

Invitation to Philosophy

Fall 2022

Instructor: Prof. PhDr. František Novosád, CSc.,

Language: English

Course Description:

This course will introduce you to the significant problems and methods of philosophy with an accent on anthropology and the theory of culture. Philosophy is on one side about asking /as if for the first time/"big questions" concerning our Being-in-the-World, the meaning of our life, and so on..... On the other side, philosophy requires familiarity with an intricate variety of basic concepts developed by prominent thinkers in world history.

During the semester, we will read selected parts of the following three books. The first is the book **An Essay on Man** written by **Ernest Cassirer**, the eminent philosopher of 20. Century. In a friendly way, this book combines systematic and historical approaches to the basic models of philosophical thinking. The reading of Cassirer's text we will connect with the reading of the book **A Philosopher looks at Human Beings** written by Michael Ruse. Philosophers should read slowly (but thoroughly), and therefore we will read and discuss *all in all* just these two books during the whole semester. The third book is a worldwide bestseller written by **Yuval Noah Harari: Sapiens** A Brief History of Mankind. Copies of Cassirer's, Ruse's, and Harari's books are at disposal via Moodle

Main Topics of course:

Philosophy: basic problems, concepts, and disciplines

Anthropology: What does it mean to be a human being?

From animal reactions to human responses

The human world of space and time

Facts and Ideals

The definition of Man in terms of human culture

Myth and religion

Language

Art

History

Science

Symbol and Existence: E. Cassirer in conflict with M. Heidegger

The course **Introduction to Philosophy** aims to:

- Provide you with an understanding of key concepts, theories, and debates in selected areas of philosophy.
- Develop critical judgment in your understanding and interpretation of any texts and arguments.
- Demonstrate different perspectives within philosophy and teach you to evaluate them critically
- Develop your critical reasoning and argument capacities.

Desired learning outcomes

On completion of this course, you will have acquired knowledge and understanding of:

- What it means to approach an issue philosophically
- How to analyze and construct philosophical arguments
- The critical approaches to philosophy, and the contribution of different theorists to philosophical ideas and thinking
- What constitutes a rational approach to philosophy and of the differences between commonsense and theoretical explanations of human behavior

On completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Understand and critically evaluate primary and secondary literature (including commentary in recorded audio format) and formulate your views about the problems discussed
- Plan and execute philosophical writing at the appropriate level, including the ability to expose some arguments and counterarguments into a coherent essay
- Define and use key terms and concepts in philosophy
- Explore hypotheses and construct arguments, with appropriate use of philosophical concepts, theories, and evidence
- Understand and evaluate the range of research strategies and methods used by philosophers.

Practical and professional skills

On completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Understand the structure of complex philosophical problems and some of the strategies that philosophers have used to solve these problems
- Read carefully and critically texts drawn from a variety of historical periods and traditions with a sensitivity to context and, where needed, an understanding of some specialized philosophical terminology
- Be ready to view unfamiliar ideas with an open mind and a willingness to change one's mind when appropriate.

Evaluation

30% - 2 short essays (between 500 – 1000 words)

40% - several non-signaled in-class-tests

30% - active participation

Passing a course assumes that the student was not absent for more than four sessions.