Faculty of Applied Sciences

FSAB1802   Philosophy. Introductory Course

[15h+15h exercises] 3 credits

This course is taught in the 2nd semester

Teacher(s):   Jean-Michel Counet
Language: French
Level: First cycle

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

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.

Content and teaching methods

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 information (prerequisite, evaluation (assessment methods), course materials recommended readings, ...)

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.

Other credits in programs

ARCH12BA	Deuxième année de bachelier en sciences de l'ingénieur, orientation ingénieur civil architecte	(3 credits)	Mandatory
ELME23/E	Troisième année du programme conduisant au grade d'ingénieur civil électro-mécanicien (énergie)	(3 credits)	
FSA11BA	Première année de bachelier en sciences de l'ingénieur, orientation ingénieur civil	(3 credits)	Mandatory
FSA12BA	Deuxième année de bachelier en sciences de l'ingénieur, orientation ingénieur civil	(3 credits)	
SINF11BA	Première année d'études de bachelier en sciences informatiques	(3 credits)	Mandatory
SINF12BA	Deuxième année d'études de bachelier en sciences informatiques	(3 credits)	