

IB Philosophy



2013-2014
Syllabus

Mr. Andersen, room 604, period 6

Course Info:

IB Level: Standard (SL), Course Code: 8361/8362, open to Grades: 11-12 (Only grades 11-12 may sit for the IB exams).

Length: 2 semesters, Credits Earned: 1 elective credit (.5 per sem.)

Prerequisite: Curiosity, some discipline of mind, plus the willingness to take on challenging curriculum.

What Is This Course All About?

IB Philosophy deals with issues that are profound, complex, challenging and important for humanity. IB Philosophy aims to be inclusive and to deal with a wide range of issues that can be approached in a philosophical way. A concern with clarity of understanding lies at the core of the philosophy course. This clarity is achieved through critical and systematic thinking, careful analysis of arguments, the study of philosophical themes and a close reading of texts. Through this examination of themes and texts, the philosophy course allows students to explore fundamental questions that people have asked throughout human history—such as: What does it mean to be “human” and a “person”? What is “wisdom” or “virtue” and can you teach it to others? What is a good life? How ought we to treat others? Moreover, the vibrant fields of philosophy confront new issues arising in our world, including those resulting from increasing international interaction, rapidly evolving technology, and a host of practical problems (often ethical in nature) that require quality reflection and problem-solving. Many futurists agree that young people will need to think philosophically to properly address our current and future problems.

The emphasis of the philosophy course is very much on “doing” philosophy. Doing philosophy requires a willingness to attempt an understanding of alternative views by applying intellectual rigor and cultivating an open and critical mind. It also invites the examination of perspectives that encompass cultural pluralism and an awareness of the international context within which it unfolds. This constitutes a new challenge for students doing philosophy within a worldwide perspective—an important feature that is reflected in the themes and activities of the course. While the reading load itself should be quite manageable for this class, some of the material will require careful attention and diligent study. This course prepares the students for the Standard Level (SL) IB examination in philosophy at the end of the course of study—which is optional for non-diploma students, though recommended.

For more information, study the online IB Philosophy Guide @:

http://xmltwo.ibo.org/publications/DP/Group3/d_3_philo_gui_0703_2/html/production-app3.ibo.org/publication/231/part/1/chapter/1.html

How Will This Course Be Useful to Me?

This course is an introduction to philosophy. It is recommended for students entering fields of law, medicine, teaching, politics, journalism, or any other profession requiring critical thinking skills and a refined sense of judgment. It also helps prepare you to be an effective citizen and a contributing member of a democratic society. Acquiring skills at this level will equip students with skills necessary for higher education in philosophy and almost any other discipline. Being able to think and express ideas clearly and coherently are assets welcome in all areas of education and employment. The thought-provoking content of this course will challenge you and stimulate your mind. (For more information on this, see Mr. A.’s handout [“Why Study Philosophy?”](#))

Course Objectives

The aims of the Philosophy program are to enable students to:

- Develop an intellectually independent and creative way of thinking.
- Relate their philosophical understanding to other disciplines and to life.
- Formulate arguments in a rational and logical way
- Examine critically their own experience and biases.
- Become aware of the plurality of philosophical traditions.
- Develop a way of thinking that draws on personal reflection and knowledge of philosophical traditions.

The curriculum for IB Philosophy is developed using guidelines provide by IBO. IB Philosophy students will sit for their exams in May. The curriculum for this course will focus on three distinct strands:

- **Learning and understanding the foundations of modern philosophical thought.** In this sense the class curriculum will be similar to that found in an introductory level college course.
- **Practicing philosophy.** Students will develop the ability to draw deeper meaning from the stimuli of the everyday world, and discuss this meaning using the conventions of philosophical analysis.
- **Writing as a philosopher.** Students will learn how to develop philosophical arguments and communicate that argument in the essay format.

IB Course Content (Themes)

☐ See handout “IB Philosophy – Syllabus Details” handout OR:

http://xmltwo.ibo.org/publications/DP/Group3/d_3_philo_gui_0703_2/html/production-app3.ibo.org/publication/231/part/2/chapter/2.html

Required Texts for IB Philosophy (Please purchase or check out by September):

The required fall texts for IB Philosophy are shown below. Remember that many of these are also available for checkout in the CRHS library. Amazon.com has multiple used copies of these texts available (prices listed below are from Amazon). To find other used or new copies, search here: <http://books.google.com/> or at www.bookfinder.com.

Please keep in mind that, with some texts, I won't assign the whole book. So, it's not as much reading as it may appear. Some students prefer to pre-read, or at least skim, these texts over the summer. If you do buy, buy locally first and used copies if you can. *Cover to Cover Books* here in Vancouver < <http://www.covertocoverbooks.net/> > has always been helpful in getting copies for CRIB students.

- ☐ [**Understand Philosophy: A Teach Yourself Guide, by Mel Thompson.**](#) ISBN-13: 978-0071747578 McGraw-Hill; 4 edition (October 13, 2010). Amazon.com: \$11.87 new. NOTE: It's possible for you to purchase this [as a Kindle text at \\$9.99](#).
- ☐ [**Who Are We?: Theories of Human Nature \[paperback\] by Louis Pojman.**](#) ISBN-13: 978-0195179279 Oxford University Press, USA (July 21, 2005). \$28.00 new, \$17.69 used (as of 8/20/ 13). **NOTE: Check our CR library first before buying.**
- ☐ [**The Ethics of Authenticity \[hardcover\], by Charles Taylor.**](#) ISBN-13: 978-0674268630 Harvard University Press; 1 edition (1992) Amazon.com List Price: \$23.49 [Used copies available from \$19.95 (VARIES)] **NOTE: Check our CR library first before buying.**

Tentative Course Outline:

- ✓ **September through January** (intermittently):
 - 1) A brief ["What is Philosophy?"](#) unit;
 - 2) A brief intro to [critical reading, thinking, writing,](#) and [logic](#);
 - 3) Most of the bulleted items (sub-themes) for [the Core Theme: What is a Human Being?](#)
- ✓ **Feb.-March:** A whirlwind intro tour into the field of [Ethics](#)
- ✓ **April:** A close analysis of our prescribed philosophical text, [Charles Taylor's "Ethics of Authenticity"](#) (Part 2 of the course).
- ✓ Roughly **Late January-March:** Preparing students for Part 3: [the Internal Assessment essay](#) [scroll down to Part 3] (due in late March). We do short practice writes along the way that lead up to this first major assessment, and these are roughly modeled after [the "Formulating Arguments" and "Understanding Texts" guidelines in the Syllabus Details section of the Guide.](#)
- ✓ In **late April early May:** Review for the exams ([External Assessment](#)).
- ✓ **After exams in mid-May-June:** Explore the [Philosophy of Religion theme](#) for fun (not for exams).

IB Assessments and Examinations

Because this course is part of the IB program it is expected that the curriculum and instruction will meet or exceed international standards. In order to moderate our progress, students will have several opportunities to demonstrate their learning. In IB Philosophy students will sit for two exams in May of 2011. These tests, which take place over two days, will be graded by IB examiners. Students will also be expected to produce one piece of philosophical writing of 1600-2000 words (the Internal Assessment) to be graded by me, the instructor. IB in turn evaluates my grading system. Simply put, IB grades me on my ability to grade you. ☐ See ["IB Philosophy – Syllabus Details"](#) for more details.

Grading:

Students who are grade-obsessed may be wise to select another course. Students who are grade-aware will want to know that final grades are based on your compilation of quality work produced or in process throughout each term. This will include in-class participation, practice exams, essays, projects, formal and informal Socratic seminars, and a final project (2nd semester only) demonstrating quality reflection and your best work. Feedback will take a variety of forms: letter grades, completion check-offs, written comments, individual conferences, peer evaluations, reading check quizzes, etc. Each of these will be assigned a letter grade based upon a 4.0 point value (see next section below). Grades will be entered into the VSD standard Student Information System (SIS), which will spit out, at appropriate times, a letter grade based on the variety of assignments identified above. Individual progress reports can also be distributed upon request (provided that you are reasonable and don't abuse the privilege).

Parents can always check [the online grade book](#) at any time. **Please NOTE:** While I will always make a good faith effort all year to score and enter assignments ASAP, with IB English assignments, it is not always easy to do as soon as students or parents might expect. (Unfortunately, all of my classes—PB English-9, IB Philosophy, Theory of Knowledge—are paper-intensive, so grading is particularly time-consuming. If you or your parents ever have a concern about an assignment, please email me (within a reasonable time line). Thank you for your patience. ☺

Four-Point Scale:

In a nutshell, the 4.0 scale reinforces actual mastery of skills, knowledge, and performance on a clear scale (usually reflected in each assignment rubric) as reflected in the key terms in the box below on the right. Everything in this class will be graded on this 4.0 Grade Point scale, or a multiple of 4 for larger projects/exams (8 or 12 for major papers and projects). This might be different

from previous teachers you've had. No worries. It's easy. Your final grade for any given term is an ongoing average of the letter grades you've received on assignments—which are all based on 4.0-based scores.

The **breakdown of a 4.0 grade point scale** looks like this (box on left):

4.0 Grade Point Scale:			4.0 Quality Scale in Terms of Mastery of knowledge & Skill:		
4.0 = A	3.1 = C+		4 – Outstanding: Performance at this level demonstrates an in-depth understanding of content and concepts. These students make connections amongst ideas that go well beyond the obvious, solve challenging problems with efficient and innovative strategies, communicate complex ideas insightfully, effectively, and creatively.		
3.7 = A-	3.0 = C		3 – Proficient: Students at this level demonstrate strong, solid achievement in grasping content and concepts. They display command of essential concepts, skills, and processes; they make important connections between central ideas.		
3.5 = B+	2.9 = C-		2 – Developing: Performance at this level demonstrates partial command of essential concepts, skills, and processes. With some direction and guidance the student can obtain a complete command of the desired goals. The communication of what they understand is adequate but sometimes rudimentary or incomplete.		
3.4 = B	2.8 = D+		1- Emerging/Under Achievement: Students at this level are inconsistent in their skill abilities or they fail to apply basic skills and effort to their assignments.		
3.2 = B-	2.5 = D		0 = Not completed/No evidence of Learning		
Cumulative % Grade Value:					
Grade Mark	Grade Value High	Grade Value Low			
A	100	93			
A-	92.99	90			
B+	89.99	87			
B	86.99	83			
B-	82.99	80			
C+	79.99	77			
C	76.99	73			
C-	72.99	70			
D+	69.99	67			
D	66.99	60			
F	59.99	0			

Quarterly Participation Grade: This class is participation-intensive. Each quarter a “Participation” grade (usually worth 8 points). I take mental notes every day on each student’s active desire to learn and to improve him-/herself. **WARNING:** In my 20 years of teaching high school students, I have become a shrewd judge of character. © This grade represents the following:

- ✓ arriving to class on time, ready to learn
- ✓ asking quality questions on directions and during activities
- ✓ general active listening—(see the “Virtue of Unselfish Listening” posted in class and copied below)
- ✓ taking advantage of in-class work time
- ✓ paying attention to oral and written instructions
- ✓ keeping yourself organized so papers don’t get lost and work gets turned in on time in the designated place
- ✓ professional, considerate behavior in class
- ✓ active, organized, helpful note-taking in your IB Philosophy composition book during seminars, lectures, films, etc.
- ✓ keeping an organized, neat Article Binder so future students can easily access the articles I provide for supplementary learning.

In general, lack of focus, wasting time, creating distractions, being unorganized—these bad habits will kill your Participation Grade.

Enrichment Credit (EC) will be provided at the instructor’s discretion and has the following restrictions:

1. EC is a privilege only for those who have turned in all assigned work and make-up work for being absent.
2. EC is not available to anyone with an unexcused absence and/or with more than two tardies.
3. EC is usually not available within one week of a grading period (quarter or semester grade, progress report).
4. Your grade will be based on the main assignments for the class; therefore, Enrichment Credit may never exceed 5% of the overall total of points for a given quarter or semester, unless otherwise authorized by the instructor. Generally, EC will take the form of a written evaluation of a lecture, film, online dialogue, or equivalent philosophically-enriching event attended or heard. Specific forms for this will be provided. These are few in number and boost only that assignment’s grade (and they are not subject to the above restrictions).

Attendance: My expectations are simple: come to class **prepared, ready to learn**, and **on time** every day. Be ready to learn when the bell rings. Small and large group discussions are based **partially** on attendance. That experience and, therefore, that assessment cannot be made up fully*, regardless of the reason for your absence. This is also true for occasional quizzes. (**Through requesting a Seminar Make-Up, students who have an excused absence can earn, say, a max of 3/4 points by thoroughly and thoughtfully responding to 1-3 central guiding questions from the seminar. Obtain these Qs plus good notes from a trusted colleague and turn in your Seminar Make-Up—labeled as such with the date(s) of your absence—no less than 1 day after your return.*) If you accrue as many as 10 absences in a term, your chances of

success are diminished proportionately. Please do not compromise your integrity by asking a parent to excuse your absence for any reason other than illness or emergency. You should expect a call home if your attendance record becomes a problem; it would be best for you to take personal responsibility through your consistent promptness, attentive presence, and dependable honesty.

Late Work: Keep in mind that a great deal of thought is given to due dates and that the homework you do outside of class is essential to the work we do together during class time. I will try to provide you with a monthly calendar of assignments, available online. **With teacher approval, some minor assignments may be turned in up to one week after the due date for half credit. Any late major assignment will not be accepted, barring emergencies.** It is your responsibility to contact your instructor ASAP if something is amiss. Do not expect to receive much, if any, feedback on late assignments.

Academic Honesty: This course follows both the IB Honor Code and the guidelines for the school. Any assignment that plagiarizes the work and/or ideas of another will receive a zero and the matter will be referred to the administration and to your family. (When in doubt about citations, just ask, or cite it anyway just to be sure.) ALL MAJOR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE SUBMITTED to <http://www.turnitin.com>. I will provide you with a log in code.

Other Important Details:

- **Contacting Mr. Andersen + Classroom Web Page:** The quickest way to reach me—if I'm not teaching in 608 (per 4) or 604 (per. 6 and 7), or in 606 for prep during 5th period—is via email (Michael.Andersen@vansd.org). As demonstrated in class, I will use [the Canvas site <https://canvas.instructure.com/login>](https://canvas.instructure.com/login) to send out regular assignment updates; to facilitate online, classroom-only discussions; to record assignments and due dates on a class calendar; as well as to share resources that may help you on your learning journey this year. As one of the piloting teachers for the Canvas system at CRHS, this site will essentially function as my classroom webpage, and it will be linked soon on the CRHS Staff Page at www.river.vansd.org). Once you and your parents provide me a suitable email (or, if needed, we can supply you a temporary email for this purpose), you will receive an invite email early in September to officially join my Canvas classroom page.
- **Building trust in the classroom:** TOK is a seminar-based class, so team work and the open expression of ideas is crucial to success. To facilitate this, all students are expected to participate actively, yet always in a mature, sensible, and compassionate manner. I expect excellence, never mediocrity. However, I also want people to see the class as a “learning lab” where mistakes will happen. That is how you learn! (Striving for excellence does not mean being a perfectionist—a hard lesson for many people.) So, while your instructor works to avoid creating a highly-competitive, threatening atmosphere, each of you is expected to help out in reaching that goal. You are no doubt aware that you learn best when you feel comfortable, safe, and yet also challenged and stimulated with fresh ideas.
- **Special DO NOTs:**
 - **Cheating:** Students who cheat will receive no credit for an assignment that involved cheating, and disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the IB Honor Code. Cheating ranges from copying another students’ homework to turning in an assignment copied from an internet source or turning in work with quotes but no source citations. Cheating also includes helping others to do work that is supposed to be an individual effort and working on homework for another class during English work time.
 - As for **electronic devices and phones**, they are not to be on during class unless cleared by your teacher for an academic or emergency purpose. ***They should never be a distraction for your own or others’ learning.*** Students using a cell phone or an electronic device inappropriately will have it taken away, only to be retrieved by a parent from the office after school. Repeated problems result in progressive discipline.
- **Save ALL your work, including drafts and in-class handouts.**
- **Please follow school policies!** Students are expected to know about all school rules detailed in your student handbook. Any violations of school policies or the IB Honor Code will result in parent notification and/or further discipline.
- **Kindly purchase a blank composition book ASAP.** You will use this daily, and you will turn it in periodically as your official *IB Philosophy Journal*. Buy it and bring it every day.

The Virtue of Unselfish Listening

- ✓ I listen because I want to know the truth about the real world and people outside of myself.
- ✓ My listening is guided by the principle of “charitable interpretation” — I don’t worry about the minor details in someone’s expression of an idea; instead, I look for the insight behind their words.
- ✓ I listen graciously, without drawing attention to myself. (I get out of the way)
- ✓ I encourage others, if necessary, with my body language and my words. I never distract them.
- ✓ I share the discussion space. If needed, I invite others in who haven’t had equal time to share their views.