



## Philosophy/Ethics

Eduardo Romo

eduardo.romo@mpls.k12.mn.us

Room 214 (612) 504-0547

romophilosophy.blogspot.com

### Course Description/Purpose

This is a semester-long introduction to philosophical reflection and examination of some central questions of human existence. Students will consider:

- 1) epistemological questions concerning the possibility and nature of knowledge and truth
- 2) metaphysical questions concerning the nature of ultimate reality, the mind-body problem, consciousness, freedom and determinism, personal identity, and the existence of God/use of faith
- 3) ethical questions concerning morality and the good life

### Recommended Background for Success

Philosophy/Ethics is for students interested in learning about knowledge, but not necessarily in the rigors and expectations of the IB Theory of Knowledge course offered via the IB Program. However, students who do find an interest in Philosophy can have the opportunity to explore the topics more deeply in the IB TOK course as a junior or senior. Students should be willing to participate in discussions and expect to complete 1-2 hours of homework per week. Most importantly, students should come into the course with an open mind, the ability to formulate questions, and the interest in working with others to find possible answers to questions and issues brought up in class.

### Course Outline

1. Metaphysics I - What is a Person?
  - What is Human Nature?
  - What is Personal Identity?
  - If It Thinks, Is It a Person?
2. Metaphysics II – What is a Meaningful Life?
  - Does God Exist?
  - What is a Good Life?
  - What is a Purposeful Life?
3. Aesthetics - How do you know what is beautiful in art?
  - What Are Beauty and the Arts?
  - What Are Value, Purpose, Meaning, and Truth in the Arts?
  - Is There Good and Bad Art?
4. Ethics – What Are Good and Evil?
  - Where Do Good and Evil Come From?
  - Why Be Good?
  - What Is Good?
5. Social & Political Philosophy – What is a Just Society?
  - What is Justice?
  - What Are Rights?
  - What is a Good Political Society?
6. Epistemology & Logic – What is Human Knowledge?
  - What Are Knowledge Skills?
  - How Do Philosophers Think Critically about Knowledge?
  - What Are the Origins of Knowledge?

### Required Textbooks/Equipment

Writing instrument (not a knife or stick with which to carve pictures and words)

Notebook/Paper & Binder specific to this course. Stay Organized!

Index Cards (4x6) - have them by the end of the second week. Share!

While there is no required course text, we will draw upon selections from:

Archetypes of Wisdom by Soccio, 8th ed. (2013)

Philosophy: The Big Questions by Cunningham, Lalonde, Neelin, & Peglar (2003)

The Simpsons & Philosophy by Irwin, Conrad, & Skoble (2004)

Plato and a Platypus Walk into a Bar by Cathcart & Klein (2007)

Art of Thinking by Ruggiero (2007)

Invitation to Philosophy : Issues & Options by Honer & Hunt (1982)

Big Questions: Philosophy for Everyone by Rauhut (2006)

Sophie's World: A Novel About the History of Philosophy by Gaarder (2007)

#### Grade Scale

A	=	94%
A-	=	90%
B+	=	87%
B	=	83%
B-	=	80%
C+	=	77%
C	=	73%
C-	=	70%
D	=	63%
D+	=	67%
D-	=	60%
F	=	0-59%

## Assignments and Assessments

**Classroom Activities & Lectures (10%):** Consider them more as guided discussions. Participate & take notes!

Students are encouraged to contribute to class discussions. Class participation provides the opportunity to practice speaking and persuasive skills, as well as the ability to listen. Comments that are vague, repetitive, unrelated to the current topic, disrespectful of others, or without sufficient foundation will not be allowed. Quality matters!

**Friday Forums (10%):** Personalize content & Facilitate greater depth of understanding.

**Examinations:** There will be two in-quarter exams (**10% each**) and one Final Exam (**20%**). You have one week to make up a missed exam due to an excused absence.\*

**Project (10%):** You will complete a project in each quarter – usually a Mindmap or presentation

**Weekly WIL What I Learned this past Week (6 x 5% each = 30%):** You should take 15-30 minutes at the end of each week to reflect on what you did and what you gained from the class.

My advice is to plan out a 5-paragraph essay including the following:

1. Introduction – What unit/topic was studied? Consider life outside of class.
2. What was actually done in class, including topic and activities?
3. What was learned by doing these things? How does knowing it affect your life?
4. Answer a question presented in class (for discussion, annotation, seminar, etc.).
5. Conclusion - what did you like and/or not like from the week and maybe a declaration of academic achievement – what is your LEARNER grade?

There is no RIGHT or WRONG and Weekly WILs will be scored as follows:

- 5% = Shows Mastery by being able to not only recall information, but also usefully apply it in the real world.
- 3% - 4% = Shows Achievement by being able to recall information, but connections are limited or non-existent.
- 1% - 2% = Something is submitted but student is unable to cite specifics or sufficient content from the week.
- 0 = Student did NOT submit Weekly WIL.

**Absences:** Students will have 1-3 days to make up any missed work for each excused day of absence.

**Be responsible!** I try to not have classwork due on Mondays or the first day after a break. But do not plan to put things off until the last moment and then find yourself unable to submit completed work. There is a 2-day “oops” window, but do not abuse it! Be proactive if you need more time.

## Office Hours

For outside-of-class help, please be mindful that I teach ZERO Hour TOK 2 and coach soccer after school from the beginning of the year into October. The BEST way to seek out support from me is via email.

## Technology Awareness

Know your school email username and password in order to fully utilize Google Apps.

Lesson explanations and (some) notes will be available online: [washburn.mpls.k12.mn.us/romophilosophy](http://washburn.mpls.k12.mn.us/romophilosophy)

## Classroom Procedures/Policies

- Be a respectful participant by listening to and sharing with your peers.
- Be on time to class. If you arrive late, be as inconspicuous as possible.
- Keep the critters away and leave food outside of class. Beverages are fine.
- Completed work should be neat and legible.

Washburn High School's  
“No Cell from Bell to Bell”  
Policy will be strictly enforced.

## Academic Integrity: Plagiarism/Consequences

All students are expected to adhere to the Washburn High School and Minneapolis District Citywide Discipline Policy, designed to promote a safe and respectful learning environment. For more information about your rights and responsibilities consult your Washburn Student/Parent Handbook.

It is expected that members of this class will observe strict policies of academic honesty and will be respectful of each other. Any instances in which cheating, including plagiarism and unauthorized use of copyrighted materials, computer accounts, or someone else's work is determined, will be referred to Student Services and will be investigated to its full extent.

Consider providing a definition of plagiarism and examples if desired or referring students to Washburn's Academic Honesty Policy (online).

Any form of cheating (copying, texting, notes, plagiarism, roving eyeballs, etc.) will result in automatic failure of assignment and further punishment to be determined by administration and parent/guardian after a conference.