“The unexamined life is not worth living,” exclaimed the Greek philosopher Socrates, setting the tone for the philosophical quests that have shaped our thought and civilization. “Neither is the examined one,” retorted the German philosopher Schopenhauer 2,300 years later after surveying the prospects of humanity in the modern world. In between these two propositions are a myriad of speculations that make up the tradition of critical thinking called Philosophy.

This quarter, SNL students will take a quick 10-week, around-the-world philosophical tour to sample the writings and thought of some important ancient and modern Eastern and Western philosophers dating from 700 B.C. to 2017 A.D. We will begin with Lao Tzu and Confucius in ancient China; take a look at Hinduism and Buddhism in ancient India; then jump to classical Greece in the fourth century B.C. to read some Plato and Aristotle and view the origin of Western Philosophy; then leap forward to 17th century A.D. France to look at the genesis of modern critical philosophy with Descartes; move on to 18th century Germany to think about the foundation of rational ethics with Immanuel Kant; the 19th century roots of Existentialism with Friedrich Nietzsche, flee to 20th century England and Bertrand Russell and the philosophical foundations of modern science, finally back to France and the Existentialism of Jean Paul Sartre, ending our tour in Paris.

Of course, it is impossible to study all these philosophers in any detail, or to touch upon scores of others who have made great philosophical contributions. But through this brief around-the-world tour, students will get a basic overview of some philosophical theories and traditions developed in various regions of the world since the beginning of civilization and read selections from some of the great books of civilization. Along the way we will discuss some of the enduring questions of metaphysics, epistemology, logic, ethics,
language, aesthetics and politics (the seven classical fields of philosophy) from these different perspectives.

In addition to reading on your own, each week we will read out loud together in class from the text of these philosophers in a “reading circle.” Each person will read a paragraph or two before the narrative passes to the next person in the reading circle. We will stop along the way to interpret what we are reading, to ask questions and for the Instructor to put the text in the context of the history of philosophy.

We also will look at the tools of critical thinking, including: observation, conceptual analysis, logic, inference, intuition, imagination, metaphor and speculation. Students will use these and other tools to discover and articulate their own stand on several critical philosophical questions that will make up the nine writing assignments of the quarter; and to turn the great questions inward.

After each class, students will think about what we have read, read further on their own, read an on-line biography of the author or subject, and write a Meditation based on the weekly writing question, a copy of which will be handed in to the Instructor for comment, either on the subject you have written about, or on your writing style. (The Instructor is a professional writer who may be able to make suggestions to strengthen your writing skills and style.)

Plato concluded that the only worthy goal in life is pursuit of “The Good, The True, The Beautiful.” Indeed. But each of us needs to develop critical thinking skills to evaluate our own values and goals. This course will help provide both substance and methods to sharpen our skills of critical thinking and our personal philosophy.

**Competences Offered:**

A-4 Can analyze a problem using two different ethical systems.

A-3-A Can interpret experience in relationship to the perspective of a significant thinker or tradition.

A-3-E Can compare substantially different theological or philosophical systems.

**Expected Outcomes:**

Upon successful completion of this course, the student should have:

1. A broad overview of the history of philosophy and some important thinkers and issues;

2. Familiarity with diverse thinking styles;
3. An ability to think about, discuss and write about, philosophical questions;

4. An ability to organize and present a rational argument and employ critical thinking skills;

5. Experience in relating philosophical questions and thinking to one’s own self and society.

Learning Strategies:

1. Informal lectures and discussions;

2. Weekly readings in philosophy. Each student will be expected to complete weekly reading assignments and keep a Reading Log of pages they read in a spiral notebook;

3. Youtubes of the various philosophers. Each week, before class, students should watch a youtube overview of each philosopher.

4. Weekly writing assignments. Each student will be expected to complete a short, informal, weekly writing assignment based upon the readings. These “Meditations” should be aimed, in part, at the specific competences that a student has signed up to fulfill, and it is the student’s responsibility to make sure they do so. See the list of writing questions at the end of the syllabus for your “Meditations”;

Meditations may do things like: 1. Identify a specific quote from the text to focus on a major idea(s) in the reading; 2. Attempt to analyze the quote and concept by trying to define what these ideas mean; 3. Discuss what other ideas might be related to the first idea; 4. Pose some questions for the philosopher or writer of the text or our class to clarify or defend the idea; 5. Or discuss how you think about that idea in the context of your own life.

Or the weekly Meditation based on the reading may take any other direction the student finds interesting.

Each week, the student will bring in a copy of this Meditation to class for the instructor. (Keep the original in your notebook, and later add my copy with comments. Hand me a copy.) The Meditation will not be graded, per se, but may be discussed in a small group or full class as a point of departure for a class conversation on the weekly reading. I will categorize it as: “Read my comments, then do over,” “Good,” “Very Good,” “Excellent,” or sometimes, “Outstanding.”

The weekly writing assignment is to be a minimum of one page. It may be as long as the student deems necessary to think about the reading and the Meditation writing questions.
At the end of the quarter the student will collect all Meditations as a part of the final notebook. They may be written by hand or on a computer, as long as I get a “copy,” not the “original.”

5. Students will be expected to attend all classes (except for sickness or work travel and to notify the instructor about absences, „don’t come to class if you are really sick and can make the rest of us sick). Reading and writing assignments will be completed despite any absences;

6. Each student will be expected to actively participate in classroom discussions and debates and to seriously think about the assigned issues before attending class;

7. Each student will be expected to turn in a final spiral notebook that collects weekly writing assignments; and includes a weekly Reading Log of essays read; a list of new vocabulary words looked up; and that includes any class notes or any other reflective thinking/writing about essays or class discussions; plus a final essay section on “What I have learned this quarter.” (I will keep this copy) The notebook will be submitted to the instructor on class 10.

Learning Tools:
(Order only Paperbacks)

1. *Tao Te Ching* by Lao Tzu, Dover Publications, ISBN 9780486297927, ($2.15); (Make sure you have this one by the first class and bring it with you.)


4. *Six Great Dialogues* by Plato, Dover Publications, ISBN 9780486454658, ($5.50);

5. *Nicomachean Ethics* by Aristotle, Dover Publications, ISBN 9780486400969, ($4.05);


8. *Beyond Good and Evil* by Friedrich Nietzsche, Dover Publications, ISBN 9780486298689, ($3.60);


10. *Existentialism and Human Emotions* by Jean Paul Sartre, Citadel Press Books,
ISBN 9780806509020; ($9.95).

I have hunted to find the cheapest versions of these texts. Total cost for new books: $56.99 plus tax (prices may have increased slightly); Used books will cost less, some as little as $0.01, plus shipping on Amazon; or many of these texts can be found in the library. Also, some of the actual text can be found online, if you search for it (If you do this, print it out and bring it or bring it to read on your mobile devices.)

We will only have time to read only small selections from each book, but this is the best way to get to authentic passages to think about. These also are “Life-Long Learning” resources and make a good addition to your personal library.

Emphasis in this class is put on reading, writing and thinking about, and discussing the selected text, as we read together. I am not testing you on “getting it right” but rather that you “get into it.”

But additionally, for “Life-Long Learning,” an Internet search engine, like Yahoo.com or Google, can take you to Internet sights that offer biographical and textual documents on all the thinkers discussed in this class, although the text listed above and a notebook are all that you need in this class. You should watch a youtube or read a short biographical sketch of each thinker before coming to class.

Evaluation:

Grades will be assigned, based upon:

1. The completion of reading and writing assignments;

2. The quality of oral and written work;

3. The quantity and quality of class participation in discussions;

4. Class attendance.

Time Framework and reading schedule: Bring these books to class each week.

**Week 1:** June 14, 2017: *Tao Te Ching* by Lao Tzu

**Week 2:** June 21, 2017: *The Analects* by Confucius

**Week 3:** July 28, 2017: *The Upanishads*

**Week 4:** July 5, 2017: *Six Great Dialogues* by Plato. We will listen to a tape of *Apology* as we read along silently. Time permitting we will read some key passages from other famous Platonic dialogues *Symposium* or *The Republic.*
**Weekly Meditation/Writing Questions**

**After Week 1:** First, what is “The Way” which Lao Tzu sought? What adjectives does he use? What else do you think about his ideas? Next, what is the most simple, intuitive “Way” that you follow, or hear calling you, if you listen? Or, what is “The Way” of the Cosmos? Or, what is “The Way” you lead your life?

**After Week 2:** For Confucius, what virtues and characteristics does the “The Good Man” exhibit? What about the Good ruler or government?

And perhaps, compose one/two/three Confucian aphorisms about moral, political, spiritual truths or beliefs in the modern world. For example: “The Wise Man takes a long lunch. So does the poor man.”

**After Week 3:** Pick two/three/four quotes about the nature of human existence or the path of spiritual development from the *Upanishads* and meditate in writing about what they mean and if they could have any relevance in the modern world? Why were you attracted to these ideas?

**After Week 4:** If you were on the Athenian jury of 399 B.C. hearing the case of “Athens v Socrates,” would you find Socrates guilty? If you were on a Chicago jury hearing the same case, how would you vote? Use three/five quotes or more and reasons to support your decision.

*Or consider this* quote from the *Apology*: “I tell you that virtue is not given by money, but that from virtue come money and every other good of man, public as well as private. This is my teaching, and if this is the doctrine which corrupts the youth, my influence is ruinous indeed.” What is Virtue? Is Socrates right that from Virtue comes every other good of man?” Why? Why not?

**After Week 5:** Make a list of the human characteristics that Aristotle calls “Virtues.” Pick two of these virtues, with a quote from Aristotle, and meditate on why are they “good?”
What does it mean, for example, to be Wise? What does it mean to be Just? Why is moderation a virtue? (Or think about “The Golden Mean.”) Or pick other Aristotelian virtues. What virtues do the Superior or Magnanimous Man exhibit? Also, make a list of traits the contemporary, 21st century culture considers to be virtues?

**After Week 6:** Sit in silence for a few minutes. (Buddha thought this is one of the hardest things to do.) Descartes says by pure thinking, you can find your “Self,” your soul, your “I” and that you can found a philosophy upon this contact or “indubitable” knowledge. Can you find your Self/Soul/I? What is it like? What is it or is it made of? David Hume said that there is no real existing “I.” Hume thought the self/soul was more like a projection of imagination mixing images of experience, habit, custom, and memory together, but there is no real self or soul at all.

Or, battle with one of the classic “proofs of the Existence of God,” from St. Thomas Aquinas’ “Five Ways,” or St. Anselm or Descartes’ “Ontological Proof.”

**After Week 7:** State Kant’s “Categorical Imperative,” the CI. Take two/three moral problems to test with the Categorical Imperative. State the moral principle that is involved with the issue at hand, such as “Should I cheat on my taxes?” “Should we use techniques of torture to get information in defense of National Security?” “Is capital punishment morally right?” “Should hand guns be banned?” Or pick your own example of a moral issue in the news.

First, state the rule of the moral action involved. Second, Can you rationally will that principle could become a universal law of human conduct? Why/why not?

Then conclude, does the C.I. allow or condemn that principle as a morally permissible/recommended (rational) action? Is the C.I. a viable moral principle?

**After Week 8:** Pick three/five quotes from “Beyond Good and Evil” to analyze and meditate upon through your writing.

**After Week 9:** What is Bertrand Russell’s definition or conception of “knowledge?” How do we get knowledge? Find three/four Russell quotes from the text and analyze them.

Or,

**For Week 10:** What is Existentialism according to Jean Paul Sartre? Assemble three/four quotes from Sartre and think about them in writing.

**About the Instructor:**
R. Craig Sautter is a poet, writer, editor, publisher, and political media consultant. (He wrote and produced Barack Obama’s first six electronic ads in 2000). He received an M.A. in philosophy from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. For the past 36 years, he has taught courses in philosophy, politics, history, literature, and creative writing at the School for New Learning. He also teaches “Chicago Politics” with DePaul freshmen in the “Explore Chicago” program and during the winter classes in “Critical Thinking and Ethics” at Miami Dade College.
Sautter is author or coauthor of 10 books and numerous articles, including for the academic journal, *Teaching Philosophy*. (You can view three of his books at [www.presidentialconventions.com](http://www.presidentialconventions.com)) He was the 47th president of The Society of Midland Authors. He also served for seven years on the Governor-appointed Advisory Board of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. He’s won several DePaul teaching awards.

He believes that meaningful learning is student-centered and should qualitatively enhance each student’s knowledge and life.

**Contacting the Instructor:**
The best way to contact the instructor about questions or class absences is to e-mail him at rcsautter@aol.com. You first should ask your fellow students questions, especially if you miss a class. (We will exchange emails and phone numbers.)

**University Policy & Resources:**

- [Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- [Incomplete Policy](#)
- [Course Withdrawal Timelines and Grade/Fee Consequences](#)
- [Accommodations Based on the Impact of a Disability](#)
- [Protection of Human Research Participants](#)

1. **Other Resources for Students**
   - [University Center for Writing-based Learning](#)
   - [SNL Writing Guide](#)
   - [Dean of Students Office](#)