



Duquesne University  
McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts  
Fall 2018



**Basic Philosophical Questions**

UCOR 132-01  
MWF 9-9.50am

Instr. M. V. Kramer  
O. H.: Fri 2-4pm/Appt.

kramerm1@duq.edu  
College Hall 352

This course will be a survey introduction to basic philosophical questions. Roughly speaking, emphasis will be on two fundamental fields of philosophy: ethics and aesthetics. Students will grasp key themes via the writings of central figures, seeing why it is that the issues they've grappled with have proven so enduring over time, while also coming to appreciate the impact that these ideas have on our shared understanding of life and art. The various perspectives presented by the authors and texts will offer their own insights into the perennial problems concerning the nature of goodness and beauty; the proper way to live, how to derive meaning from life, and what inspires the creation of art; the connection between thought and action, as well as between nature and artistry; and the standards or claims by which we arrive at ethical or aesthetic understanding.

The class shall also strive to keep in mind what may be the ultimate question that informs any philosophical theory or practice: what is philosophy? While definitive answers to these core issues may be hard to come by, students will engage with the material and each other in order to understand, interpret, and criticize the responses offered by the works we study. Beyond that, this class should ideally encourage students to indulge in a bit more aimless rumination and subversive curiosity while remaining tethered to the overriding principles of truth, trust, and tact.

Classes will largely consist of discussion guided by questions drawn from the readings, though establishing lectures will provide a framework for student engagement. Graded assignments will include mid-term and final exams, two section essays, and online discussion. Participation, moreover, will be expected. Readings will include works by Plato, Aristotle, René Descartes, David Hume, Viktor Frankl, Joseph Campbell, Shunryū Suzuki, Donald Ritchie, María Lugones, and Susan Sontag; as well as a screening of a film by Sophia Coppola.

