Phil 103 - What is Enlightenment?

Course Description

In this introductory philosophy course, we will study a variety of historically significant approaches to the question of how we should live and what a fully human life looks like, or conceptions of enlightenment. These diverse approaches will focus on the cultivation of moral character, the pursuit of knowledge, and social justice. In each case, we will ask: What is enlightenment? What situation of darkness are we in, that we need enlightenment? What are the obstacles to enlightenment? We will attempt to answer those questions through the practice of philosophy — the search for wisdom through critical thinking, constructive dialogue, and argumentative writing.

Learning Outcomes

Successful students in the course will:

- Examine diverse definitions of the concept of enlightenment from multiple global traditions
- Examine the concept of social justice, especially around issues of gender and race
- Analyze why social justice and other forms of enlightenments are difficult to achieve
- Evaluate the arguments for these positions
- Examine how these diverse perspectives challenge their own conceptual and normative presuppositions on these issues
- Identify and justify their own positions on these issues, in class discussion and in argumentative writing
- Have fun!

No prerequisites or corequisites.

Course may be used as an elective in the Philosophy major.