

# Rockwall-Heath High School

## 2019 - 2020

### IB Philosophy

<b>Instructor:</b>	Dan Ewert
<b>Time / Location:</b>	A & B Days: 1 <sup>st</sup> Period, Room 4009
<b>Office Hours:</b>	Pretty much everyday after school. Other times as arranged.
<b>Email address:</b>	<a href="mailto:daniel.ewert@rockwallisd.org">daniel.ewert@rockwallisd.org</a>
<b>Remind Code:</b>	@rhhsphil
<b>Google Classroom:</b>	riob9qp
<b>TurnItIn Class ID &amp; Enrollment Key:</b>	21919528 / rhhsphil

#### Course Description:

Studying philosophy provides an opportunity for students to engage with some of the world's most interesting and influential thinkers. It also develops highly transferable skills such as the ability to formulate arguments clearly, to make reasoned judgments and to evaluate highly complex and multifaceted issues. The emphasis of the Diploma Programme philosophy course is on "doing philosophy," that is, on actively engaging students in philosophical activity. The course is focused on stimulating students' intellectual curiosity and encouraging them to examine both their own perspectives and those of others.

Students are challenged to develop their own philosophical voice and to grow into independent thinkers. They develop their skills through the study of philosophical themes and the close reading of a philosophical text. They also learn to apply their philosophical knowledge and skills to real-life situations and to explore how non-philosophical material can be treated in a philosophical way.

The aim of the philosophy course is to engage students in philosophical activity, enabling them to:

- develop an inquiring and intellectually curious way of thinking
- formulate arguments in a sound and purposeful way
- examine critically their own experiences and their ideological and cultural perspectives
- appreciate the diversity of approaches within philosophical thinking
- apply their philosophical knowledge and skills to the world around them

The course will be divided into roughly into three major areas of study:

#### 1. **Being Human**

- a. This is the core theme of IB Philosophy and is required. We will examine what it means to be human from the aspects of human nature, personhood, mind and body, the self and the other, freedom, and identity. We will spend about two weeks examining each one.

#### 2. **Ethics**

- a. This is the optional theme we will explore. We will examine normative ethics (theories determining what makes things or actions right or wrong), meta-ethics (say, whether there is right or wrong or from where moral principles derive), and applied ethics (applying our thinking to real-world ethical issues, such as abortion stem cells, environmentalism, etc.).

#### 3. **Descartes *Meditations on First Philosophy***

- a. IB requires that we do a more intensive examination of a philosophical text and I've selected this out of the 12 available options.

#### Required Texts:

- Le Nezet, N.; et al, (2014). IB Philosophy Being Human Course Book. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Cottingham, J. (2017). Descartes: Meditations on First Philosophy. Cambridge University Press.
  - This will be available at Roma's Books
- Possibility for one or two more books, but this remains to be seen. I'll try to avoid it.

## IB Philosophy, 2019 - 2020

### \*\*\*Additional Materials

- Additional readings will be assigned as we proceed with the course and will be provided to you.
- All you need in general for this class is a notebook and writing utensil. The rest is up to you.

### \*\*\*Additional Tech Stuff

- Refer to the Google Classroom. The course join code is up above, as is the class Remind code.
- Everything will be posted in Classroom, including assignments.
- Unless we're using them, keep your phones on Do Not Disturb or Airplane mode and don't mess with them.

### Course Expectations:

- A. **Readings:** Students will be required to read the assigned readings in their entirety. Classroom discussions will be predicated on ideas and concepts related to the reading assignments. There will be regular readings throughout the course. Because the class will be heavily discussion-based, if you don't do the reading, we can't discuss.

### B. Assignments:

1. **Weekly writing:** Each Friday, you will submit a 1.5 to 2 page written response to whatever we have read that week. The purpose of this is for you to reflect upon and wrestle with the text. I do not want a summary. I want your analysis and evaluation of the argument of the philosophical work or of issues presented by the work. These will be worth double daily grades. You will provide me with a paper copy and will also submit it through TurnItIn. The heading should be nothing more than your name and the date of submission (single spaced). The rest of the paper should be double-spaced with one inch margins and standard font (Times New Roman, Calibri, Helvetica, Cambria) and 10-12 point font. DO NOT play around with paper conventions or I will deduct points.

Do not be intimidated by this (even though I know you probably are). Two pages will seem like a lot at first, but as we progress, you'll find it easier and easier to express yourself and to delve into the issues in such a way that will fill up the space. The first several will also be graded relatively leniently while we get into it. We will also go over writing advice and structure.

- a. There are several purposes for this writing:
- i. I need to be able to assess your writing and argumentation ability and help you improve it. It will be ugly at first. The professor who helped me improve my writing more than any other made my papers bleed red. I'll do so the same for you. I'll be picky.
  - ii. The ultimate IB assessments at the end of the year require good writing, clear argumentation, and structure. That won't happen if you don't constantly practice.
  - iii. Most importantly... E.M. Forster: "How do I know what I think until I see what I say?" Flannery O'Connor: "I write because I don't know what I think until I read what I say." The process of writing compels you to think through your argument and your ideas in ways that mere pondering or speaking do not. The long-form essay - and even shorter essays - are becoming lost art forms in favor of tweets, memes, and the sharing of nonsense. Where that goes, the quality of thought will go with it. Do better.
2. **Quarterly Writing:** Once a quarter, you will do a longer writing based on what we have covered so far. This will be a 4-5 page paper and I will give you essay prompts that you may select from. These will be major grades. Do not be intimidated by this either. You will already be accustomed to 2 page writings. This will be just going a little further into the chosen topic.
3. **In-class writing:** Twice each quarter, we will do in-class writing. This is to prepare you for the eventual IB assessments in May. I will select prompts that have been used in the past and will grade you according to the IB rubric. These will be major grades. We may do this a few more times than the base 2 in T4 as we prepare for the IB exams.

## IB Philosophy, 2019 - 2020

4. **Other:** There may be additional daily grades for, say, class or online participation, pop quizzes to make sure you're reading, etc.
- C. **Online Participation:** There may be online discussions.
- D. **Class Participation:** Pay attention, ask questions, discuss. I always like classes that are more talkative and curious. Quiet classes are boring. And for a philosophy class, discussion and interaction are very important.

### Point Breakdown:

- Summative Grades: 70%
- Formative Grades: 30%

### Course Policies:

**Attendance Policy:** Be here and on time. If you have to be late for some reason, have a pass. If you're going to be gone for some reason, you can check with me. If you are gone for some reason, check Google Classroom for any assignments. You can also talk to your classmates or contact me. I cannot let you leave the class without a pass or phone call from Attendance.

**Other:** There are more that I don't care to waste paper on. I'll go over them the first day and they're accessible via Classroom. But I will make note of these:

- Don't cheat. Don't copy. You'll only be more stupid for having done so and risk zeroes if and when you're caught. And if you have copy work for ANY class inside my classroom, I will destroy both copies and confiscate your phone if you're copying off a picture.
- Your cell phones are the devil. They distract you. They call to you. They take you out of the moment. They put your mind everywhere but where it needs to be right now. Do yourself a favor. Put it on mute. Put it in your backpack. Leave it there until the end of class or until you can get it out for class purposes.
- DO NOT pack up your stuff or start putting things away until I stop class. I will almost always stop with 30-60 seconds left before the bell so you have time for that. It's a huge pet peeve of mine. Huge. So. Huge.
- If I give you time in class to work on something, use it. You're not going to do it later and you're wasting my time that I'm giving you.

**A special note on cheating and plagiarism:** Don't do it. I'm interested in your ideas, your thinking, and your writing. Plagiarism is not just copying and pasting. It's changing words, omitting sentences, etc. It's passing off other people's writing or ideas as your own. I understand there are pressures on your time. I understand this may be hard. I understand you may be worried about your grade or your GPA or your class rank. If you're having issues, talk to me and do it before due dates. I will respect you far more if you admit to me you're having issues, or if you do an insufficient job, or if it's too short, or if it's late – all of this – than if you cheat or plagiarize. I hate it. I have students from my past whom I caught cheating in some capacity and their cheating is STILL something that I remember most about them, even going back 14 years. I don't want your cheating and my disappointment in that to be something that I remember about you in the future. Respect me, respect yourself, and respect the work and the process. Treat it all honestly.

# IB Philosophy, 2019 - 2020

## **Course Structure:**

These are all rough dates and are subject to change as we proceed.

### **I. Introductory Material**

1. 8/19 – 8/30

### **II. Core Theme: Being Human**

1. Human Nature
  - a. 9/3 – 9/13
2. Personhood
  - a. 9/16 – 9/27
3. Mind and Body
  - a. 9/30 – 10/11
4. The Self and the Other
  - a. 10/15 – 10/25
5. Freedom
  - a. 10/21 – 11/1
6. Identity
  - a. 11/4 – 11/15
7. Buffer and Other
  - a. 11/18 – 11/22

### **III. Ethics**

1. 12/2 – 2/28

### **IV. Descartes *Meditations***

1. 3/1 – 4/30

## IB Philosophy, 2019 - 2020

### IB Assessments

Similar to AP classes, IB classes also have assessments at the end. Inconveniently, they fall during the same testing window as AP tests. If there is a conflict, you will take your IB exams at the assigned times, and make up your AP exams later.

Dissimilar to AP exams, IB assessments focus more on writing and critical thinking. There's no multiple choice section and there's no easy-to-follow grading rubric (for good and ill).

There are effectively three different assessments.

1. The IA (Internal Assessment)
  - a. From the course guide: "Students are required to complete a philosophical analysis of a non-philosophical stimulus. This component is internally assessed by the teacher and externally moderated by the IB at the end of the course."
  - b. We'll talk later about what this means and how it's graded. Short answer is that it's a max 2,000 word essay that you will write on a stimulus of your choosing that is non-philosophical in nature (could be a news article or event, a scene from a movie, a comic, a song, etc.). You will do a philosophical analysis coming from that stimulus. I grade it and submit that grade to IB, but examiners will take a sampling of essays and moderate them for accuracy. Effectively, they're grading my grading at the same time as they're grading you.
  - c. We will go over the paper schedule later. We will begin the process of writing it beginning in the second quarter. This includes meetings with me.
  - d. This counts for 25% of your overall IB grade.
2. The EAs (External Assessments)
  - a. There are two:
    - i. Paper 1 (afternoon of May 6<sup>th</sup>) (50% of your IB grade)
      1. Two sections:
        - a. Section A
          - i. You will be given two stimulus-based questions about the core theme (being human). You must write on one of them.
        - b. Section B
          - i. You will be given two questions for each of the optional themes. You will focus only the questions for Ethics and you must answer one of those two.
      - ii. Paper 2 (morning of May 7<sup>th</sup>) (25% of your IB grade)
        1. You will be given two questions for each of the prescribed texts, each with two parts. You will focus only on the questions for Descartes' *Meditations*. You will answer one of the two questions, answering both parts of that question.

