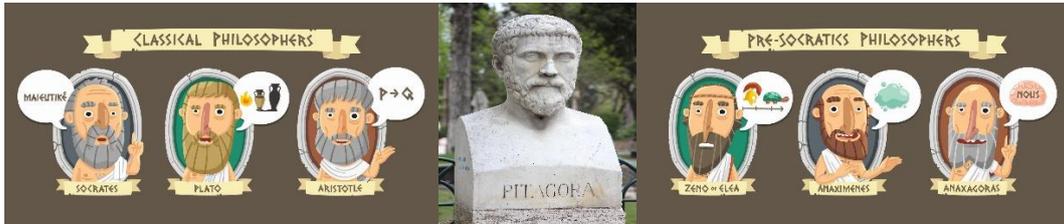# FULL COURSE DESCRIPTION FOR CLASSES RUNNING FROM 23/03/2026 TO 27/04/2026

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1 Introduction To Philosophy

Join us for an engaging evening of online classes delving into the history and development of Western Philosophy. This first class will cover key philosophical concepts, encourage lively debates, and provide a platform for intellectual discussions. We begin at the very beginning — with the pre-Socratic philosophers such as Thales of Miletus, Pythagoras, Zeno of Elea and Heraclitus. We explore how rational thought first began to emerge from myth, speculation, and bold conjecture, while also recognising the tensions and inconsistencies that remained. How do we reconcile the mathematical brilliance behind Pythagoras's famous theorem with his mystical beliefs about transmigration of souls and curious prohibitions about beans and everyday life? This course traces the birth of philosophical reasoning — serious, critical thinking about the world — and shows how it continues to shape the way we think today. No prior knowledge is required.Any questions? Email: adrian.brockless@gmail.com Web: https://www.adrianbrockless.com/evening-classes

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2 Truth and the Examined Life: Plato's Apology and the Question of Knowledge

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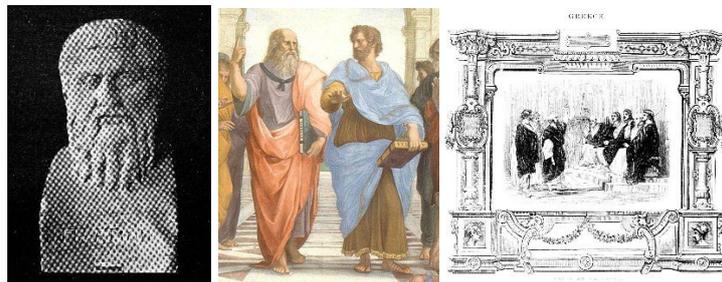
This evening class introduces Plato through his dialogue The Apology, and through doing so addresses one of philosophy's most enduring questions: what is truth? We will explore whether truth is simply what appears convincing to us, as the sophist Protagoras suggested when he claimed that "man is the measure of all things", or whether truth is independent of opinion and belief altogether. The discussion will consider how truth differs from mere opinion, whether the idea of moral truth can coherently extend into other domains such as science, and how we distinguish genuine knowledge from beliefs that later turn out to be false. The class is designed for those with no prior background in philosophy and will centre on thoughtful, open conversation. Details about classes here: https://www.adrianbrockless.com/evening-classes

③ What Is Courage? Socrates, Language, and the Problem of Meaning

This evening class explores these questions through Plato's dialogue Laches, using the discussion of courage as a gateway into much wider issues about language, knowledge, and authority. When Socrates asks for a strict definition of bravery, he raises a problem that later re-emerges in analytic philosophy with figures such as Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, and Ludwig Wittgenstein: can words always be captured by strict definitions, or does language do more than simply label neatly defined concepts? We will consider whether the search for exact definitions is always productive, what this means for ideas such as art, music, and virtue, and how different models of language shape contemporary debates, including those surrounding artificial intelligence. Along the way, we examine the nature of expertise, the limits of authority, the role of trust in knowledge, and the Socratic method as a discipline of intellectual humility and moral self-scrutiny. Once again, no prior knowledge of philosophy is required. Further details here: https://www.adrianbrockless.com/evening-classes

④ Learning What We Do Not Know: Innate Ideas and the Blank Slate
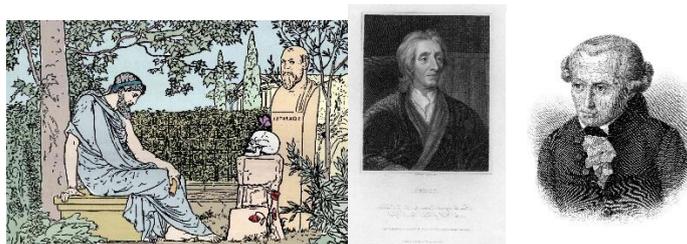
This evening class begins with Plato's famous "Meno's Paradox": how can we search for something if we do not yet know what it is? From there we explore the Theory of Recollection and the wider question of whether the mind is born as a blank slate, as later argued by thinkers such as John Locke, or whether we possess some form of innate structure or knowledge, as suggested in different ways by René Descartes, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Immanuel Kant. Along the way we consider the difference between propositional knowledge ("knowing that"), acquaintance, and ability ("knowing how"), and ask how perception, language, and truth are connected. We also examine memory and personal identity, including the classic puzzle of the Ship of Theseus, before turning to the contrast between rhetoric and philosophy, and the tension between popular opinion and reasoned insight in democratic life. No prior knowledge of philosophy is required; the aim is simply to help you see how philosophical thinking works in practice. More details here: https://www.adrianbrockless.com/evening-classes

5 Knowing the Good, Doing the Bad, Thinking the Ugly: Moral Dilemmas and AI
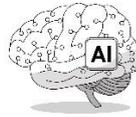
This evening class begins with the structure of a moral dilemma, drawing on Plato's Gorgias and the classic problem of weakness of will: how is it possible to judge one action better and yet choose another? We examine temptation, akrasia (weakness of will), and the tension between knowing what is right and doing it, before asking whether wrongdoing is really ignorance, as Socrates suggests, or something more complex. From there, the discussion turns to artificial intelligence: can a machine face a genuine moral dilemma, or only calculate probabilities of preferred outcomes? Does AI have "better judgements," or merely programmed optimisation functions? Exploring what counts as a better outcome, whether moral significance is reducible to observable action, and how moral progress differs from scientific progress, we gently introduce questions in epistemology and philosophy of mind. The session is designed to show how moral reasoning, knowledge, and emerging technologies intersect in ways that are both philosophically rigorous and immediately contemporary. No prior knowledge of philosophy is required. Further details here:
https://www.adrianbrockless.com/evening-classes

6 Following Rules: Wittgenstein, Meaning, and the Social Self

This class introduces Ludwig Wittgenstein's distinction between merely acting in accordance with a rule and genuinely following one, and asks what this tells us about meaning, normativity, and shared practice. We examine the Private Language Argument and the claim that a language referring to purely private sensations is incoherent, which in turn challenges the idea that psychological words are labels attached to inner feelings. From there, we connect these themes to contemporary questions about artificial intelligence: can an AI system genuinely follow a rule, or does it only produce outputs that accord with rules under interpretation? Can it possess concepts like pain, belief, or intention without participation in a human form of life? Finally, we explore the implications for personal identity. If psychological predicates depend upon public criteria, then identity cannot be fixed solely by private feeling or first-person declaration, but is shaped within a network of shared human responsiveness. Through these questions, we explore the deep connections between language, normativity, the constitution of the self, and human forms of life more generally. No prior knowledge of philosophy is required.

7 Does God Exist? Faith and Philosophical Scrutiny

For our final class in this block of six, we turn to one of the most enduring and socially significant questions in philosophy: does God exist? We will examine classical arguments for the existence of God, including the cosmological arguments set out in the first three "Ways" of Thomas Aquinas, the teleological reasoning of the Fifth Way and its later development in William Paley's design argument, and the ontological approach associated with thinkers such as Anselm of Canterbury. We then consider powerful objections, especially the problem of evil: how can a being who is all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving coexist with suffering and injustice? In response, we explore the free will defence and its critics, including Stephen Law's "evil God challenge," which presses the question of whether the same reasoning could equally defend a malevolent deity. Along the way we reflect on ideas such as moral responsibility, remorse, and what it would mean for goodness itself to be ultimate. No prior background in philosophy or theology is required.