LFSAB1802

2010-2011

Philosophy. Introductory Course

3.0 credits	15.0 h + 15.0 h	1q

Teacher(s) :	Mercier Stéphane ;
Language :	Français
Place of the course	Louvain-la-Neuve
Main themes :	Introduction to philosophical reasoning through the study of the following conceptual pairs: intuition vs.reason, determinism vs. freedom, mind of geometry vs. mind of subtlety, analysis vs.synthesis, subjective vs.objective, animated vs.inanimated. Analysis of problematic situations which question rational explanation (e.g. X prefers A to B and chooses B). Trough A. Turing's Imitation Game, study of the man/machine distinction, of its presuppositions (existence of the soul or not) and of its consequences (semantics vs. syntax distinction). Analysis of the foundations and the philosophical implications of the democratic idea: problem of infinite regression (people vote to decide that they vote), the " natural light" concept , general agreement and argumentation, notion of majority and its limit-cases.
Aims :	By the end of this course, the students should be able to distinguish the different kinds of rationality and their respective fields of relevance, to know the great theories which have had a large influence on the History of Philosophy, and to reason on a philosophical ground to justify a decision in terms of values *The contribution of this Teaching Unit to the development and command of the skills and learning outcomes of the programme(s) can be accessed at the end of this sheet, in the section entitled "Programmes/courses offering this Teaching Unit".*
Content :	The course has three parts 1. Theoretical Introduction 2. Analysis exercise and argumentation in small groups on a given theme 3. Assessment of the exercise performed by another group: cross assessment The considered theories are, among others ones, those of Aristotle: non-rational quality of the 1st principles of reason Pascal: spirit of geometry versus spirit of finesse Descartes: Analysis and synthesis Kant: determinism and freedom, impossibility of knowing man Turing: Do machines think? Davidson: rational explanation and irrational behaviour H.H. Hope: Against democracy Leo Strauss: Foundations of the democratic method The analysis and argumentation exercise consists in applying some principles and philosophical reasoning to a given situation: e.g. lying to the benefit of a noble goal; machine imitating human behaviour, vote to the majority. The cross assessment exercise calls for critical lecture, on historical, ethical, logical level and following given assessment standards, of the work of another group.
Other infos :	Prerequisites: No specific previous knowledge is required Evaluation: The student has to write a paper (about 10 pages) on a chosen philosophical book and to pass a written examination on the matter of the oral course. Support: Text book Methodological texts.
Cycle and year of study :	> Bachelor in Engineering
Faculty or entity in charge:	BTCI