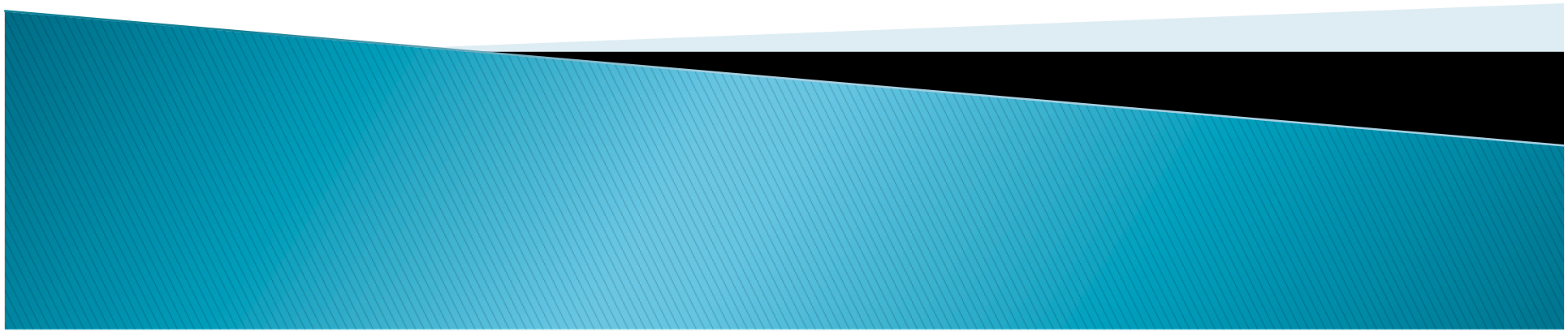
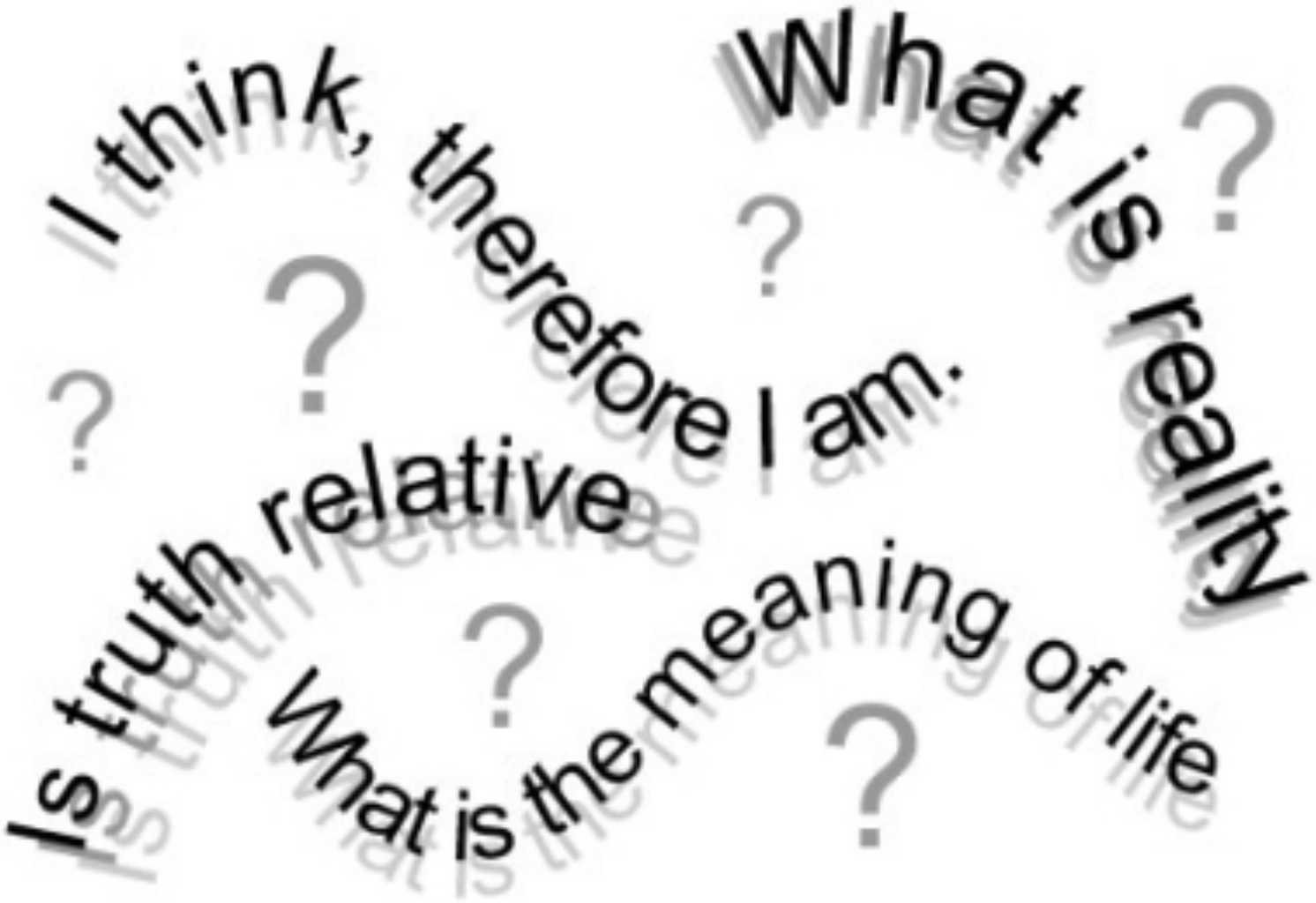
What is Philosophy?

Ethics + Philosophy 2101

Prepared by Jill Kennedy, O'Donel




I think, therefore I am.
What is reality
Is truth relative
What is the meaning of life

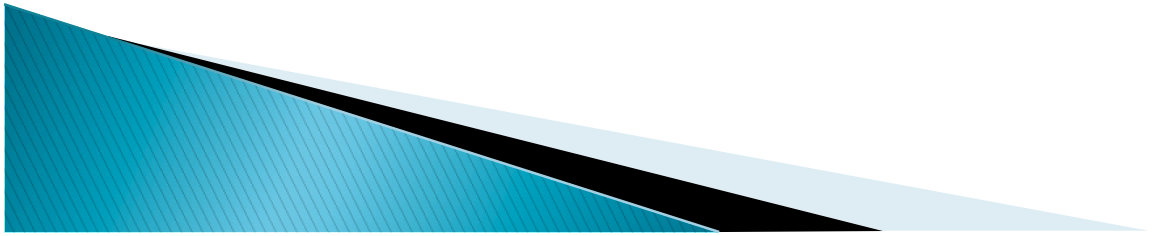
VIDEO

With help from the 5 minute Philosopher

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfYw9OqD8YA

What is Philosophy?

- Philosophy is **EVERYWHERE** – philosophy of business, philosophy of dating etc.
- Philosophy is the act of **REFLECTIVE THOUGHT, QUESTIONING** and **WONDER.**
- It is the search of **TRUTH**
- Philosophy is the search for **WHAT IS RIGHT.**

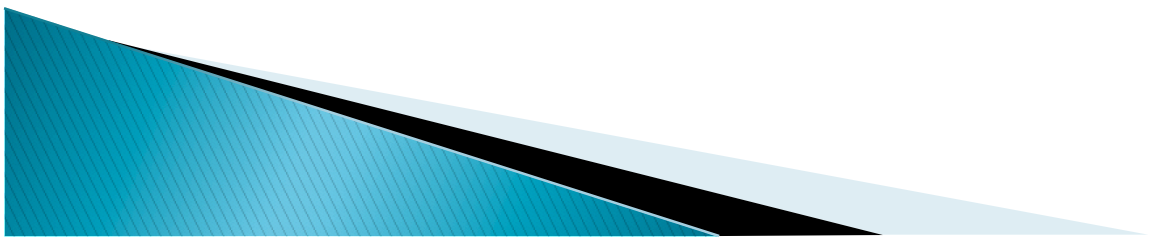


What is Philosophy?

- Comes from Greek word *philo* meaning **"to love"** and *sophia* meaning "**wisdom**" – an open-minded search for truth.
- A philosopher is not necessarily wise but wants to *become* wise
- Anyone can be a philosopher!
- The ability to wonder is the distinguishing trait of philosophers.

Have You Ever Wondered…

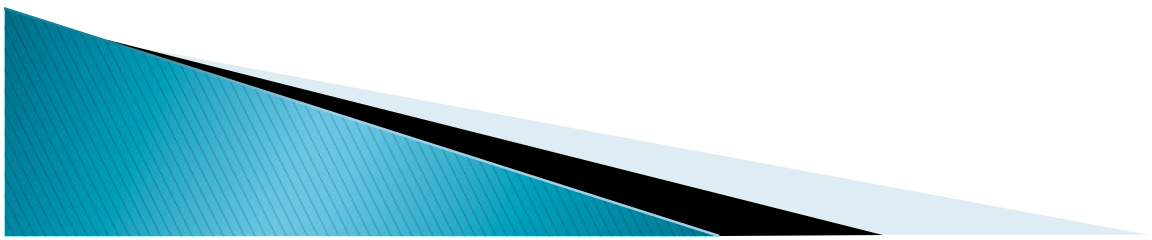
- What is the meaning of life?
- What is the meaning of love?
- Is it wrong to tell this lie?
- Does evil exist?
- Does God exist?
- Are people innately good?
- Can I be sure I'm not dreaming right now?
- Am I a good person?
- What does it mean to be a "good person"?
- Where did the universe come from?
- What makes one piece of art beautiful and another a piece garbage?



EVERYONE IS LISTENING TO CRAPPY MUSIC AT COACHELLA
AND I'M JUST SITTING HERE WAITING FOR A HARD ROCK CONCERT
memegenerator.net

What is Philosophy?

- Whether you've thought or wondered about these questions or not, congratulations! You're about to!
- Philosophy is all about **thinking about thinking**
- It's not about the answers: **it's about thinking about the questions!**
- Philosophy provides an opportunity to evaluate, discuss and reflect on questions – hopefully leading to answers.

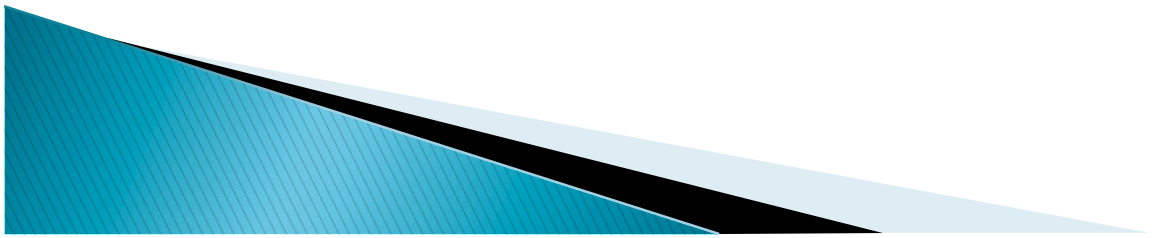


How Do We Define Philosophy?

- There is no concrete definition of philosophy.
- The shortest definition came from contemporary philosopher Anthony Quinton who wrote:

'philosophy is thinking about thinking'

– Anthony Quinton



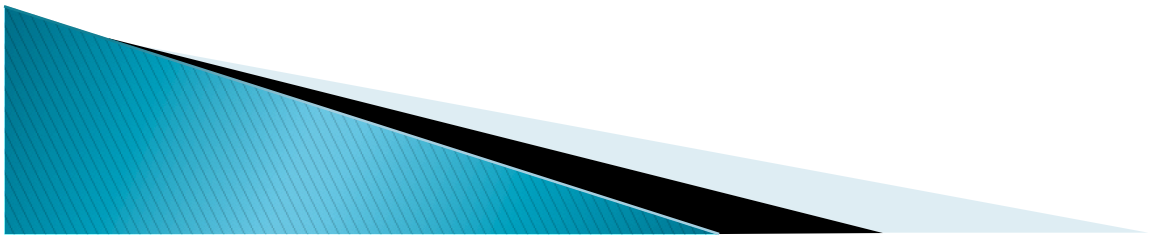
“At least we’ve got all the questions…”

When Socrates met Plato.

“Thinking about thinking”

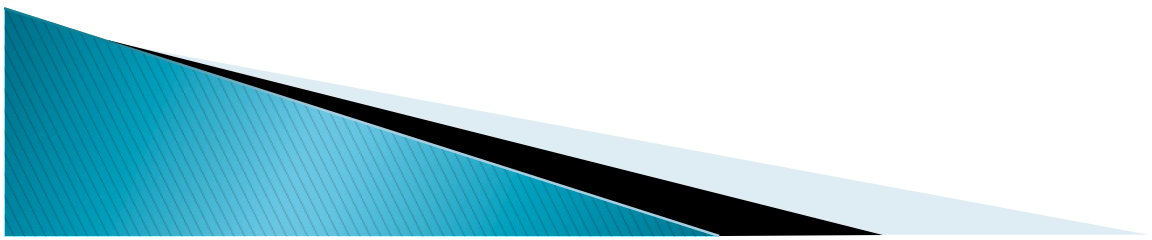
- Invented by ancient Greeks to answer the big questions about:
  - Nature of reality
  - Quest for happiness
  - How to build a good society
  - What makes life worth living

  - What do you believe are the answers to these questions?



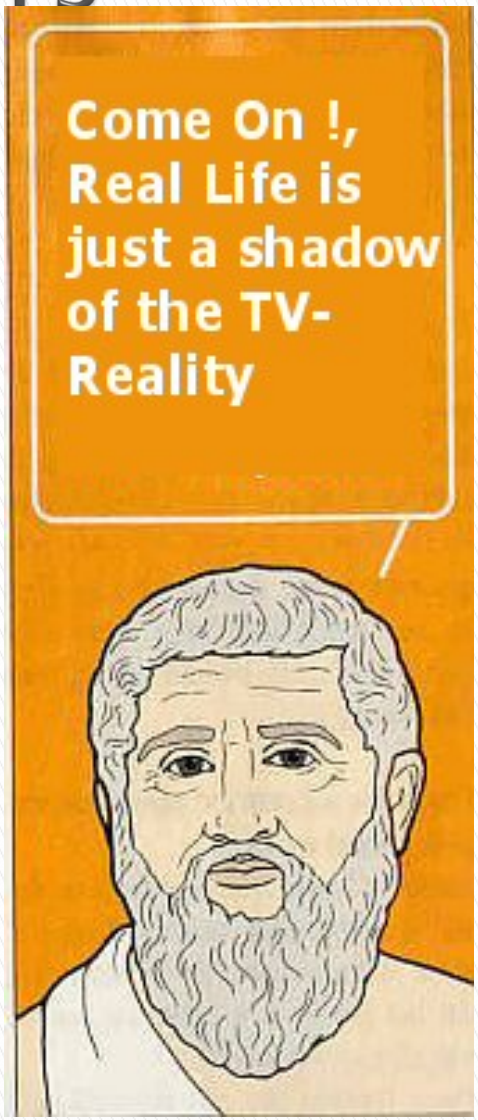
“Thinking about thinking”

- The philosopher’s task is not to understand concepts, it is to try to understand what exists and the nature of it’s existence.
- A philosopher does not ask the time – instead a philosopher would say ‘Does time exist? If so, what is time?’
- The philosopher, however, must create logical, well-crafted arguments to support their opinions.



Famous Philosophers

"The unexamined life is not worth living."

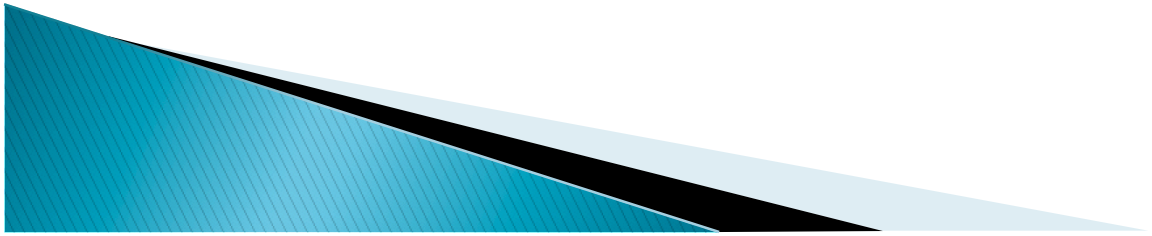


Famous Philosophers

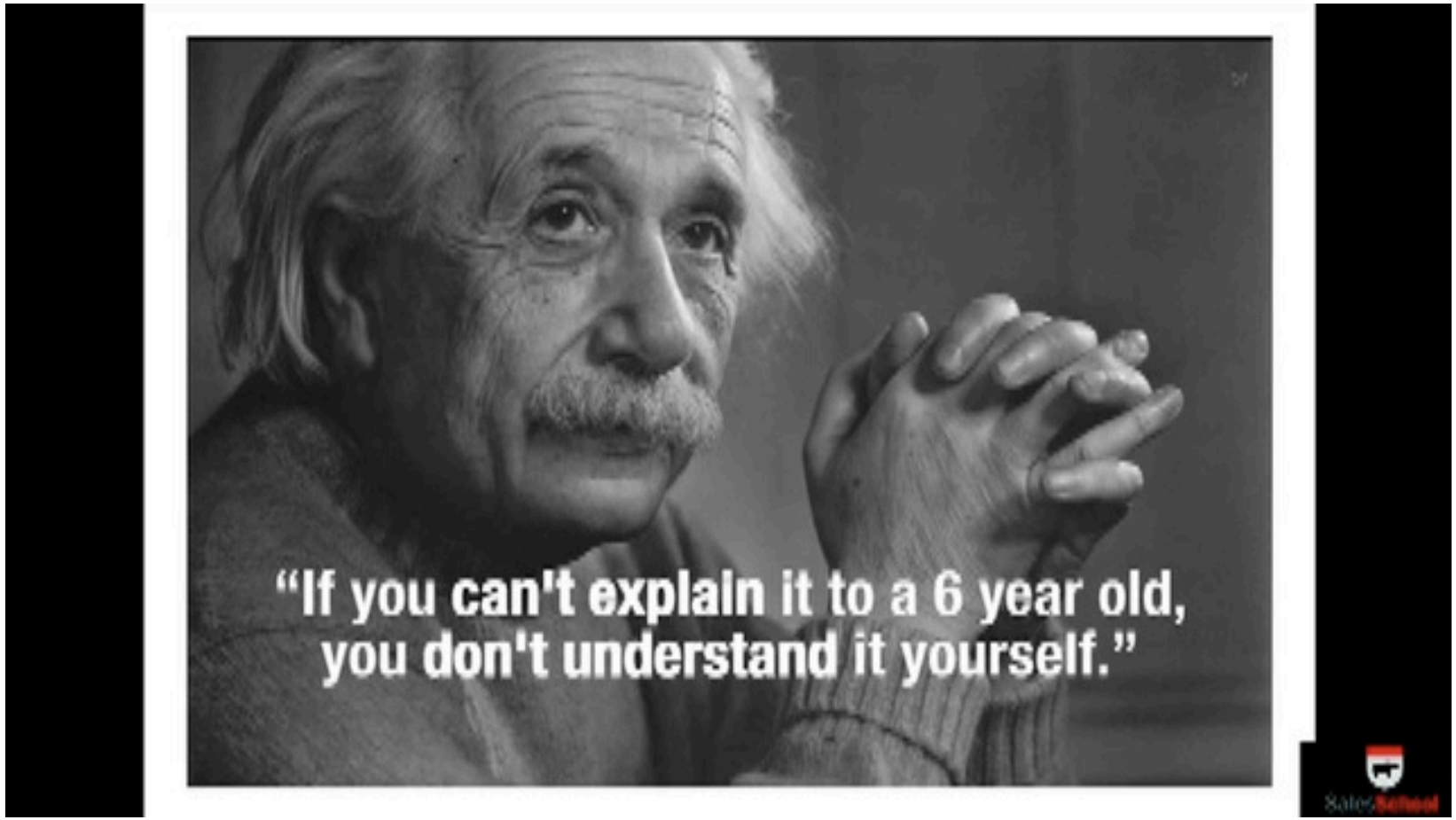
- Thales of Miletus
- Plato
- Isaac Newton
- Socrates
- Gottfried Leibniz
- Aristotle
- Mary Wollstonecraft
- Mohandas Gandhi
- Niccolo Machiavelli
- Aquinas
- Karl Marx
- Immanuel Kant
- Soren Kierkegard
- Martin Luther King Jr.
- St. Augustine of Hippo
- Albert Einstein
- Noam Chomsky
- George Santayna
- Rene Descartes
- David Hume
- Jean-Paul Sartre
- Michel Foucault
- Confucius
- Friedrich Nietzsche
- Susan Blow
- Galileo Galilei
- Sigmund Freud
- Hypathia of Alexandria
- Simone de Beauvoir
- Nicolaus Copernicus
- Voltaire
- Jesus Christ
- Yoda (?)

History of Philosophy

- Philosophy began in the 5th and 6th century BCE (before common era).
- Socrates – brought the field of ethics into existence.
- Plato – wrote about metaphysics, ethics and knowledge, developing a distinctive interpretation of human nature.
- Aristotle – also took part in the study of metaphysics and ethics while founding the discipline of logic.
- Descartes – focused on how people know, in the 1600s he was recognized as the founder of modern philosophy: that everything should be doubted.



Benefits of philosophical thinking



6 Big Issues of Philosophy

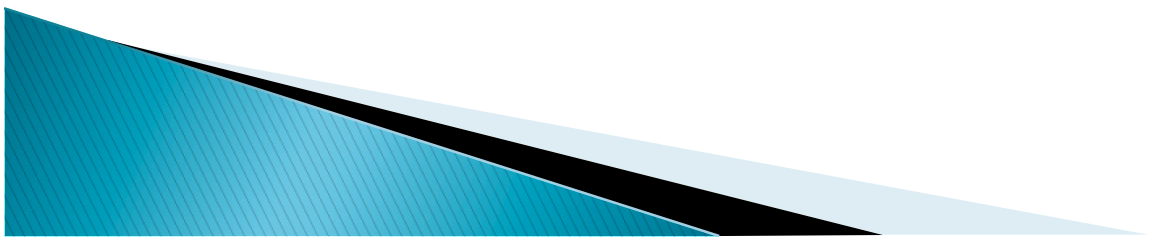
- **Metaphysics**: The nature of reality – the world and the existence of gods. What is real?
- **Logic**: How to build arguments to get answers
- **Epistemology**: Study of knowledge. How do we know what we think we know?
- **Ethics**: How do we tell right from wrong? Proper conduct of one's personal life
- **Political philosophy**: What is the best form of government?
- **Aesthetics**: What is art? How does it influence society? What is beauty?

How would YOU answer these questions?

When there are questions…

- Where do people find answers?
  - Peers
  - Family
  - Media
  - Science
  - Religion
  - Other?

So how does philosophy differ from say, religion, or science?



Similar but different

- Posts a question (hypothesis) and seeks answers
- Conducts experiments by observing or manipulating the natural world (like your labs)

Science

- Posts a question (inquiry) and seeks answers
- Tries to clarify people's thinking

Philosophy

Similar but different

- Wants a guide for how to live a good and moral life
- Finds truth through intuition and revelation

Religion and Mysticism

- Wants a guide for how to live a good and moral life
- Seeks truth through argument and logic

Philosophy

Confused...?

Good ☺

Ethics and Philosophy 2101

- Our main focus for this course is the ethics branch of philosophy but we'll still visit all the others.

- **Ethics is the study of values, of how we ought to live. It involves reflective, rational thinking to determine which behaviours are "right" or "wrong"**

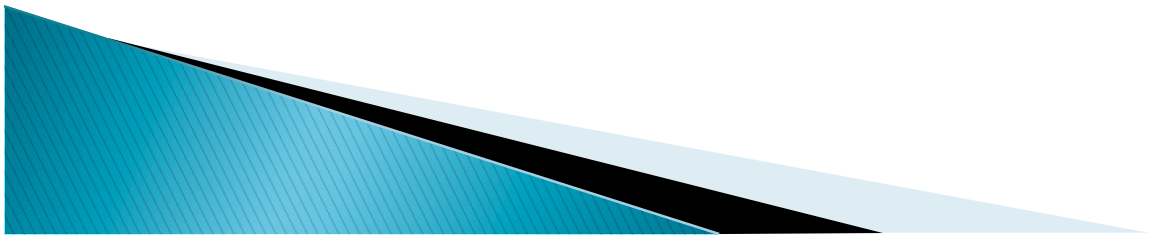
Can you see any challenges to determining right and wrong behaviours?

Course Overview

- The main objective is to introduce you to some of the ideas and philosophers who have tried to explore the “big” questions
- We’ll use **classical philosophical inquiries** to try and get some answers (Start with a question, explore all sides)
- It’s not about memorizing! The main thing is to engage the ideas!

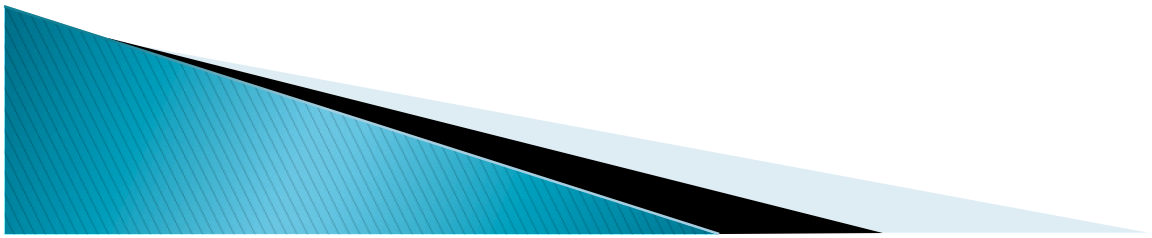
COURSE FOCUS

- Learn: **How to think** (i.e./ metacognition) *rather than* **What to know** (i.e./ memorization)
- Examine the relationship between development of religious thought and philosophical views
- Explore how various living belief systems explain basic principles of reality
- Investigate sources of influence on moral and ethical decision-making
- Assess your own understanding of ethical decision-making , morality and ethics – develop personal working definitions



Marks Breakdown

- Assignments/Projects/Worksheets 50%
- Participation (small and large group discussion, attentiveness during lectures/ discussions/videos/presentations, attendance) 20%
- Journal (Teacher assigned reflections) 20%
- Quizzes/Case studies (open book) 10%

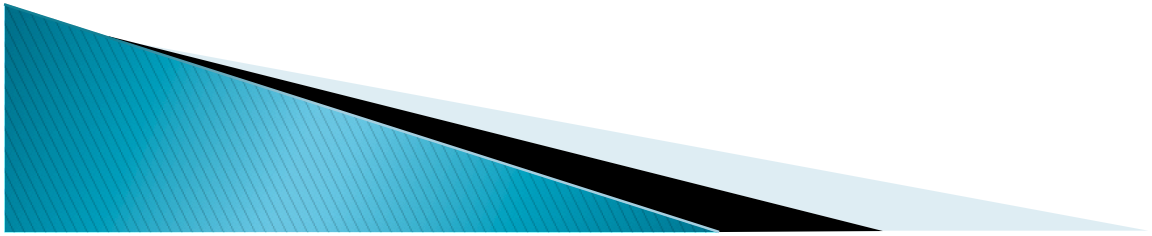


Materials

You will need:

1. Journal (or small exercise)
2. Exercise for answering questions
3. Folder or binder for handouts and worksheets
4. Writing Utensil – pen or pencil

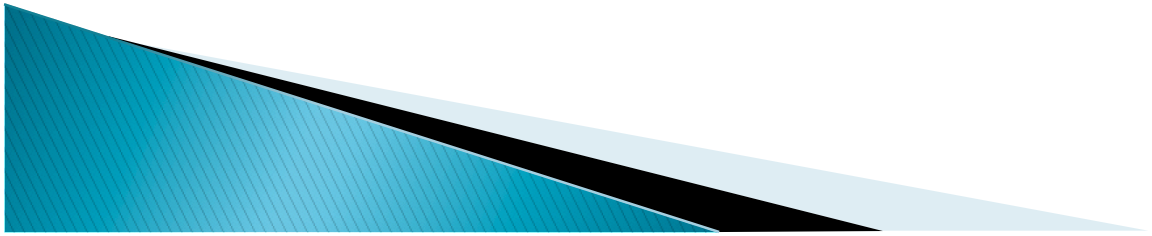
*2 and 3 can be in same small binder



Why philosophize?

- What benefits can you now see about exploring philosophy?

- Think:
  - Laws
  - Government
  - Environment
  - Human Rights…

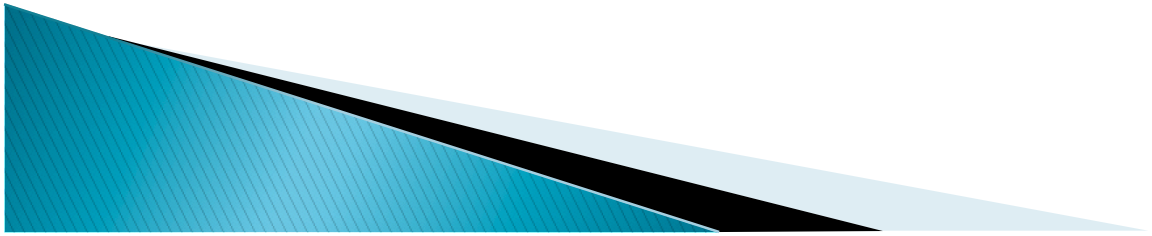


Let's try it!

JOURNAL ENTRY #1

- Question:
  a.) What does it mean to be "fair and just"?

  b.) Are you a "fair and just" person?
  How/Why?

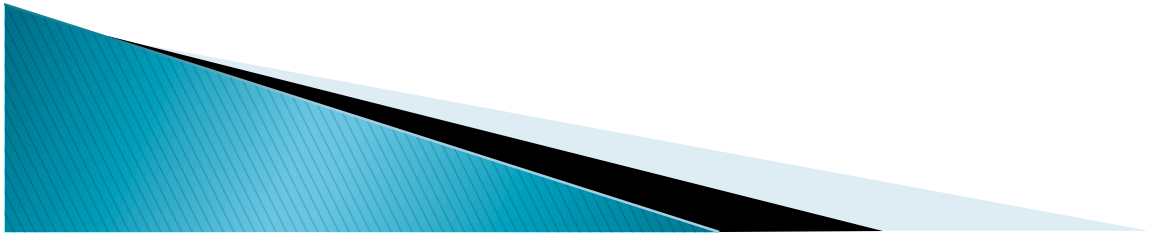


Let's try it!

JOURNAL #2

- Question:
  a.) How do you know who your friends are?

  b.) Has social media changed the definition of friendship? How/Why or How/Why not?

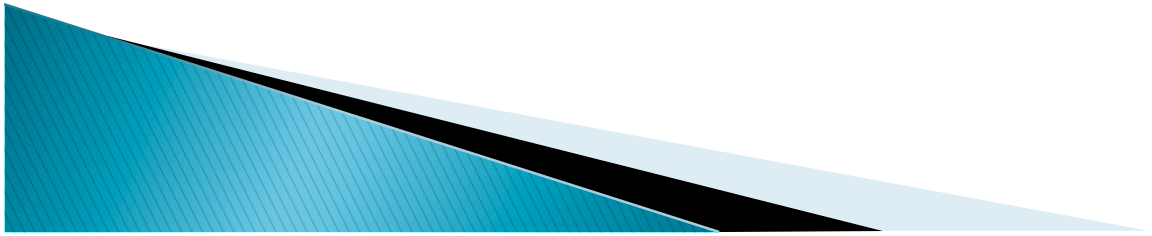


Let's try it!

JOURNAL ENTRY #3

- Question:
  Should you ever tell a lie?

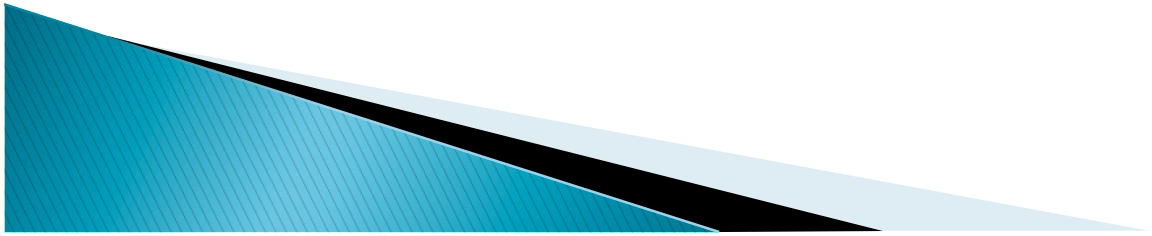
- We'll come back to this one later... >:)



Let's try it!

JOURNAL ENTRY #4

- Question:
  Are there times when you should be violent?



- This concludes our introduction. What do you think so far!?