a philosophical question.
- What student will be able to do:
 - Learn to ask philosophical questions.
 - Be respectful and reflective listeners.
 - Value diversity as a strength.

Instructional Strategies

Each class will be 50 minutes long, organized in relation to some story, game or other activity/prompt designed to stimulate curiosity about a topic of philosophical interest. Students are asked to join the class call with their video on, though this is not strictly required based on individual circumstances (please contact me if this is the case). We will use a range of non-verbal strategies to facilitate our time together including gestures for agreement and disagreement in addition to physically raising hands to indicate their intent to contribute next. Each class will be loosely divided into 3 segments: (1) introduction and questions, (2) main activity, and (3) whole-group discussion.

(1) In the introduction, we will revisit past discussions before introducing the topic for the day and preparing for any associated activities. Students warm up through brief discussion and sharing of ideas and questions that come up for them as they reflect together. (2) During the main activity segment of the class, we will read a book, play a game, watch a video, or engage in some other prompt designed to encourage discussion around some philosophical topic. This will vary week by week and may vary from proposed syllabus offerings depending on student interests. (3) In our whole group discussion, students will share their thoughts, reflect on their thinking, and identify additional questions and/or potential conclusions they have come to. During this time, we will push each other’s sensemaking deeper and consider other ways of thinking about topics. We will end our sessions with this open discussion, and often with more questions than answers.

Overall, this class operates on the belief that philosophy is not a static set of knowledge to be passed on, but a social practice of thinking deeply and exploring ideas together through collaborative dialogue. As such, there are no rigid learning goals set by the instructor. Students are invited to take up topics in ways that are most meaningful to them, though they are encouraged to articulate how their questions and insights are connected to others. Because of this focus on guided instruction, the schedule and activities listed here are subject to change based on students’ interests and the instructor’s discretion.

Resources and Materials

No materials are required for this course.

Tentative Course Schedule

Date	Topics and Activities
Week 1 - Apr 2	Introduction and Norms What do you wonder?
Week 2 - Apr 9	What is a philosophical question? Show and Tell
Week 3 - Apr 16	Wondering about Knowing and Reasons Two Truths and a Tale
Week 4 - Apr 23	Wondering about Living What is alive?
Week 5 - Apr 30	Wondering about Ethics Good and Bad - What would you do?
Week 6 - May 7	Wondering about Reality How do I know I’m not dreaming?
Week 7 - May 14	Wondering about Paradoxes Thought Experiments
Week 8 - May 21	Wrapping up: Lingering Questions & Student Choice Oh, The Places You’ll Go