

Description of the Course and Learning Objectives and Outcomes

Part 1: Description of the Course

From the ACC catalogue: “Students will be introduced to various significant philosophical issues and thinkers and to the practice of philosophical analysis.”

Professor Dechene’s Introduction to Philosophy course will use the history of philosophy approach with the purpose of acquainting students who are new to the study of philosophy with a representative range of philosophers, philosophies, and viewpoints.

The course is intended to make students conversant with the main names and ideas in the history of philosophy, and to provide a solid basis for further study of philosophy.

The motto of the course will be the famous aphorism, “You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.” To discover what is true, throughout the course we will look at these closely related questions:

1. What is real (and what isn’t).
 2. How does an individual discover what is true or real.
 3. What difference does knowing what is real make in a person’s life.
 4. How does a person live realistically (i.e., live his or her life in terms of what is truly real).
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Part 2: Learning Objectives and Outcomes

Professor Dechene’s course is divided into four sections (with a test at the end of each section). The learning objectives for each section are these:

1. Understand what the earliest Greek philosophers were looking for: that which is common to all things in the universe, i.e., that which makes the cosmos a unified cosmos rather than just a collection of separate things. We will especially look at the idea that maybe what is fundamentally real and that is common to all seemingly different things is formless, what Anaximander called the *apeiron* (the boundless).
 2. Understand the radical distinction between the reality seen by the intellect and what is seen by the senses, and Parmenides’ discovery of logic, and his distinction between necessary and contingent statements and, correspondingly, between certainty and opinion, on the one hand, and Being and appearances on the other.
 3. Understand how classical philosophy responded to the intellectual and spiritual crisis caused by Parmenidian rationalism and abandoned the idea that there could be a common truth underlying all that is, and based on direct experience and logic.
 4. Understand the modern European attempt to rebuild philosophy on a new foundation, and how that effort collapsed.
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