

PHIL 205A: Philosophy for Children

Course Description:

This course is a workshop in doing philosophy with children. Students will be introduced to the methods and practices of doing philosophy with young people. Philosophy for Children is an instructional theory and methodology for bringing philosophy into the lives of pre-college students. It emphasizes “doing philosophy” over “studying philosophy;” instead of reading Plato, for instance, young people explore the same sorts of questions that intrigued Plato through the creative use of literature, classroom games, and collaborative exercises. Philosophy for Children stresses the development of a “community of inquiry” in which budding philosophers are encouraged to ask their own relevant questions, to develop their views and articulate reasons for them, and to listen and learn from one another. In many ways, this course is an introduction to philosophy through children’s literature and classroom activities. Students successfully completing this course will have explored many of the perennial concerns of philosophy in a manner that is consistent with approaches used to introduce pre-college students to philosophy and philosophical inquiry.

Course Objectives:

This workshop will give students:

- A general understanding of ways to facilitate philosophy sessions in K-12 classrooms;
- An awareness of the philosophical content of children’s literature and the pedagogical and philosophical issues involved in doing philosophy with children using children’s books;
- An introduction to the theoretical underpinnings of philosophy for children;
- Skills and experience participating in philosophy discussions;
- Engagement in the philosophical and pedagogical questions raised by children’s philosophical propensities and the community of philosophical inquiry; and
- Experience creating a philosophy lesson plan for pre-college students.

Course Texts:

There are no required books for this course.

All assigned readings will be available on the Canvas site:

<https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/1481983>

Assignments & Grading (Summary):

This is a credit/no credit course. To earn credit for the course, you must complete **all** the following **and** earn at least **300** of the 400 points for the class:

- 40% Participation in the course (including attendance) (180 points)
- 20% Short papers (x2,10% each, 40 points each)
- 20% Final Paper (80 points)
- 10% Discussion Board posts (days these assignments are due are clearly marked in the “Topics and Readings” section below (60 points)
- 10% Observation of one philosophy for children session in a school setting

Topics and Reading Schedule on Next Page

Topics and Readings:

Note: This schedule is subject to change. I will announce any changes that impact assignments through Canvas. Otherwise, we will have a flexible approach to our schedule in order to cultivate open discussion in our community. In philosophy for children, it is difficult to predict how each session will go, how long a given topic will take, and so forth. That unpredictability is reflected in the reading schedule below.

Assignments should be completed prior to arriving in class on the assignment day.

TOPIC I: WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY? WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN? WHAT IS A COMMUNITY OF PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY?

Thursday, September 30th-Thursday, October 7th

Assignment for Thursday, 9/30: Watch Sara Goering’s TEDx talk on philosophy for children (TEDx Overlake) [TEDxOverlake - Dr. Sara Goering - Philosophy for Kids: Sparking a Love of Learning](#)

Reading & Discussion Board Assignment for Tuesday, 10/5: Read “Philosophy for Children,” (Mohr Lone) (PDF on Canvas) and post one question the reading raised for you to the Canvas Discussion Board by 9am.

Reading & Discussion Board Assignment for Thursday, 10/7: Read “Guiding a Philosophical Discussion,” (Lipman) and post one question the reading raised for you to the Canvas Discussion Board by 9am.

Proposed In-class Readings and Activities

- “The Schoolroom,” from *Stuart Little* by E.B. White
- *The Three Questions*, John Muth
- Activity: Good News, Bad News

TOPIC II: LOGICAL/CRITICAL THINKING WITH CHILDREN

Tuesday, October 12th- Thursday, October 14th

Reading & Discussion Board Assignment for Tuesday, 10/12: Read “Can Children Do Philosophy” (Murrin) (PDF on Canvas) and post one question the reading raised for you to the Canvas Discussion Board by 9am.

Proposed In-class Readings and Activities

- *Albert’s Impossible Toothache*, Williams
- Activity: Selection from *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*, Rowling
- Activity: Two Truths and a Lie

TOPIC III: METAPHYSICS WITH CHILDREN

Tuesday, October 19th-Thursday, October 21st

Short Paper #1 due 10/19/21 at 11:59pm via Canvas

Proposed In-class Readings and Activities

- Activity: Ship of Theseus
- *Quackers*, Wong
- *Harold and the Purple Crayon*, Johnson
- *The Adventures of Beekle: The Unimaginary Friend*, Santat

TOPIC IV: ETHICS WITH CHILDREN

Tuesday, October 26th-Thursday, October 28th

Proposed In-class Readings and Activities

- *The Rainbow Fish*, Pfister
- *Four Feet, Two Sandals*, Williams and Mohammed
- Activity: Fair or Equal?
- Activity: Moral Dilemmas Cases

TOPIC V: SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY WITH CHILDREN

Tuesday, November 2nd-Thursday, November 4th

Reading & Discussion Board Assignment for Tuesday, 11/2: Read “Philosophy for Children in Native America: A Post-Colonial Critique,” (Rainville) and post one question the reading raised for you to the Canvas Discussion Board by 9am.

Proposed In-class Readings and Activities

- *Frederick*, Lionni
- *The Other Side*, Woodson
- Activity: Split Up the Pie

TOPIC VI: EPISTEMOLOGY WITH CHILDREN

Tuesday, November 9th-Thursday, November 11th
No Class Thursday, 11/11 – Veterans Day

Reading & Discussion Board Assignment for Tuesday, 11/9: Read “Philosophical Rules of Engagement,” (Jackson) (PDF on Canvas) and post

one question the reading raised for you to the Canvas Discussion Board by 9am.

Proposed In-class Readings and Activities

- “The Mirror of Erised,” from *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*, Rowling
- *The Bear that Wasn’t*, Tashlin
- *Green Eggs and Ham*, Dr. Seuss
- Activity: What do I know?

TOPIC VII: TALKING ABOUT ANIMALS WITH CHILDREN

Short Paper #2 due Monday, 11/15/21 at 11:59pm via Canvas

Tuesday, November 16th-Thursday, November 18th

Proposed In-class Readings and Activities

- *Charlotte’s Web*, E.B. White
- *Hey, Little Ant*, Hoose & Hoose
- Activity: Animals We Love/Animals We Use

TOPIC VIII: ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS WITH CHILDREN

Tuesday, November 23rd- Thursday, November 25
No Class Thursday, 11/25 - Thanksgiving

Proposed In-class Readings and Activities

- *The Giving Tree*, Silverstein
- *Abigale the Happy Whale*, Farrelly

Topic IX: PHILOSOPHY OF ART WITH CHILDREN

Tuesday, November 30th-Thursday, December 2nd

Discussion Board Assignment for Thursday, 12/2: By 9am, post a written list of songs/music you find beautiful and songs/music you think is ugly to the Discussion Board on Canvas.

Proposed In-Class Readings and Activities

- *Ish*, Reynolds
- *Emily’s Art*, Catalanotto
- Activity: What is beauty? Beautiful and ugly songs

TOPIC X: QUESTIONS ABOUT THE MEANING OF LIFE WITH CHILDREN

Tuesday, December 7th-Thursday, December 9th

Proposed In-Class Readings and Activities

- Selection from *Tuck Everlasting*, Babbitt
- Selection from *Dinah Forever*, Mills
- *Death, Duck, and the Tulip*, Erlbruch
- “If I Were in Charge of the World,” poem by Judith Viorst
- Activity: What’s Worth Doing?

Final Paper due Wednesday, 12/15 at 11:59pm via Canvas