

Basics of Analytic Philosophy

1. What Do We Do?

Philosophy addresses questions which are usually big, important, and are the intellectual leftovers – questions that we don't yet have complete methods for answering in any other academic discipline. Examples:

1. Does God exist? (A specific version: does an all-powerful, all-knowing, perfectly-benevolent agent who created the universe exist?)
2. Is it rational to have faith?
3. Are there objective facts about what's right and wrong?
4. Is the mind a physical entity?
5. Is there free will?
6. Is gender socially constructed?

2. How Do We Do It?

Through argument. Here's what the process looks like for an individual philosopher, which during Fall 2019, will be you!

Discover - Discover an intellectual reaction (for example, by contemplating a question or reading a philosophy paper)

Explore - Explore the reaction (for example, by free-writing)

Formalize - Turn the reaction into an argument. (This is the part that requires skills you'll be learning in this class). See if you still endorse the reaction upon seeing it in argument form. If not, modify the argument, or explore your reaction further. Play around until you're happy.

Convey - Convey the argument to others

Receive Feedback - If you're lucky enough to get feedback from another human, listen extremely carefully to their intellectual reaction. Take it in. Ask questions about it until you fully understand it. (Note – the aim is not to refute it, it's to *understand* it!)

Start over: Discover - Observe a reaction to their reaction in yourself...

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24.00 Problems of Philosophy
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