



PLATO PHILOSOPHY FUND APPLICATION

THANK YOU FOR APPLYING!

PROJECT TITLE: *SoCAL PHILOSOPHY ACADEMY*

DATES FOR PROJECT: *JUNE 18-22, 2018*

AMOUNT OF FUNDING REQUESTED: *\$3,450*

1. PLEASE DESCRIBE THE PROJECT, INCLUDING ANY WORK THAT HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE TO DEVELOP IT. (500 WORDS MAX)

The SoCal Philosophy Academy is an annual summer day camp for Ventura and Los Angeles county high school students (housed on the California Lutheran University [CLU] campus in Thousand Oaks, CA). During the academy the students are introduced to and/or expand upon their familiarity with the field of philosophy as well as some perennial and contemporary philosophical issues and questions. Through the process of *engaging in the practice of philosophy* and by wrestling with and discussing thought experiments/scenarios/stories students are introduced to philosophical analysis, argumentation, and critical evaluation. The Academy was founded in 2017 and the inaugural summer academy took place June of that same year. During this first/pilot year we were able to accept thirty local high school students for a one-week day-camp/academy. During the week the students were introduced to the study of philosophy with the goal of helping to further develop the communication and critical thinking skills necessary for post-secondary education and/or their vocation and career. During the second year (June 2018), in addition to the above activities I am hoping to add guest speakers, a site visit to the Berggruen Institute (<http://berggruen.org>), and initiate an ongoing interdisciplinary collaborative study (between CLU's Philosophy Department and CLU's Center for Teaching and Learning) on the effectiveness of the academy (i.e., the effectiveness of pre-college philosophy instruction).

The short-term goals of the academy are to introduce the students to philosophical analysis, argumentation, and some of the central problems in metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics; and to teach them how to construct/reconstruct arguments and positions on issues as well as to evaluate them. The long-term goals include gathering data on the effectiveness of such pre-college philosophy instruction. Ultimately the goal is that this research will directly lead to a scholarly publication following the first round of data collection (Summer 2018) and then subsequent publications with each additional year of data collection.



2. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS PROJECT? (500 WORDS MAX)

The primary purpose of this project is to introduce local high schools students to philosophy and give them an opportunity to engage in philosophical analysis, constructing/reconstructing arguments, and evaluating these arguments/positions. It has been my experience that a significant component of college preparedness, and consequently the educational inequality in the US, is access to courses that promote and teach the high level abstract critical reasoning (i.e., “critical thinking”) that is so touted as essential to success in higher education. The SoCal Philosophy Academy attempts to contribute to this preparation of students as well as remedying this access inequality in two ways - First, by introducing students to the discipline of philosophy. This introduction includes instruction on how to construct/reconstruct arguments and positions on issues as well as how to effectively evaluate these positions and theories. The motivation and evidence supporting this instructional approach are primarily theoretical - philosophy is a discipline that demands precision, clarity, and rigor in thought and communication so it seems to follow that introduction and instruction in such a discipline would help students develop these skills. Unfortunately this is a supposition that has not been sufficiently investigated and tested – there is too little known concerning what, if any, benefits pre-college philosophy instruction provides. Consequently, a second aim of the academy is to offer an opportunity to gather data on the effects of pre-college philosophy instruction on students’ abstract and critical reasoning skills.



3. WHO WILL BENEFIT FROM THE PROJECT, AND HOW? (500 WORDS MAX)

The primary beneficiaries of this project are the participants - high school students from Ventura and Los Angeles counties (with an emphasis on minority students and historically underrepresented groups in higher education). The opportunity to participate in the Academy is intended to benefit the students by exposing them to the study of philosophy, give them additional exposure to California Lutheran University, and help them continue to develop the communication and critical thinking skills necessary for post-secondary education. This venture is positioned to benefit participants by offering an opportunity for students to receive explicit instruction in abstract and critical reasoning (i.e., critical thinking) and metacognitive skills. These skills are highly valued in higher ed (and a key to success in the admissions tests for college and graduate school) and this academy provides the exposure and instruction to facilitate the development of these skills. (With only a limited rollout and marketing campaign in 2017 we were able to garner 42 applications - we were ultimately able to accept 30 students - from nine high schools: Ventura County- Thousand Oaks, Ventura, Newbury Park, Channel Islands, Santa Paula, Fillmore, Rio Mesa; Los Angeles County - Leuzinger, Hawthorne).

A second beneficiary is CLU philosophy students. These college students will be included in the summer academy as guests and presenters so that the high school participants can get a good idea, from a students' perspective, about the discipline of philosophy and studying philosophy at CLU. During the inaugural academy (June 2017) three CLU students participated and it was not only a great experience for them but also for the high school students to see *current* philosophy students thinking through some of these philosophy problems/questions. The goal is for this experience to be not only rewarding for the camp participants but also for the current CLU students as it offers a way for them to gain experience giving public presentations and deepen their understanding of the philosophical material. In addition to participating in the academy as guests and presenters I hope to also bring in a student research assistant to help facilitate an interdisciplinary (between Philosophy and the Center for Teaching and Learning) collaborative study on the effectiveness of the academy (i.e., the effectiveness of pre-college philosophy instruction).

This research also brings in a third beneficiary – the pre-college philosophy community broadly. The goal is for the collaborative research project and data collection measuring the effectiveness of pre-college philosophy instruction to provide guidance and direction for future “college-prep” programs also seeking to offer pre-college philosophy instruction.



4. WHAT IS THE PLAN FOR DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING THE PROJECT? INCLUDE A TIMELINE.

We are currently applying for funding and working on creating a website for the academy. The next steps will be to secure guest speakers, reserve room(s)/food/etc., arrange for a site visit to the Berggruen Institute (including transportation to and from the Institute), and start to work with the Center For Teaching and Learning on the study for measuring the effectiveness of the academy and the pre-college philosophy instruction (IRB approval, finalizing the evaluation, etc.). In March and April we will begin more directed marketing for this summer's academy (contacting newspapers and radio stations, visiting high schools, sending out flyers etc.). In May and June we will begin the final prep for the actual academy week by finalizing lesson/discussion plans, planning with guest speakers, and helping the CLU philosophy students prepare for their presentations and facilitating of discussion. After the academy week we will begin to analyze our data and start the process of writing an article on our findings.

5. WHAT OTHER FUNDING SOURCES HAVE YOU EXPLORED FOR THIS PROJECT?

The 2017 inaugural/pilot summer academy was generously funded by the CLU Community Leaders Association, the CLU Philosophy Department, CLU College of Arts & Sciences, and CLU TRIO / Upward Bound Program. For this summer's second annual academy we have again applied for funding from these contributors (and hope to receive similar funding, but because we hope to expand the scope of the academy we are seeking additional contributions). In addition we have applied for a Social Innovation Award through Teach For America.



6. PLEASE LIST YOUR BUDGET, INCLUDING ANY AMOUNTS FROM OTHER SOURCES.

Detailed budget and a schedule for expenditure:

Lunch (5 days, 30 people, approx. \$10/person)	approx. \$1500
Advertising	\$ 200
Peter Worley's <i>Provocations</i> (30 copies)	approx. \$ 600
Plato's <i>Five Dialogues</i> (30 copies)	approx. \$ 255
Supplies (CLU notebooks, pens, etc.)	approx. \$ 154
Room Fee	\$ 750
Instructor Stipend	\$ 750
Travel Reimbursement for guest speakers	\$ 500
Student Research Assistant Stipend	\$ 500
	(to help facilitate an interdisciplinary collaborative study on the effectiveness of the academy)
<hr/> Total	approx. \$5,209
CLU Community Leaders Association grant	- \$1000
<u>Funds from CLU Philosophy Dept.</u>	<u>- \$ 750</u>
Amount of Funding Requested	\$ 3,450

The budget for advertising, texts, and supplies would be spent *prior* the academy (June 2018) while the food and room fee budget would be spent *during* the camp, and the instructor stipend, travel reimbursement, and student worker stipend would be distributed *afterwards*.