

Course Outline

Name of Course: Principles of Philosophy **Written/Revised:** May 2009

Course Number: 265

Number Credits: 5

Level of Course: CP-A

Grade Level 11, 12

Prerequisite: none

Course Description:

I. Introduction

History of Philosophy has been designed as an elective Social Studies course. The course is available for students in grades 11 and 12; the course is available for the academic/ honors level. The course will examine and discuss the philosophical beliefs and ideas from the origins of human civilization to modern times; there will be an emphasis on western philosophy, beginning with the Greeks. The beginning of philosophy is the faculty of wonder; it is through this concept that the course will unfold. We will read and discuss the seminal works that address the major questions that have both fascinated and plagued humanity: Who am I? Where did I come from? Where did the world come from? Does God exist? Can we understand the world in which we live? What is the role of science and religion in the realm of philosophy? Do I have free will? Upon what do I base my morality? Is there morality? Logic and illogic, Etc.

II. New Jersey Core Proficiency Standards - All Levels of Instruction

Standard 6.1 (Social Studies Skills) All students will utilize historical thinking, problem solving, and research skills to maximize their understanding of Civics, History, Geography, and Economics.

Standard 6.2 (Civics) All students will know, understand and appreciate the values and principles of American Democracy and the rights, responsibilities, and roles of a citizen in the nation and the world.

Standard 6.3 (World History) all students will demonstrate knowledge of world history in order to understand life and events in the past and how they relate to the present and the future.

III. Course Responsibilities

Class Participation: This is a student-centered class that will be mostly discussion. In order for that to occur you must be prepared for class and prepared to speak. You must understand that you will be required to speak in an open forum where ideas, opinions and

beliefs are discussed on a daily basis. Much of the evaluation in this class will be your participation and your ability to articulate your evaluation, opinion and thoughts about the readings assigned for class. You must think critically; that means not just the expression of opinions, likes and dislikes. Anyone can say what he or she believes, or react to what another believes. In some cases you will have strong feelings about what we are reading or discussing. These strong reactions are good, but they are only the beginning. We want to do more than just express our reactions. Thinking critically requires: (1) clearly and accurately expressing the relevant claims, (2) examining and questioning (both the reasons for and consequences of) others' and (especially) one's own beliefs, (3) developing and being responsive to alternative views, (4) trying to support or reject such views on the basis of evidence and argument, and (5) being willing to accept the outcome of such inquiry.

Readings: You will be assigned frequent readings that must be done prior to the class period for which they were assigned; you must read critically—make an earnest effort to understand what the author is saying, noting where you have questions, disagreements, confusions, etc. There may be short quizzes periodically to assure that you are keeping up with the readings.

Writing: There will be short writing assignments related to many of your readings and our discussions. Often the best way to understand something (e.g. a philosopher's ideas, your own ideas) is to try to clearly write it out in your own words. This will prepare you for class discussion, and allows you to demonstrate your understanding of the material and your ability to approach it critically

There is no textbook for the course, but there will be assigned readings that will be distributed to the students. We will be reading many on-line documents and many that I will create. We may view several films that bring clarity to some of the more esoteric philosophies within the curriculum. Films that may be shown include: *Waking Life*, *What Dreams May come*, *Groundhog Day*, *The Matrix*, *A River Runs Through It*, *Minority Report*, and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*.

Unit 1—Introduction to Philosophy, Logic and Wonder

We will address the questions sent to the students over the summer: Who are you? Where did the world come from? Does God exist? Does morality exist? Upon what do we base ethics? Is there shared experience? Etc...

Unit 2—The Greeks and their World

- * Before Socrates
- * Socrates, Plato and Aristotle
- * The Cynics, Skeptics, Epicureans and Stoics

Unit 3—Christianity and Philosophy

- * Saint Augustine
- * Medieval Philosophy

Unit 4—The Beginnings of Modern Science

- * Copernicus

- * Newton
- * Machiavelli
- * Francis Bacon
- * Hobbes

Unit 5—The Great Rationalists

- * Descartes
- * Spinoza
- * Leibniz

Unit 6—The Great Empiricists

- * Locke
- * Berkeley
- * Hume
- * Burke

Unit 7—Revolutionary French Thinkers

- * Voltaire
- * Diderot
- * Rousseau

Unit 8—A Golden Century of German Philosophy

- * Kant
- * Schopenhauer
- * Some comparisons of East and West
- * Fichte
- * Schelling
- * Hegel
- * Marx
- * Nietzsche

Unit 9—Democracy and Philosophy

- * The Utilitarians (Bentham, Mill)
- * The American Pragmatists

Unit 10—20th Century Philosophy

- * Frege and Modern Logic
- * Russell and Analytic Philosophy
- * Wittgenstein and Linguistic Philosophy
- * Existentialism
- * Bergson and Recent French Philosophy
- * Popper
- * The future of Philosophy

There will be a strong emphasis on the historical setting within which each of these individuals and their philosophies take place.

IV. Course Evaluation

Class Participation	25%
Reading Questions	25%
Writing Assignments	25%
Quarterly Research Assignment	25%