

## INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

*Professor: William Goodwin*

Hi, I'm William Goodwin, and I want to welcome you to your Introduction of Philosophy. I'll tell you a little bit about myself. I grew up in Miami, and then my education took me out to California where I got my Ph.D. At the University of California, Berkeley. And now I'm finally back in Florida and teaching philosophy to undergraduates. So I want to welcome you to this introductory philosophy class.

So there are really two traditional ways that you can run an introductory philosophy course. And the first is to do a sort of historical survey of classic thinkers in philosophers, maybe starting with Plato and then Aristotle and then even Descartes. And this has a lot of virtues. It introduces you to some of the classic texts in philosophy, and you get exposed to the tradition which makes up the core of what philosophers do these days.

It has a downside though which is that sometimes these readings can feel inaccessible to the contemporary student. And some people don't see the point of reading things from 2,000 years ago.

The second kind of approach to doing introduction to philosophy is to do a sort of current topics in philosophy where you go through a series of different contemporary topics that people work on, such as the nature of ethics or the mind body problem, and you read a little bit about each of these topics. Now this approach is virtuous, because it gives you a sampling of what philosophers nowadays are doing. And you might actually read some works from contemporary philosophers. So that has its positive sides too.

The downside to that though is that you never go into depth into anything, and I think the real power of philosophy is that it transforms your understanding of things that you already thought you understood.

So my strategy for running this course is to do a little bit of both the historical strategy and the topic strategy, and I'm going to do that by making the first half of the course a topical introduction to a variety of different topics in contemporary philosophy. But we're going to read some of the classic texts of the past in the course of introducing these topics as well as some more contemporary articles by mainstream modern philosophers.

But in order to provide the depth and really show you what a philosophical analysis of a particular topic can do, we're going to spend the second half of the course analyzing one particular topic in philosophy and looking at what happens to it and how it transforms when you think carefully about.

And the topic we're going to look into is terrorism. We're going to read a philosophical attempt to understand what terrorism is and to evaluate its moral status, that is to say, whether and why or under what circumstances, terrorism could be justified. We'll finish that up with three case studies

of historical episodes of terrorism, and then you, in your final paper, will get a chance to research an episode of terrorism yourself and assess its moral status.

And I hope at the end of this course, you will have seen something of what the past of philosophy was like and also its potential for changing your way of thinking going forward. Thank you.