Philosophy 10100
Introduction to Philosophy
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What is philosophy?

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'Philosophy' comes from the ancient Greek 'φιλοσοφία' — philosophia.
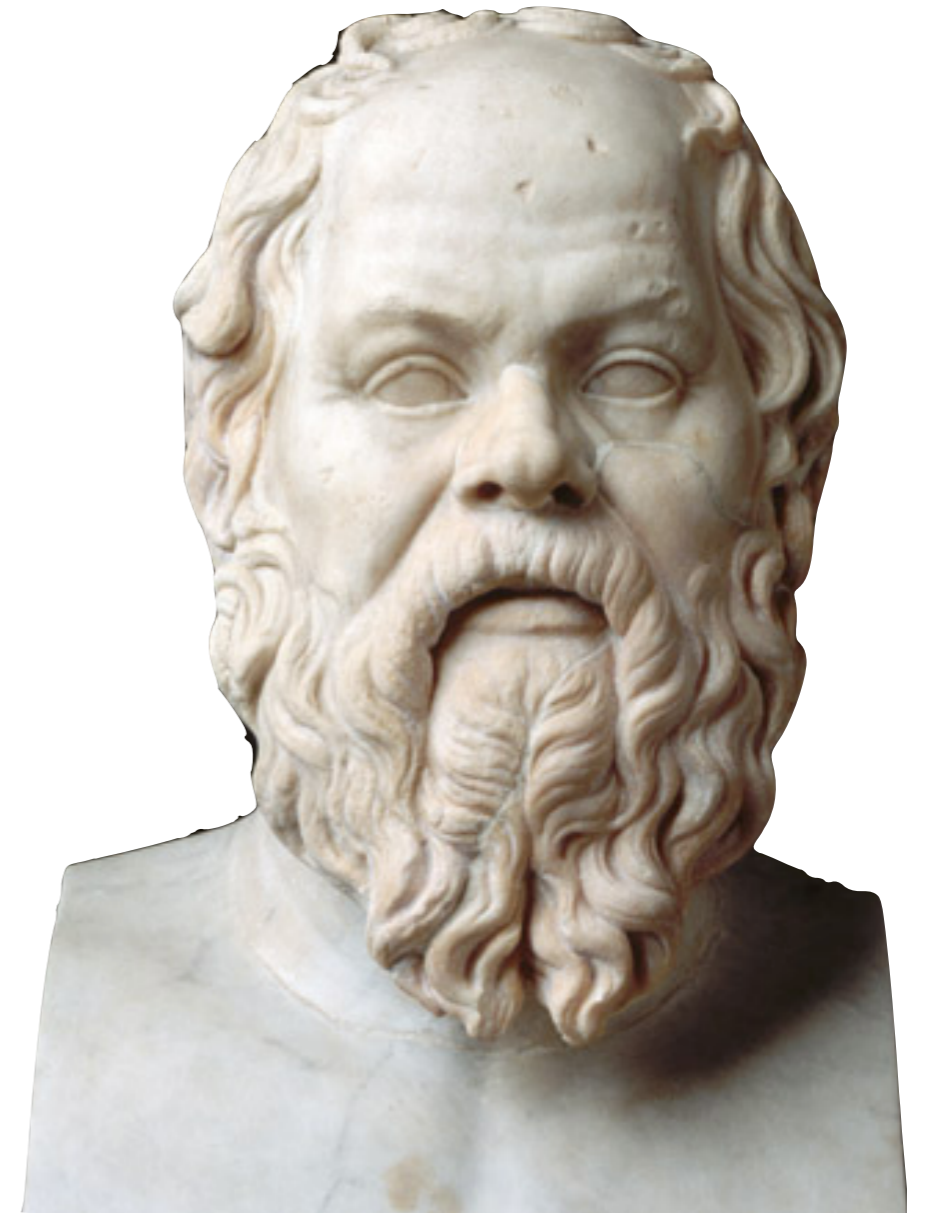
philosophia = philo + sophia
philo = love
sophia = wisdom

What does it mean to love wisdom?

Socrates, who was in some ways the first philosopher, contrasted lovers of wisdom with two other sorts of people.

The first were people who formed belief on the basis of **custom** or **tradition** rather than argument.

The second were **rhetoricians** and **sophists** who used arguments, not to form true beliefs, but to achieve some other end.

Philosophy, by contrast, is the attempt to form true beliefs about the world on the basis of the application of reason.

Can you think of any other academic departments at Notre Dame that might describe themselves in this way?

This is no accident. All of these other fields — the natural sciences (like physics, chemistry, and biology), the social and human sciences (like economics, sociology, psychology, and political science), and others — were once part of philosophy.

Philosophy is thus, in one sense, the leftovers: it consists of the questions for which we have failed to devise any subject-specific scientific method.

We can also give a more positive characterization. The sciences have particular methods which are designed to deliver answers to some limited range of questions. Philosophy is the completely unrestricted discipline: it is the attempt to use our reason to answer any question whatever about reality. As we will see, philosophy so understood is not really an alternative to scientific investigation of the world: it is an attempt to understand the nature of reality which incorporates rather than opposes the results of the sciences.

In this class, we'll be focusing on four such questions.

Is there a God?

What am I?

What is real?

What must I do?

In this class, we'll be focusing on four such questions.

The main aim of the course will not be for you to learn what other people have thought about these questions — though you will do that too. The main aim of the course will be for you to develop your own views on these questions. You will be evaluated mainly on the basis of your ability to defend those views by argument.

And to do that, you will have to learn a bit about what arguments are, and what makes arguments good or bad. I will come back to that in a bit. But first, some nuts and bolts about how the course will work.

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philosophy

Philosophy 10100: Introduction to Philosophy

Course description	Syllabus
Grading	Honor code
How to access readings	Writing philosophy papers
Philosophy on the internet	Philosophy at Notre Dame
Contact	TA's

Does God exist?

Tu 1/13	What is philosophy?	
Th 1/15	A first cause	Aquinas' 2nd way
Tu 1/20	A necessary being	Leibniz, "On the ultimate origination of things"
Th 1/22	The designer of the universe	Aquinas' 5th way Paley, *Natural Theology* (excerpt) Darwin, "Organs of extreme perfection and complication" Rees, *Just Six Numbers* (excerpt)
Tu 1/27	God & evil	Mackie, "Evil and omnipotence"
Th 1/29	Evil & freedom	van Inwagen, "The problem of evil" *extra readings* ↓
Tu 2/3	The wager	Pascal, "The wager"

What am I?

Th 2/5	An immaterial thing *[rough draft due]*	Descartes, *Meditations* (excerpt) Jackson, "What Mary didn't know" van Inwagen, "Dualism and physicalism" (excerpt)
Tu 2/10	A material thing	van Inwagen, "Dualism and personal identity" (excerpt)
Th 2/12	A psychological thing	Locke, "Of identity and diversity" (excerpt) Reid, "Of Mr. Locke's account of our personal identity" Williams, "The self and the future" (excerpt)
Tu 2/17	Not really a thing	Parfit, "Divided minds and the nature of persons"

If the main thing you are going to be asked to do in this class is to argue for your views, and respond to arguments against your views, you need to know something about arguments. The study of arguments is **logic**.

A first step in grasping the basic principles of logic is the mastery of four (semi-)technical terms.

Arguments consist of one or more premises and a conclusion. The conclusion is what you are arguing for; the premises are the (alleged) basis for that conclusion.

The two key terms used in the evaluation of an argument are valid and sound.

an argument is **valid** when it is impossible for its premises to be true and its conclusion false

an argument is **sound** when it is valid and has all true premises

Validity and soundness are the two most fundamental concepts for you to grasp in this course. Let's illustrate them by considering some example arguments.

an argument is **valid** when it is impossible for its premises to be true and its conclusion false

an argument is **sound** when it is valid and has all true premises

1. All men are mortal.
2. Brian Kelly is a man.

C. Brian Kelly is mortal.

an argument is **valid** when it is impossible for its premises to be true and its conclusion false

an argument is **sound** when it is valid and has all true premises

1. All men are mortal.
2. Brian Kelly is mortal.

C. Brian Kelly is a man.

One way to show that this argument is invalid is to focus on its form.

1. All **men** are **mortal.**
2. **Brian Kelly** is **mortal.**

C. **Brian Kelly** is a **man.**

One way to show that this argument is invalid is to focus on its **form**.

You'll notice that certain words in the argument are repeated.

To get the form of the argument, replace every repeated expression of this sort with a 'dummy letter' — sort of like a variable. That gives us the following form of the argument:

1. All F's are G.
2. x is G

C. x is F.

Can you think of any argument of this form which has true premises and a false conclusion?

This shows that this form of argument is invalid — which in turn is good evidence that the argument at the top, which is of this form, is invalid.

an argument is **valid** when it is impossible for its premises to be true and its conclusion false

an argument is **sound** when it is valid and has all true premises

1. Either Notre Dame will win the National Title in 2015 or USC will.
2. USC will not win the National Title in 2015.

C. Notre Dame will win the National Title in 2015.

What is the form of this argument? Is every argument of this form valid?

an argument is **valid** when it is impossible for its premises to be true and its conclusion false

an argument is **sound** when it is valid and has all true premises

Here's a slightly trickier one:

1. If the moon is made of cheese, then it will soon become moldy.
2. The moon will not soon become moldy.

C. The moon is not made of cheese.

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1

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1. If the moon is made of cheese, then it will soon become moldy.
2. The moon will not soon become moldy.

C. The moon is not made of cheese.

What is the form of this argument?

One way to put it would be as follows:

1. If P then Q.
2. Not Q.
_____
C. Not P.

Is every argument of this form valid?

If an argument is valid, can it have a false conclusion?

If an argument is sound, can it have a false conclusion?

If an argument is invalid, can it have a true conclusion?

If an argument is unsound, can it have a true conclusion?

Mastering the concepts of validity and soundness gives you way to talk about, and criticize, arguments.

Suppose that you are presented with an argument for some conclusion that you think is false, and you want to criticize that argument. The most straightforward way to do that would be to show that the argument is unsound.

Soundness = validity + true premises. So to show that an argument is unsound, you can do one of two things: show that it is invalid, or show that it has a false premise.

But there are other ways to criticize an argument as well.

Here's an argument:

1. The number of beer bottles on Notre Dame's campus right now is odd.
   _____
C. The number of beer bottles on Notre Dame's campus right now is not 496.

There's a pretty clear sense in which, if I gave this argument right now, it would be a bad argument. But it is valid; and you can hardly claim that it is unsound, since you do not know whether the premise is true or false.

The right criticism of this argument seems to be, not that it has a false premise, but that we have no reason to believe that the premise is true — and hence no reason to believe that the argument is sound.

A first step in thinking clearly about arguments, and learning how to talk clearly about arguments, is distinguishing between things you can say about individual premises and conclusions, on the one hand, and whole arguments, on the other.

One can sensibly say that a premise or conclusion is true, or false, or unsupported by the evidence. But it makes no sense to say any of these things about arguments.

By contrast, one can sensibly say that an argument is sound or unsound, valid or invalid. But it makes no sense to say any of these things about individual premises or conclusions.

You will talk some more about validity and soundness in your discussion sections this Friday. Next time we will put these tools to work discussing an important attempt to answer the first question which will occupy us in this course:

Is there a God?