

**Course Title:** Honors Philosophy Seminar (HP) \*

**Grade Level:** 11-12

**Length of Course:** Two semesters

**Prerequisites:** Teacher recommendation

**Credit:** 5 per semester

**\*Name Change Proposal:**

The University of California has placed several restrictions on courses before they can earn students extra grade points of being honors courses. One major stumbling block for Ways of Knowing has been the requirement that a similar, less intense course, be offered as a college prep course. Given our school population, it would seem highly unlikely that we could enroll another group of students in a philosophy class and separate the best of the students for an honors philosophy class. If the University of California read the curriculum and understood the expectations for students in Ways of Knowing, it would seem that they could understand the intensity and high level of intellectual involvement students have in the course is what their honors expectation is all about!

Another problem for us is the identity which department a course that surveys all academic departments belongs in. By calling it the philosophy of learning, we put it in the Social Studies Department, but that's a mere convenience. Social Studies, meanwhile, is not eager to surrender one of their two honors credits from the University of California to make Ways of Knowing acceptable to UC.

The course title -- Ways of Knowing -- has proved a mystery to some college admissions offices when they evaluate student transcripts. It is hoped that they will understand the new course title immediately.

We would like to change the name of Ways of Knowing to Honors Philosophy Seminar. We still want everyone to know that it is an honors class even though the University of California will insist on its being labeled a college prep (P) course. In our course offerings, the course will continue to be called an honors course and to carry its subtitle (Ways of Knowing) because it has that identity with the students and parents. This title change is for the purposes of transcripts only.

**Course Description:**

The Honors Philosophy Seminar (HP) class is intended to be an interactive overview of the presuppositions upon which the major academic disciplines rest. Its purposes are to stimulate reflection upon the knowledge and experience students already possess, to make explicit the concepts and vocabulary used in particular areas of knowledge or fields of study, and to encourage students to acquire a critical awareness of what they and others know by analyzing concepts and arguments as well as the basis for value judgments that all people have to make. The students will read from selections, essays, and books about: (1) the role of language and thought in knowledge, (2) the requirements of logical rigor to knowledge, (3) the systems of knowledge in mathematics, natural sciences, human sciences, and history, (4) value judgments and knowledge in moral, political, and aesthetic philosophy, and (5) the relationship of knowledge and truth. Students will be required to do honors level reading and writing as well as discussion and oral presentations. It is expected that the spirit of inquiry that students must have

to succeed in this course will influence the ways of appreciating knowledge gained in other courses in the curriculum. Students who enroll in the course must realize that because it is an honors course, any student performing at the C level or lower will not earn credit for the course.

### **Goal Statements;**

The goals of the Honors Philosophy Seminar are to lead the students to:

- Engage in reflection on and the questioning of the bases of knowledge and experience.
- Be aware of subjective and ideological biases.
- Develop a personal mode of thought based on critical examination of evidence and expressed in rational arguments.

Because this course combines so many areas of knowledge, each teacher who teaches it must bring a wide range, although limited, level of expertise to the curriculum. Each teacher may approach the subject matter differently, but the following outline is intended as a model. It is, perhaps, emphasizing language and political philosophy more than other areas whereas another teacher might stress aesthetics and natural sciences more. It is expected that any teacher will cover all the areas of study to a significant degree. Basically, seminar students should be able to:

From their study of language and logic -

1. Define language and its constituents, such as the word and the sentence.
2. Explain the differences between conventional and natural signs.
3. Know some of the types of ambiguity arising from the use of language and the distinction between vagueness and ambiguity.
4. Know some of the important functions of language, such as informative, expressive, imperative, performative, ritualistic, and metaphorical functions.
5. Know the difference in the uses of language, such as statements and propositions, types and WOKens, denotation and connotation, literal and figurative meanings.
6. Explain the referential, ideational, behavioral, and contextual utilitarian theories of meaning.
7. Know the formal, informal, colloquial, and dialectical levels of usage.
8. Explain the differences between lexical, stipulative, and ostensive definitions.
9. Define and use syllogisms (major and minor premises and conclusions).
10. Explain the difference between truth and validity in an argument.
11. Know the difference between inductive and deductive reasoning.
12. Know what is meant by the Law of Identity, the Law of Non-contradiction, and the Law of the Excluded Middle.
13. Know the differences between analytic, synthetic, a priori, and a posteriori proposition.
14. Know what is meant by categorical, conditional, and analytic statements.
15. Understand the various problems with facts and verifiability of evidence.
16. Know and discern between major fallacies in logic, such as unqualified generalization, false analogy, false appeal of authority, post hoc, non sequitur, argumentum ad hominem.

From their study of mathematics -

1. Explain the ways mathematics is analogous to language and its problems of explanation.
2. Know what is meant by Platonism, logicism, formalism, intuitionism, and axiomatization in mathematical theory.

3. Explain the relationship between mathematics and a priori knowledge and mathematics and logic.
4. Explain the implications of different geometries to mathematical theory and to our understanding of truth and the empirical world.

From their study of natural science-

1. Define what is meant by science.
2. Explain why the natural sciences are regarded today as paradigms of knowledge.
3. Know some of the main features of the scientific method, such as inference, observation, compatibility and consistency with other data, the use of mathematics to solve problems, and the role of revision in scientific theory.
4. Explain the effect of natural science and its achievements on the way we look at reality today and contrast this view with the pre-scientific point of view.
5. Know the limits of the truth science uses.

From their study of human sciences and history -

1. Know the difference between natural and human sciences in terms of subject matter, approaches, methods, aims, and canons of proof.
2. Assess the claims of truth and objectivity made by the human sciences.
3. Explain the strengths and weaknesses of the explanatory power of the human sciences to analyze the human condition as compared to the literary analysis.
4. Explain the limits of how we know and use the past.
5. Know the difference between chronology and interpretive history.
6. Explain the problems of causation in historical interpretation.
7. Understand some of the difficulties of using history to explain the present.
8. Know what is meant by linear, cyclic, and chaos theories of history.

From their study of morality and political theory -

1. Understand ontological and teleological moral theories.
2. Know the arguments for moral absolutism and moral relativism.
3. Explain some of the arguments for and against: moral skepticism, moral hedonism, moral nihilism, moral egoism, moral utilitarianism, and the categorical imperative.
4. Explain the influence of tradition and ideology on political life.
5. Understand and evaluate balance and distribution of power in such political forms as fascism, communism, socialism, and democracy.
6. Explain the relationship between political and moral judgments.

From their study of aesthetics -

1. Understand and evaluate the arguments for aesthetic subjectivism and aesthetic objectivism.
2. Explain the classifications of the major arts.

3. Understand some of the major movements in art history, such as Classicism, Impressionism, Expressionism, Abstract Expressionism.
4. Assess the significance of the arts in life.

From their study of knowledge and truth -

1. Explain the differences between belief and knowledge.
2. Explain the difference between knowledge of acquaintance and knowledge of description.
3. Explain the differences among correspondence, coherence, and pragmatic theories of truth.
4. Know the difference between rational and empirical approaches to knowledge.
5. Know the differences among realism, idealism, and phenomenalism.
6. Evaluate the other sources of knowledge: testimony, intuition, revelation, faith, mysticism.

From their oral and written studies --

1. Define and use essential philosophical terminology.
2. Complete several writing assignments, such as:
  - a. A philosophical critique of an author's position.
  - b. The identification of logical inconsistencies and fallacies in a philosophical argument.
  - c. The identification of premises and objections that might be raised against them in a philosophical argument.
  - d. A speculative essay on a philosophical topic.
  - e. The reconciliation of two or more divergent points of philosophical arguments.
  - f. A Socratic dialogue in which two or more opposing viewpoints are debated.
  - g. Research papers on different aspects of the course content.
3. Write coherent, detailed, and effective timed essays during class periods.
4. Participate in debates on philosophical issues.
5. Prepare an oral research project on an assigned topic.
6. Write clear, organized, and detailed notes.

**Scope and Sequence:**

Concerning the role of language and thought in knowledge -

1. The definitions of language
2. The theories of meaning:
  - a. referential
  - b. ideational
  - c. behavioral
  - d. contextual-utilitarian
3. Denotation and connotation
4. Linguistic signs

- a. icons
- b. indexes
- c. symbols

5. Language as a symbolic system

6. Semantics

- a. Levels of abstraction
- b. Cognitive and emotive meanings
- c. Vagueness and ambiguity
- d. Natural and conventional signs
- e. Abstraction and stratification of language
- f. Verification
- g. Cognitive; expressive, and behavioral uses of language

7. Requirements of logical rigor in language

a. Syllogistic reasoning

- Propositions and statements
- Premises and conclusions
- Truth
- Validity
- Law of Contradiction
- Rules for form syllogisms
- False syllogisms

b. Logical fallacies

- Hasty generalization
- False dilemma
- False analogy
- Improper appeal to authority
- Post hoc ergo propter hoc
- Non sequitur

c. Differences between inductive and deductive logic

- Truth and validity in induction
- The inductive leap

Concerning systems of knowledge--

1. Mathematics

- a. Mathematics as a language
- b. Mathematics, a priori knowledge, and logic
- c. Theories of mathematics
  - Nominalism
  - Conceptualism-intuitionism
  - Realism
- d. Non-Euclidian geometries and their implications
- e. Mathematics in the sciences

## 2. Natural sciences

- a. Definition of science
- b. Elements of the scientific method
  - Inference
  - Observation
  - Insight
  - Isolation of relevant phenomena
  - Hypotheses
  - Experimentation
  - Compatibility and consistency of data
  - Use of mathematics
  - Role of revision
- c. Scientific paradigms and their conflicts
- d. Contrasts between pre-scientific and scientific views of reality
- e. Effects of science on philosophy and culture

## 3. Human sciences

- a. Definition and scope of human sciences
- b. Major differences between human sciences and natural sciences.
  - Methods and techniques
  - Contexts of discovery
  - Contexts of justification and rationalization
  - Types and validity of evidence
  - Validity of inferences and extrapolation
  - Use of statistics
  - Formulation and verifiability of laws
- c. Assessments of formulations
  - Theoretical basis
  - Clarity
  - Power
  - Simplicity

## 4. History

- a. Definition of history
- b. History and chronology
- c. History and interpretation of history
- d. Theories of history
  - Linear
  - Cyclic
  - Chaos
- e. Interpretations of history
  - Metaphysical
  - Empirical
  - Religious
- f. Purposes of history

Concerning value judgments and knowledge --

1. Moral judgment

- a. Definitions of morality
- b. Moral absolutism
  - \* Theological morality
    - Egoism
    - Hedonism
    - Utilitarianism
  - \* Ontological/ intrinsic morality
    - Natural law
    - The Categorical Imperative
    - The Golden Rule
- c. Moral relativism
- d. Nihilism

2. Political judgment

- a. A definition of politics
- b. Loci, balance, and distribution of power in political-economic systems, such as:
  - Republicanism
  - Democracy
  - Socialism
  - Communism
  - Fascism
  - Laissez-faire capitalism
  - Welfare capitalism
- c. Rights, obligations, and privileges of majorities and minorities in a political system
- d. Approaches to the study of political reality.
  - Speculative-theoretical
  - Positivist- behavioral
    - \*Statistical models
    - \*Systems analyses
- e. Some major political theorists, such as:

|       |           |             |        |
|-------|-----------|-------------|--------|
| Plato | Aristotle | Machiavelli | Hobbes |
| Locke | Rousseau  | Mill        | Marx   |

f. Politics and morality

- Repressive and benevolent despotism
- Moral approaches
- Machiavellianism
- Utilitarianism

3. Aesthetic judgment
  - a. Definition of aesthetics
  - b. The concept of beauty
  - c. The classification and characteristics of the major art forms
    - Music
    - Literature
    - Painting
    - Sculpture
    - Architecture
    - Drama
    - Dance
    - Film
  - d. Aesthetic subjectivism and objectivism
  - e. Aesthetic criteria for evaluating the arts
    - Formalistic theory of art
    - Expressionistic theory of art
    - Symbolistic theory of art
  - f. Aesthetic theory
    - Mimetic
    - Hedonistic
    - Revelatory
    - The roles of play, escape, and illusion
    - Expressive and intuitional purposes
    - Communicative purposes
    - Psychic distance
    - Empathy
    - Heightened experience
  - g. The Artistic Movements
    - Classicism
    - Romanesque
    - Gothic
    - Renaissance
    - Baroque
    - Romanticism
    - Impressionism
    - Expressionism
    - Various Modern Movements
  - h. The relationship between art and truth
  - i. The relationship between art and morality
  - j. The value of arts in leading a full life

Concerning knowledge and truth –

1. Definition of knowledge
2. Differences between knowledge and belief
3. Difference between perceptions and reality

a. Dualism

b. Monism

- Native realism
- Representative realism
- Phenomenalism
- Subjective idealism
- Objective idealism

4. Arguments for and against skepticism

5. Sources of knowledge

a. Empiricism

- Scientific law and explanations
- Problems of induction
- Verifiability and meaning

b. Rationalism

c. Authority

d. Intuition

e. Faith

f. Revelation

g. Mysticism

6. Knowledge and Memory

7. Truth

a. Correspondence theory

b. Coherence theory

c. Pragmatic theory

8. Absolute versus relative nature of knowledge and truth

### **Assessment Strategies:**

1. All units of study will conclude with a written examination modeled after the International Baccalaureate Examination questions. Samples might be:

Language: “Can one plausibly agree that people who speak different languages can live in different worlds?”

Mathematics: “What is meant by identifying mathematics as a language?”

Logic: “Logic can provide us with a set of rules to evaluate the validity of an argument, but it does not, in itself, determine truth. Therefore, why should we bother with logic at all?”

Natural Science: ““When you look for truth, do not use your eyes, for the truth lies inside yourself.” “What would a believer in the scientific method argue in reaction to a person who made a statement like that?”

Aesthetics: “What more can a work of art be than an expression of feeling?”

2. Objective tests such as: Multiple choice, true-false, and fill-in which require the recall of information or the application of knowledge or ideas.
3. Essays of various lengths done after completing research projects.

4. Oral presentations, debates, panel discussions, requiring students to recall and organize information, interpret ideas, and express themselves verbally.
5. Quizzes, both announced and unannounced.
6. Class discussions measuring the quality and quantity of the student's contributions.
7. Projects, either individual or group culminating in a report.
8. Individual and collaborative efforts at graphic, musical, dance, dramatic, video presentations of ideas.

### **Skills to be Mastered:**

It is presumed that the course objectives require certain skills to be mastered. For instance, students must be able to:

1. Read sophisticated honors material appropriate for the eleventh and twelfth grades.
2. Write clear, coherent, relevant, substantive compositions both as in-class or take-home projects.
3. Speak to the class with proper projection, conviction, thoroughness, and poise.
4. Participate in class discussions in a supportive and contributory manner.

If a student has these basic skills, the course objectives can easily translate into outcomes anticipated. For instance, students will be able to:

1. Define language.
2. Distinguish the differences between conventional and natural signs.

And so forth.....

### **Instructional Strategies:**

Depending upon the teacher's style and class size, it is expected that teachers will use:

- Guided discussions
- Lectures
- Cooperative learning and small group activities
- In-class writing exercises
- Outside of class writing assignments
- Teacher-made or duplicated materials, such as:
  - Excerpts from selected books and documents
  - Newspaper and magazine articles
  - Study guides
  - Worksheets
- Supervised independent work during class
- Student presentations, either oral or written, by individuals or groups
- Examinations, written and oral, objective and subjective
- Audiovisual materials such as film, video, laser disk, slides, music
- Debates, round-table discussions
- Dramatic readings
- Individual assistance during Study Hall or other non-class time
- Library research

- Outside speakers
- Classroom presentations of various artistic performances
- Graphics projects of various kinds
- Field trips

### **Instructional Materials:**

#### **CORE READINGS**

Abel: *Man is the Measure*

Olen: *Persons and Their World*

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS**

Ackerman: *A Natural History of the Senses*

Bach: *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*

Barnet: *A Short Guide to Writing about Art*

Battin: *Puzzled about Art*

Bilenky: *Women's Ways of Knowing*

Bode: *First You Have to Row a Little Boat*

Boorstin: *The Discoverers: A History of Man's Search to Know His World and Himself*

Boyer: *A History of Mathematics*

Briggs: *Fractals: The Patterns of Chaos*

Bronowski: *The Ascent of Man*

Bronowski: *The Common Sense of Science*

Burgess: *A Mouthful of Air*

Burke: *The Day the Universe Changed*

Ceram: *Gods, Graves, and Scholars*

J Clark: *Civilization*

Collingwood: *The Idea of History*

Coontz: *The Way We Really Are*

Dalai Lama: *A Flash of Lightning in the Dark of Night*

Dillard: *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*

Dillard: *The Writing Life*

Dray: *Philosophy of History*

Durant: *The Lessons of History*

Easwarani: *Meditation*

Feynman: *Surely, You're Joking, Mr. Feynman*

Fraser: *The Bell Curve Wars*

Funderbark and Thobaben: *Political Ideologies*

Fussell: *Class*

Gleick: *Chaos: Making a New Science*

Glovich: *How We Know What Isn't So*

Goidwater/Treves: *Artists on Art*

Gombrich: *Art and Illusion*

Gould: *Time's Arrow, Time's Cycle*

Hahn: *Zen Keys*

Hawking: *A Brief History of Time*

Hayakawa: *Language in Thought and Action*

Herrstein and Muray: *The Bell Curve*  
Hirsch: *Transforming Vision: Writers on Art*  
Hoff: *The Tao of Pooh*  
Holmes: *Basic Moral Philosophy*  
Horowitz: *More Than You See: A Guide to Art*  
Kahane: *Logic and Contemporary Rhetoric*  
King: *The Art of Mathematics*  
Kline: *Mathematics and the Search for Knowledge*  
Lao Tzu: *Tao Te Ching (trans. Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English)*  
Lopez: *Crossing Open Ground*  
Marius: *A Short Guide to Writing about History*  
Mayfield: *Thinking for Yourself*  
Moore: *Science as a Way of Knowing*  
Moore and Parker *Critical Thinking*  
Morrison: *Powers of Ten*  
Muller *The Uses of the Past*  
Nagel: *What Does it All Mean?*  
Palmer: *Does the Center Hold? (An Introduction to Western Philosophy)*  
Pirsig: *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*  
Parsons: *How We Understand Art*  
Paulos: *Innumeracy*  
Peterson: *The Mathematical Tourist*  
Porush: *A Short Guide to Writing about Science*  
Rawls: *A Theory of Justice*  
Reps: *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones*  
Ruggiero: *Beyond Feelings: A Guide to Critical Thinking*  
Sachs: *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*  
Sagan: *A Demon-Haunted World*  
Shekerjian: *Uncommon Genius*  
Sheppard: *Aesthetics -- An Introduction to the Philosophy of Art*  
Schick and Vaughn: *How To Think About Weird Things*  
Starr: *Music and the Mind*  
Starr Solitude: *A Return to the Self*  
Strickland: *The Annotated Mona Lisa*  
Tannen: *You Just Don't Understand*  
Tuchman: *Practicing History*  
Welty: *One Writer's Beginnings*  
Weiner *The Beak of the Finch*  
Winks: *The Historian as Detective*

### **Videos, Recordings, and Slides**

Ambrose Video: Jacob Bronowski's, The Ascent of Man Series especially Program 11:  
"Knowledge or Certainty"

Annenberg Collection:

Discovering Psychology especially "Sensation and Perception" "Cognitive Processes "Sex and Gender" Ethics in America especially "Do Unto Others" "Truth on Trial"

Astronomical Society of the Pacific:

The Films of Charles and Ray Eames, Vol. 1, "Powers of Ten" from the COSMOS series --  
"Creation of The Universe"

Intellimation: Unseen Worlds: Imaging from Atoms to Outer Space

Karol Media: The Challenge of the Unknown and The Search for Solutions

Knowledge Products: Giants of Philosophy (Readings by Charlton Heston)

National Geographic: The Invisible World --Vestron Video

Signals: Art of the Western World

Kenneth Clark's Civilisation

James Burke's Connections 2

Project Mathematics (CalTech): The Theorem of Pythagoras

Teaching Company: The Superstar Teacher's Series

Great Minds of Western Philosophy Series

Part 3: The Enlightenment and Its Critics

Part 4: Philosophy and the Epoch of Ideology

The Origin of the Modern Mind

Existentialism and the Meaning of Life

Triton Pictures: Mindwalk: A Film for the Passionate Thinker

Video Catalog: The Soul of the Universe, The Evolving Soul, Silicon Soul

Wide World Publishing: What Do You See? Optical illusion slides