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CONTINUUM  
PHILOSOPHICAL INSIGHT

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# INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHICAL THINKING

SEMINAR SYLLABUS

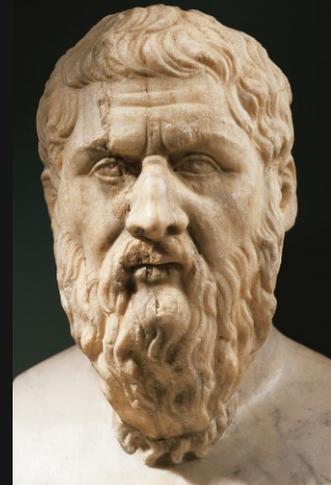
[WINTER 2020 | SATURDAYS 2:00-3:00PM ET]

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## DESCRIPTION

What *is* philosophy? Is it something we study—as subject, like biology or literature? Is it something each of us has, individually—as in, “my personal philosophy”? Is it a relic of history? An intellectual curiosity? A means to impress at cocktail parties and on social media?

Or perhaps—as this seminar will attempt to demonstrate—philosophy is a way of thinking relatively easy to identify but very difficult to practice. Mere description of the practice does not suffice for understanding it; one must, rather, engage in the practice itself. This engagement requires discipline of the mind and the consistent willingness to pursue philosophy not merely as a hobby, but as a **habit**. For those who have the will, this seminar will provide the means: namely through a schedule of carefully-selected readings and persistent dialogue—both in the seminar discussion sessions and through the Lyceum platform. This incipient practice of philosophy will not make you a philosopher; but it will engender in those who seize it the germ of a true philosophical habit.



## METHOD

The seminar is 8 weeks long, with one recorded lecture and one discussion session each week. Each discussion session is structured around a reading from three different Platonic dialogues (*Apology*, *Crito*,

*Meno*) and my own *Introduction to Philosophical Principles*. **Digital editions of all texts are provided for free.** Participants are expected to have read the assigned reading and listened to the lecture prior to the session, so that they may engage in a semi-structured discussion directed and moderated by the instructor. Understandably, given how busy we may all easily become, sometimes this may not be feasible. Try to get through as much material as you can.

## READING

Each week includes (scheduled below) an assigned reading,

Additionally, a number of supplemental readings are available through the Files tab on Teams (where one may also find all the recordings and other supplemental materials). These materials discuss the nature and practice of philosophy, primarily from the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition. These materials are not essential to the course but are suggestions for anyone wishing to look further into the topic.

## LECTURE

Each week there will also be a 20-40 minute audio lecture, posted to Teams at the beginning of the week. This lecture will be based upon the assigned reading, but will also stray into related topics, or may use the reading as a launching point for addressing some related issue (perhaps one more general, or perhaps one more specific). The purpose of these lectures is to help germinate the habit of philosophical thinking, as well as to raise specific questions that should help structure and guide our discussion sessions.

There may be accompanying visual aids, in order to provide some clarity as to textual points, but one *should* be able, in most cases, to simply listen to the lecture (and perhaps consult the visual aids later). This should allow more flexibility: making the lectures suitable accompaniment for a commute, while doing chores, etc.

## DISCUSSION

The heart of the seminar is the discussion session: where all the thoughts emergent and encountered throughout the week—via the reading, lecture, and on-going conversations in the Teams channel—are brought into explicit conversation. This allows us to attempt a concerted effort at bringing resolution to our difficulties, and—failing such a resolution—to direct our inquiry further.

Each discussion session will begin with a brief synopsis of the week's material and a focusing on whichever aspects of that material seem most pressing. Beyond the direction provided by the instructor, participants are encouraged to bring their own concerns explicitly into view and to engage with the instructor and one another in civil debate and collective inquiry. Sessions are Saturday afternoons from 2:00-3:00PM ET.

## SESSION SCHEDULE

Discussion: January 25	<p>Opening the Door</p> <p>Recording – Lecture 1: The Importance of Philosophy</p> <p>Reading – Misconceptions</p>
February 1	<p>The Examined Life</p> <p>Recording – Lecture 2: Philosophical Attitude</p> <p>Reading – Plato, <i>The Apology</i>.</p>
February 8	<p>Controlling Desire</p> <p>Recording – Lecture 3: Power or Virtue</p> <p>Reading – Plato, <i>Crito</i></p>
February 15	<p>Seeking Knowledge</p> <p>Recording – Lecture 4: Τι'Εσται – What Is</p> <p>Reading – Plato, <i>Meno</i></p>
February 22	<p>Critical Thinking</p> <p>Recording – Lecture 5: Scientific Philosophy – Logic</p> <p>Reading – Kemple, <i>Introduction to Philosophical Principles</i>, c.1</p>
February 29	<p>Critical Thinking about the World</p> <p>Recording – Lecture 6: Scientific Philosophy – Nature</p> <p>Reading – Kemple, <i>Introduction to Philosophical Principles</i>, c.2</p>
March 7	<p>Critical Thinking about the Self</p> <p>Recording – Lecture 7: Scientific Philosophy – The Human Person</p> <p>Reading – Kemple, <i>Introduction to Philosophical Principles</i>, c.3</p>
March 14	<p>Fulfillment or Servitude</p> <p>Recording – Lecture 8: The Useless Utility of Philosophy</p> <p>Reading – Inconclusions</p>