

# BASIC PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONS

UCOR I32-20  
MWF 3-3:50  
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OUR PURPOSE is to gain an initial understanding what philosophy is by watching some great philosophers—Plato, Ibn Sīnā, René Descartes, and Gabriel Marcel—at work and noting the range of questions they take up and how they deal with them. We will give special attention to questions about human nature, life and afterlife, and the goods of human life.

More specifically, we will engage in slow, thoughtful reading of Plato's *Apology*, *Meno*, and *Phaedo* with a view to understanding what is meant by wisdom, considering philosophy as a way of life, as a life of inquiry, and as a sort of death too, all in pursuit of wisdom. Then, after a brief look at the transmission of this ancient heritage through Ibn Sīnā, we will contrast the rather different account of human nature, inquiry, wisdom, life, and death presented by the father of modern philosophy, René Descartes, in his *Discourse on Method*. Finally, time permitting, we will sample contemporary philosophy through the existential approach of Gabriel Marcel toward wisdom about human life.

## Texts

- Plato. *Apology, Meno, & Phaedo*
- Ibn Sīnā. 'Allegory of the Flying Man'
- René Descartes. *Discourse on Method*
- Gabriel Marcel. 'Presence and Immortality'

## Requirements

Three essay exams, a journal, and participation.