

Introduction to Philosophy: Knowledge and Reality

Start date 18 November 2016

End date 20 November 2016

Venue Madingley Hall
Madingley
Cambridge

Tutor Dr James Giles

Course code 1617NRX047

Director of Programmes

Emma Jennings

**For further information on this
course, please contact**

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To book See: www.ice.cam.ac.uk or telephone 01223 746262

Tutor biography

James Giles studied at the University of British Columbia and the University of Edinburgh. He is Adjunct Professor of Psychology at Roskilde University, Denmark and has also taught at other universities in Australia, the US, Canada, Europe, and in Social Anthropology and Philosophy at the University of Cambridge. He has travelled widely through India, China, South-East Asia, and the Pacific. The overarching purpose of Giles' work is to create a philosophical psychology that explains the core features of the human condition. The unifying theme in his work is the fundamental role that human awareness, in its diverse modes, plays in that condition. Among Giles' writings are: *Sexual Attraction: The Psychology of Allure*, *The Nature of Sexual Desire*, *No Self to be Found: The Search for Personal Identity, A Study in Phenomenalism*, *The Way of Awareness: Reflections on Taoist Philosophy* (forthcoming) and *The Shell of When* (a poetry collection). He is currently working on two books: one on the psychology of infancy and one on Taoist philosophy.

Dr Giles teaches through a combination of lectures and class discussion. His courses are frequently historically based, but always with the primary focus of having students arrive at a philosophical understanding of the subject. For more information visit www.james-giles.com .

Course programme

Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00	Dinner
20:30 – 22:00	What is Philosophy?
22:00	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Descartes' rationalism
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Hume's impressions and ideas
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Hume and Kant on reasoning
18:00 – 18:30	Free
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	The problem of mind and body
21:30	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Consciousness as behaviour and brain
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	Berkeley and a world of ideas
12:45	Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Course syllabus

Aims:

1. To appreciate some of the basic principles of philosophical inquiry;
2. To give exposure to some basic ideas in metaphysics and philosophy of mind and the problem of how we can have knowledge;
3. To cultivate and refine critical thinking skills.

Content:

In this introductory course we will explore the fundamental problems that have occupied the great thinkers at least since the beginning of civilization. Starting with the nature of philosophy itself, we will try to discover the essence of the philosophical quest.

From here we consider philosophical problems concerning human understanding, knowledge, and scepticism. How is it that we come to know about the world? Are there any truths that pure reason can teach us, or must we always rely on sense experience? Does sense experience give us knowledge about an external world? Here we will examine Descartes' notion of intuition, Hume's theory of impressions and ideas, and Kant's famous idea that factual truths can be known by reason alone.

This will bring us to problems about metaphysics. We will ask, for example, about the relation between the mind and the body. Dualists like Descartes argue that the mind is radically different from the body and capable of a separate existence. Several schools of thought, however, reject this view, arguing instead that there is no difference between mind and body. Materialists, for example, say that all mental states are really just behaviours or brain states. Idealists, however, reject both dualism and materialism, arguing rather that that the apparent physical world is really just a collection of conscious ideas.

Central to philosophy is critical thinking and the search for truth. Consequently, this course will not only involve the presentation of philosophical ideas, but also critical reflection on these ideas. Students should thus come with the expectation to engage in critical discussion and evaluation of the philosophical theories being presented.

Presentation of the course:

The teaching methods will involve lectures, and class and group discussion.

As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:

1. understand some of the basic concerns of philosophy;
2. compare and contrast the ideas of some important schools and philosophers;
3. see how the problems of concern in philosophy affect each of us in our everyday lives;
4. develop their own philosophical perspective on the topics discussed;

Reading and resources list

Listed below are a number of texts that might be of interest for future reference, but do not need to be bought (or consulted) for the course.

AUTHOR	TITLE	PUBLISHER, DATE & ISBN:
JERRY M. GILL (EDITOR) [A GOOD ANTHOLOGY]	<i>The Enduring Questions: Classical and Contemporary Voices (7th edition)</i>	Wadsworth, 2002, ISBN: 0155062867
RENE DESCARTES	<i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i>	Oxford U. P. 2008, 978-0192806963
DAVID HUME	<i>Treatise on Human Nature (Book I)</i>	Dover, 2001, 0486432505
GEORGE BERKELEY	<i>The Principles of Human Knowledge</i>	Wilder Publications, 2009, 978-1604596229
IMMANUEL KANT	<i>Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics</i>	Hackett, 2002, 0872205932
BERTRAND RUSSELL	<i>The Problems of Philosophy</i>	Oxford U. P., 2001, 0192854232
GILBERT RYLE	<i>The Concept of Mind</i>	Penguin, 2000, 0141182172

Note Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

Information correct as of: 16 September 2016