

*Catholic District School Board Writing Partnership*

# Course Profile

## **Philosophy: The Big Questions**

Grade 11

Open

HZB30

• *for teachers by teachers*

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### **Acknowledgments**

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## Course Overview

### Philosophy: The Big Questions, Grade 11, Open, HZB30

#### Course Description

This course addresses four fundamental philosophical questions about life: What does it mean to be human? What is art and how do we know what is beautiful in the arts? What are good and evil? What is a just society? These questions by no means represent all the branches of philosophy but they have been at the centre of philosophical inquiry for a long time. Two related questions are also included as essential to each unit of study found within the course: What is human knowledge? What is a meaningful life?

Throughout the course, students learn to think logically and to apply creative and critical-thinking skills. They learn to communicate their own answers to philosophical questions and evaluate the role philosophy plays in the quest for human happiness and social order. Students also learn the skills necessary to research and investigate various traditions in philosophy and the application of philosophy to other subject areas such, as history, science, art, and religion.

#### How This Course Supports the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations

Philosophy begins with wonder and with questions. As a tool for thinking, philosophy seeks to provide explanations, arguments, and proof for the questions and ideas generated by philosophical inquiry. Like all disciplines, philosophy is an activity with its own perspectives, lexicon, classifications, traditions, and methods of rational assessment. In its simplest form, however, philosophy can be described as a search for truth, clarity, and life wisdom. This search, by its nature, leads to an exploration of questions concerning the existence of God, the role of the citizen in a just society, the difference between good and evil, how family members should behave towards each other, and the uniqueness of the human person and culture.

The Catholic intellectual tradition is no stranger to philosophy and its search for wisdom.

From its earliest writings, particularly in the Pauline epistles, Christian thinkers have acknowledged and addressed the philosophies of western civilization. Sometimes, these encounters have been mutually beneficial and respectful. At other times, the relationships between philosophy and Catholicism have been strained, if not actually antagonistic. In spite of this sometimes turbulent history, the Catholic Church claims that a working knowledge of the philosophical traditions of the world is indispensable for thinking Catholics (John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 1998).

This course provides an opportunity for students to explore the correlation between the “big questions” and methods that have informed philosophy and the reflections proffered by the Catholic tradition. In doing so, the course contributes to the efforts of students to become effective communicators, reflective and creative thinkers, collaborative contributors, and responsible citizens.

Students explore the human condition in a reflective, critical manner in an effort to understand the unique dignity and value of each person. Various approaches to the nature of the body, mind, and spirit and their relationships are examined. These questions have always been integral to Catholicism.

Students also investigate that peculiarly human accomplishment – art. They investigate the creative impulse and develop a critical analysis of various artistic forms. The experience of literature, music, and the visual arts – both their creation and interpretation – is essential to the life of the discerning believer.

In addressing the questions of good and evil, students apply the values of the gospels to moral issues in the personal and social realms.

The question of what constitutes a just society is examined in light of the message of Jesus and Catholic social teaching. Students reflect on the nature of responsible citizenship, the notion of the common good, and the imperatives of environmental ethics.

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All the “big questions” noted here also include an exploration of what knowledge is and where it comes from, together with the question of the ultimate meaning of the human journey.

Finally, the skills associated with philosophical inquiry allow for the development of cogent arguments based on sound reasoning and effective communication, skills that are essential to becoming a creative and reflective thinker. By raising these questions and developing these skills, this course leads students to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the relationship between Catholic faith and philosophy.

## Course Notes

This course is designed for Grade 11 students in Roman Catholic Secondary Schools who have an interest in questions that have a variety of answers that keep leading to further questions. The course explores these questions with thoughtful reasoning and clarity of argument. It is a course for students who desire to know what others think about these questions and how to relate philosophical theories to everyday life.

In effect, the course serves a two-fold purpose. The first is to introduce students to philosophical thinking, to broaden their knowledge of philosophical topics, and to encourage their passion for philosophical inquiry. The second is to develop the skill set necessary for students to apply philosophical positions to their learning, specifically in relation to other subjects and in preparation for their societal role as life-long learners. Consequently, students who choose to continue with their study of philosophy in Grade 12 will find that this course provides the necessary building blocks for further study.

Each unit is organized around Ministry expectations related to what students are expected to know and do upon completion of the course. The expectations cover five areas:

- Philosophical Questions
- Philosophical Theories
- Philosophy and Everyday Life
- Applications of Philosophy to Other Subject Areas
- Research and Inquiry Skills

Planning for the course must take into consideration several features of Open courses. First, students often enroll in these courses because of personal interest rather than post-secondary planning. The course is truly open to every kind of learning strength, interest, and goal. Second, Open courses are comprised of learning expectations appropriate for all students whether they are bound for university, college, or the workplace. In effect, philosophy classes will have students who have completed both the academic and applied streams. The diversity of learners and learning styles influences instructional considerations.

Each unit has a common five-part pedagogical design built to address these concerns. First, students identify and share their own thinking on the unit’s “big” question. Second, they begin to critically consider their thinking, looking for the intrinsic merits of their argument and correctly using the terminology of philosophical argumentation. This second step allows for the inclusion of various theories of knowledge (e.g., skepticism, practical and theoretical certainty, rationalism, and empiricism), discussions concerning the validity of knowledge, and whether knowledge is learned, innate, or both. Third, they study and research philosophers and philosophical viewpoints related to the question. Fourth, they evaluate and analyse the strengths and weaknesses of these theories and traditions using effective reasoning and solid argument. This fourth step allows for a further application of thinking skills. Students pose questions and critique solutions to contemporary problems that arise from the application of these arguments to everyday life, culminating in the exploration of the question of what makes life worth living. Finally, in the fifth step, they explore the approach Catholicism takes to the question under study.

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The five-part design provides enough pedagogical flexibility to meet the instructional needs of all learners through the various activities. Learning expectations are clustered together and accompany each activity; assessment strategies support the presentation and acquisition of the knowledge and skills reflected in the expectation cluster for each unit.

When students begin a unit, their first task is to identify and share their own thinking on the “big” question. In doing so, they demonstrate learning expectations listed under both the Philosophy and Everyday Life strand and Using Communication Skills under the Research and Inquiry Skills strand. Various teaching/learning strategies invite students into this process, from writing a quote on the board and asking for student reaction, to circulating a list of quotes related to the question and asking students to pick the quote that best describes their thinking on the topic, to showing parts of a contemporary film or listening to a piece of music or poetry that identifies a certain life stance in relation to the question.

In the second step, students focus on expectations related to thinking and inquiry. They begin to analyse and evaluate the various viewpoints presented in class and formulate conclusions as to which viewpoints they find the most convincing and why. Group discussions allow students to apply decision-making and problem-solving skills in an effort to bring clarity and understanding to the discussion. In turn, student responses are critiqued using methods appropriate to philosophical thinking.

Students then move on to a more formal study of what philosophers and philosophical schools have said about the “big” question. This step allows students to define the terms central to philosophical discussions and identify the main conclusions of some philosophical positions regarding the question of study. In some units, philosophers from the Catholic intellectual tradition are included.

At this point, students are ready to analyse and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the theories. They are also ready to compare the answer these various philosophical theories provide with that of other subject areas and identify examples of fallacies in reasoning in writings from other subjects.

The final part of the unit design allows Catholic students to compare philosophy’s approach to the “big” questions with those proffered by Catholicism. Such a comparison allows students to integrate their learning and recognize the similarities and differences that exist between faith and reason. Since Catholicism is in no way alien to rational inquiry and endorses the philosophical conviction that the intelligibility of reality is available to the human intellect, comparisons of this nature can only enrich the quest for wisdom that is at the heart of the philosophical quest. In some units, this final step can be combined with assessment strategies designed for earlier activities in the unit.

Each unit has a culminating activity that serves as a demonstration of student achievement of the expectations for the course. There is also a course culminating activity.

The last point worth considering is that the entry point for each unit need not always be the student’s own thinking. The first and third can easily be flipped for variety.

### **Units: Titles and Times**

Unit 1	Human Nature – What is it to Be a Person?	35 hours
* Unit 2	Art and Aesthetics – What is Beauty?	25 hours
Unit 3	Ethics – What Are Good and Evil?	25 hours
Unit 4	Society and Politics – What is a Just Society?	25 hours

\* This unit is fully developed in this Course Profile.

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## Unit Organization

### Unit 1: Human Nature – What is it to Be a Person?

**Time:** 35 hours

#### Unit Description

This unit introduces students to philosophical thinking by asking one of the most basic questions of modern philosophical inquiry, namely, what am I? Students begin the course by considering what is meant by philosophical thinking and then apply their conclusions to an investigation of human nature; for example, whether human beings are basically selfish and aggressive or unselfish and cooperative, spiritual in nature or only material, and whether people are fundamentally free to choose their own life path or controlled by their genes, gender, and environment. This exploration provides an opportunity for students to learn the tools of inquiry that are necessary in philosophy (e.g., reasoning skills, clear communication, the correct use of philosophical terms, careful reading of texts) and invites discussion of what it means to know something in a philosophical sense. Next, students study various philosophical theories about human nature (e.g., classical views, religious views, scientific views, behaviourism, existentialism, and feminism) and the implications of these various answers for everyday life. Students then turn their attention to the use of reasoning skills and philosophical argument to evaluate the validity of these philosophical positions and complete their study of what it is to be a person. They present several examples from contemporary culture (e.g., film, literature, art, social policy) and related subject areas (e.g., psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science) that illustrate the application of these viewpoints to activities unique to human beings. One of these is work. Students reflect critically on various theories of labour. Another significant human activity is play. Students explore the meanings of playful behaviour, which serves as a link to the next unit in which human creativity and imagination are expressed in the arts. The unit culminates with readings that identify what it is to be human from a Catholic perspective (e.g., scriptural texts, sections from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Jean Vanier's *Becoming Human*).

#### Unit 1 Overview Chart

Activity	Expectations	Assessment	Focus
1	PQV.02, ELV.01, ELV.02, PQ1.01, PQ1.02, EL1.01, ISV.03, IS3.01 CGE2c, 3c, 4g, 5e, 7g	Communication	Know thyself –A Personal Perspective on Human Nature
2	ISV.02, IS1.01, IS1.02, IS1.04 CGE4a, 4b	Thinking/Inquiry	Thinking About Human Nature: Mind, Body, and Spirit
3	PQV.01, PTV.01, PT1.01, PT1.02, PT1.03 CGE2b, 7f	Knowledge/Understanding	Evaluating Philosophical Claims Regarding Mind, Body, and Spirit
4	ELV.01, ELV.02, OSV.01, OSV.02, ISV.04 CGE5a, 5b, 5f	Application	The Human Person: Problems of Identity
5	ISV.01, ISV.05, IS3.02 CGE1e, 1i, 2a, 2e, 3e	Communication Application	The Human Person: Dignity and its Source
Unit Culminating Activity	PQV.02, PQ1.02, ELV.02, ISV.03, ISV.04, IS3.01	Thinking/Inquiry Application Knowledge/Understanding Communication	Portfolio Presentation

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### Unit 1 Culminating Activity: Portfolio Presentation

For the culminating activity, each student constructs a portfolio presentation (e.g., poetry readings, pictures, collages, video, slides) that illustrates the student’s sense of what it is to be a person and what makes life worth living. Portfolios are presented in class and are also included as an exhibit in the course’s culminating activity in Unit 4.

### Unit 2: Art and Aesthetics – What is Beauty?

**Time:** 25 hours

#### Unit Description

This unit begins by asking the question “what is art?” Students begin by considering the suggestion that the self or person who they are is in some sense a creation. How is it possible that the self can create personal identity? Are human beings their own artwork? Related questions include: What is the artist? What does the artist do? Is it the artist or society that determines the value and function of art? Is artistic appreciation and judgment entirely a matter of taste (i.e., beauty is in the eye of the beholder) or are there standards by which to judge the artwork’s merit? Students identify their own criteria for what they like in the arts and the role the arts play in providing various venues for personal expression. This is followed by a study of several different philosophical theories as to the purpose of art and the role art criticism can play in defining whether or not an artwork represents beauty. But how does one really “know” beauty in art and is one interpretation really better or truer than another? Students then look at art from the point of view of the audience. This raises questions, such as: What are the criteria by which an artwork can be judged? How is the truth of an artwork to be interpreted? Why do people around the planet attend to artistic productions of various kinds? Students explore the implications of these questions by developing an argument in support of their favourite artworks from everyday life, especially artworks that involve technology and the environment (e.g., architecture, sculpture, music, film/video, graphic design, advertising). The unit concludes with an analysis of the relationship between art, religion, and culture/group presentations that address the controversies that can arise when using artistic forms (e.g., music, dance, Church architecture, religious literature, paintings, nature) to express contemporary religious belief. This last activity raises questions about art and politics; censorship; and art and morality. Discussion of moral issues in art serves as a bridge to Unit 3.

#### Unit 2 Overview Chart

Activity	Expectations	Assessment	Focus
1	ELV.01, ISV.03, IS3.01 CGE2C, 5e	Communication	Exploring the Senses
2	PTV.02, ISV.02, PT1.01	Thinking/Inquiry	Thinking About Art
3	PTV.01, IS2.01, IS2.02	Knowledge/Understanding	A Search for Values in Art
4	ELV.02, OSV.01, ISV.04, PQ1.05, OS1.01, OS1.02 CGE7j	Application	Art in Everyday Life
5	ISV.05, IS3.02 CGE1i, 3e, 5a	Application Communication	Art, Religion, and Contemporary Culture
Unit Culminating Activity	PVQ.02, PQ1.03, ELV.01, EL1.01, ELV.02, EL1.02, ISV.01, ISV.03, ISV.04, IS3.02	Thinking/Inquiry Application Knowledge/Understanding Communication	Group Presentation to Art Panel

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## Unit 2 Culminating Activity: Group Presentation to Art Panel

The culminating activity for this unit is a group presentation. Each group presents their choice of an artwork that they would like to see included in the National Gallery. The presentation is to a panel of peer judges and is based on three questions: why the artwork was chosen, why it deserves to be included in the collection, and why everyday Canadians would benefit from this choice. Criteria for selection are based on the quality of philosophical reasoning and application concerning the aesthetic features of the artwork.

## Unit 3: Ethics – What are Good and Evil?

**Time:** 25 hours

### Unit Description

This unit begins with a series of philosophical inquiries concerning the nature of values and their moral consequences. Since values influence much of what we do and say, students need to examine their thinking about values—where they come from, what makes them something of worth, and whether values are absolute and unchanging or change as people change. This discussion of values, and the standards used to discuss what is right and wrong or good and evil, leads students to a more formal discussion concerning personal ethics, specifically the relation between how we should live our lives and the obligations or duties we have to live up to these standards. To assist in this process, students analyse the positions of both classical and modern philosophers (e.g., Aristotle and Aquinas, Kant and John Stuart Mill) as well as contemporary philosophical theories (e.g., ethical relativism, act-oriented and results-oriented theories, existentialism and development theory). In order to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of these ethical positions regarding everyday life and problems that arise in jobs and occupations, students, either individually or in a group, apply research to a variety of case studies related to ethical issues. The unit culminates with a written comparison between the research gathered on the case studies with that of the moral teachings of the Catholic Church regarding the issues. This comparison raises a number of concerns about what it means to live in a just society and prepare students for the next unit of study.

### Unit 3 Overview Chart

Activity	Expectations	Assessment	Focus
1	ELV.01, ISV.03, IS3.01 CGE2b	Communication	Morality and Values
2	PQV.02	Thinking/Inquiry	Why Study Ethics?
3	PTV.01, PT1.01, PT1.03	Knowledge/Understanding	Analysing Ethical Points of View
4	ELV.02, EL1.02, ISV.01, ISV.04, IS2.01, IS2.02 CGE2e	Application	Ethical Case Studies
5	ISV.05, IS1.02, IS3.02, PQ1.05 CGE4g	Communication	Religion and Ethics
Unit Culminating Activity	PQV.02, PQ1.03, ELV.01, EIV.02, ISV.05, IS1.03, ISV.04, IS3.02, ISV.01, IS2.02	Knowledge/Understanding Thinking/Inquiry Communication Application	Ethical Counterspin: The TV Show

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### Unit 3 Culminating Activity: Ethical Counterspin – The TV Show

The culminating activity for this unit uses the format of a television panel talk show as the basis for a symposium on ethical dilemmas found in contemporary culture. Each student is asked to appear on the television show “Ethical Counterspin”. Using the knowledge and terms used in the unit, guests (i.e., selected students) provide a detailed analysis of the issue using the research gathered in their case study. Several students are selected to provide the viewpoint of the Catholic Church. Each production/show should include four to six students and remaining students serve as the studio audience and ask questions of the guests.

### Unit 4: Society and Politics – What is a Just Society?

**Time:** 25 hours

#### Unit Description

This final unit addresses the issues of social philosophy and the various philosophical theories that people use to structure society. Students begin by discussing their own views of justice and fairness, of what the proper relationship should be between individuals and society, and of what role government should play in regulating social behaviour. Such discussions inevitably lead to an examination of the meaning of law and its relation to human freedom and human rights. In order to deepen their understanding of these issues, students compare various theories of justice (i.e., justice as merit, justice as social utility, justice as fairness) and study the work of several political philosophers (i.e., Plato, Confucius, Rousseau, Hobbes, Marx, Gandhi) as to the role the state should play in public life. From these foundations, students turn their attention to the application of moral principles to the problems of society (e.g., the responsibility of business to society, racism, gender equity, war, welfare, capital punishment, prisons, environmentalism, housing) and use their research to develop possible solutions to one of the problems. The final activity of the unit is to examine the question “what is social justice?” from the perspective of Catholic social teaching.

#### Unit 4 Overview Chart

Activity	Expectations	Assessment	Focus
1	ELV.01, ISV.03, IS3.01	Communication	Living Together in Justice
2	PQV.02	Thinking/Inquiry	The Need for Government
3	PTV.01, PT1.01, IS1.02	Knowledge/Understanding	Theories of a Just Society
4	ELV.02, ISV.01, ISV.02, ISV.05 CGE7g	Application	Justice in Action
5	PQ1.02, PQ1.03, PQ1.04, ELV.02, EL1.01, EL1.03 CGE1d, 7e, 7j	Communication Application	What is Social Justice?
Unit Culminating Activity	PQV.02, PQ1.01, ELV.01, ELV.02, EL1.02, OS1.02, ISV.01, IS1.02, IS1.04, IS2.01, IS3.01	Thinking/Inquiry Communication Knowledge/Understanding Application	Utopia Model Displays

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## Unit 4 Culminating Activity: Utopia Model Displays

This culminating activity provides the opportunity to build a social order based on student learning from previous units. Their presentation, perhaps in the form of a “utopia storefront”, must illustrate (e.g., using music, film, readings, tableaux, collages, bulletin board display) what they would say if asked: In your just society, what is a human person? What is beauty? What are good and evil?

## Teaching/Learning Strategies

### Instructional Strategies

The five-part design of each unit provides a direct link between instructional strategies and the knowledge and skills identified in the expectations.

Teaching/learning strategies appropriate for entry-point activities, designed to invite students to discuss their views concerning the unit’s “big” question, include:

- Student Response – Students respond to quotations from various sources that take a stance on the question and choose the one that best reflects their own thinking and then share their choice with the larger group.
- Think/Pair/Share – Students reflect on the question, share their reflections with a partner, then share the partner’s reflection within the larger group.
- Case Study – From newspapers, students investigate real or simulated situations that relate to the question, followed by student’s reaction and sharing.
- Brainstorming – The group generates responses to what the “big” question means without criticism or analysis.
- Media Presentation – The class responds to a media presentation (e.g., film, song, television show) connected to the question.
- Role-playing – Students dramatize a scenario that relates to the question and then lead discussion as to various viewpoints.

Teaching/learning strategies that assist in the unit’s second activity (i.e., developing philosophical argument skills and the knowledge necessary to recognize common fallacies in philosophical reasoning) include:

- Socratic Presentation – teacher presentation of information regarding theories of knowledge and terminology of philosophical argumentation (e.g., logical validity, begging the question, vagueness, argument from authority);
- Group Discussion – investigation of real situations from newspapers or other sources that relate to the question followed by student’s reaction and sharing;
- Focus Groups – informal group discussions based on focus questions.

Teaching/learning strategies appropriate for the unit’s third activity of formal study of philosophical theories and approaches to the unit’s “big” question include:

- Socratic Presentation – teacher presentation of information (Note: summary notes may be necessary for students who need learning accommodations);
- Independent Study – exploration and research of a topic of interest using the Internet;
- Media Presentation – use of videos to deliver information;
- Jigsaw – specialized group learning followed by home group sharing;
- Group Research Project – group exploration and research of a philosopher or schools of philosophy related to the question.

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Teaching/learning strategies appropriate for the unit’s fourth activity, which is the application of philosophy to other subjects and everyday life, include:

- Case Study – Students investigate real and simulated problems related to jobs, occupations, and everyday life.
- Debates – Groups formally discuss an issue, with planned presentations that contrast alternative philosophical positions provided by other subject areas, such as sociology, political science, history, and literature.
- Independent Study – Students explore and research a philosophical problem related to the unit’s “big” question and present solution.
- Carousel – Expert groups or individuals prepare and deliver presentations that identify the difference the choice of a philosophical answer should make to people’s values, behaviours, and life plans.

Teaching/learning strategies related to a Catholic response to the unit’s question include:

- Socratic Presentation – The teacher presents information.
- Independent Research – Students explore and research the Catholic position on the question.
- Guest Speaker and Conference – Students attend a presentation by a speaker and submit a report that critiques the presentation.
- Media Presentation – Students compile information related to the Catholic position on the issue by accessing such sources as encyclopedias, surveys, and the Internet.

## **Assessment & Evaluation of Student Achievement**

Each activity in a unit culminates in assessment that allows students to demonstrate their learning; a feature that ensures learning is directly related to assessment as outlined in the Achievement Chart, found in *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 11 and 12, Social Sciences and Humanities, 2000*, p.144-145.

Assessment, evaluation, and reporting should be based on the achievement levels as outlined in the Ministry document, *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 to 12, Program Planning and Assessment, 2000*.

Assessment tasks that accompany the first activity of each unit include journal writing or a one- to two-page statement of personal beliefs as to the question or a report of contemporary events that are related to this philosophical question. To allow for student accommodation, the assessment task might ask students to submit a cartoon that captures their personal views on the question together with an explanation that communicates their personal thinking. Assessment tasks that demonstrate student learning of the expectations appropriate for this activity include:

- Student participation;
- Journal Entry regarding personal view of the question;
- Portfolio Entry of news articles related to “big” question;
- Written Assignment – one-page summary of current thinking on the question.

Assessment tasks that accompany this second activity include group discussions based on case studies found in newspapers or other sources that relate to the question followed by student’s reaction and sharing, informal debates, and media presentations related to the question. Students are assessed on the appropriateness of their case study, on their analysis of the issue using reasoning skills, and on their ability to form conclusions about the issue. Assessment tasks that demonstrate student learning of the expectations appropriate for this activity include:

- Journal Writing – description of how thinking on question has changed as a result of inquiry skill development;
- Oral Presentation – demonstration of correct use of terminology of philosophical argumentation;
- Written Presentation – short in-class test on terminology.

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Assessment tasks for activity three may include a written test, a research paper on one of the philosophers, a debate where students role-play a philosopher, or a report on a controversy related to a philosophical stance (e.g., Mill and Kant about good and evil). Assessment tasks that demonstrate student learning of the expectations appropriate for this unit activity include:

- Definition of terms central to philosophical discussion (assessment tool: quiz);
- Oral Presentation – summary of the ideas of famous philosophers with respect to the question;
- Group Presentation – comparison of answers given by different philosophers;
- Written assignment – two-page summary of the various philosophical theories.

Assessment tasks for this fourth activity are diverse in nature, including such possibilities as written assignments, group presentations, media simulations, portfolios, and unit tests. In some units, this fourth assessment task may serve as a unit culminating activity in which case students would be directed to use their work from the first three activities as a basis for their formal presentation. Assessment tasks that demonstrate student learning of the expectations appropriate for this unit activity include:

- Research Paper – Students publish their findings using accepted forms of documentation.
- Dramatic Presentations – Students present a simulation of a philosophical problem and then role-play various philosophical responses to the problem based on their research of how different philosophical answers influence life plans.
- Group Presentation – Students work together to present their solutions to philosophical dilemmas related to the unit’s question.

For the final unit activity the following will be assessed:

- Journal Writing – Students record final reflections in their journal.
- Group Presentation – Students present information gathered from their research.

Assessment tools used could include: anecdotal records, checklist, rating scale, marking scheme, rubric. Seventy per cent of the grade will be based on assessments and evaluations conducted throughout the course. Thirty per cent of the grade will be based on a final evaluation in the form of an examination, performance, essay, and/or other method of evaluation.

### **Culminating Activities**

Students are required to complete a unit culminating activity that demonstrates their success at meeting the expectations. Components of each culminating activity are included in the course culminating activity as well.

### **Final Evaluation: Philosophers on Display**

As a final performance task for the course, students display the five components from their unit culminating activities that they feel best illustrate their claim to be called “philosopher.” Students must be prepared to generate discussion as to why these components contribute to philosophical thinking. They must also be prepared to answer questions asked of them about their work and why they deserve the title of “philosopher” at the end of this course.

One component must be selected from each Achievement Chart category: Communication, Thinking/Inquiry, Application, and Knowledge/Understanding. The final component should demonstrate how the study of philosophy contributes to a Catholic worldview. Presentations are for twenty to thirty minutes. Students should be made aware of the final performance activity at the beginning of the course. The final performance task is worth 30% of the final grade for the course.

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## Accommodations

Teacher should provide learning opportunities that take into consideration students with special needs. These considerations include:

- teaching/learning strategies that employ a variety of learning styles;
- effective use of a variety of print and electronic sources;
- familiarity with exceptional student's IEPs which provide recommended learning strategies.

Where appropriate, the following suggestions may be helpful:

- Involve student in planning assignments.
- Conference with students on a one-to-one basis.
- Use co-operative learning.
- Use visuals.
- Provide copies of overhead notes.
- Repeat important information.
- Teach how to underline or highlight important points.
- Arrange appropriate physical placement in the classroom.
- Write homework assignments on the board.
- Encourage use of agenda organizer.
- Use mind mapping.
- Give open-book tests and allow use of notes.
- Provide alternate projects.
- Use student demonstration or modelling.

## Resources

The most difficult challenge teachers face in providing resources for this course is in finding resources students can read without too much difficulty. Unfortunately, most textbooks in philosophy are written for undergraduate students at the university level. Often, these prove to be too challenging for Grade 11 students. The following are resources that can be adapted for classroom use.

### Textbooks

Gaarder, Jostein. *Sophie's World*. New York: Berkley Books, 1996.

Horner, Chris and Emrys Westacott. *Thinking Through Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2000.

Iannone, A. Pablo. *Through Time and Culture: Introductory Readings in Philosophy*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1994.

Sproule, Wayne. *Philosophy in Action*. Markham, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, Fall 2001.

Velasquez, Manuel. *Philosophy: A Text with Readings*. USA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1997.

Wolff, Robert Paul. *About Philosophy*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1995.

### Other Print Resources

Resources that can be used to generate discussion concerning philosophical issues include:

Brown, Stuart, Diane Collinson, and Robert Wilkinson, eds. *Biographical Dictionary of Twentieth-Century Philosophers*. London: Routledge, 1996.

Cartoons (e.g., *The 5th Wave* by Richard Tennant, *Far Side*, *Calvin and Hobbes*, *Peanuts*)

Craig, Edward, ed. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. London: Routledge, 1998.

Current Newspaper Articles (both national and regional)

Current Magazines

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Kersey Ethel M., ed. *Women Philosophers: A Bio-Critical Sourcebook*. New York: Greenwood, 1989.  
Popkin, Richard and Avrum Stroll. *Philosophy Made Simple*. New York: Doubleday, 1993.  
Robinson, Dave and Judy Goives. *Western Philosophy for Beginners*. Cambridge: Icon Books, 1998.

### **Non-Print Resources**

Film (e.g., *Star Trek*), Video, Music, Art, Guest Speakers

### **Websites**

**Note:** The URLs for the websites have been verified by the writer prior to publication. Given the frequency with which these designations change, teachers should always verify the websites prior to assigning them for student use.

A number of websites (e.g., Philosophy On-line) can be used in this course. Websites should be checked first to ensure that the material posted is appropriate.

About.com:Philosophy – <http://philosophy.about.com>

The Philosophy Research Base – <http://www.erraticimpact.com>

### **Catholic Resources**

*Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

*Catholic New Times*.

*Catholic Register*.

C.C.C.B. *Call to Justice*.

Donders, Joseph G. *John-Paul II: The Encyclicals in Everyday Language*. Orbis Books: New York, 1996.

John-Paul II. *Ratio et Fides*. 1998.

Groome, Thomas. *Educating For Life: A Spiritual Vision For Every Teacher and Parent*. Allen, TX: Thomas Moore Publications, 1998.

*New Revised Standard Version Bible*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Smith, Pamela. *What Are They Saying About Environmental Ethics?* New York: Paulist Press, 1997.

Vanier, Jean. *Becoming Human*. Toronto: Anisi Press, 1999.

Highly recommended as background reading in preparation for teaching the course is:

Tarnas, Richard. *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas that Have Shaped Our World View*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1991.

### **OSS Considerations**

This open course is outlined in *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 11 and 12, Social Sciences and Humanities*. There is no prerequisite to taking the course. There are many opportunities for students to develop research and communication skills directly related to career exploration and the student exit plan outlined in *Choices Into Action: Guidance and Career Education Program Policy for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, 1999*. This course reflects the role of technology in learning. This course also reflects the guidelines developed for assessment, evaluation, and reporting prescribed in *Program Planning and Assessment*.

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## **Coded Expectations, Philosophy: The Big Questions, Grade 11, Open, HZB30**

### **Philosophical Questions**

#### **Overall Expectations**

**PQV.01** · describe precisely and clearly three (or more) of the big questions of philosophy;

**PQV.02** · summarize their own or others' answers to these questions, and give reasons in support of the answers.

#### **Specific Expectations**

**PQ1.01** – compare two or more answers to three (or more) of the big questions of philosophy;

**PQ1.02** – give appropriate reasons for their own or others' answers to three (or more) of the big questions of philosophy (e.g., What is happiness? Can a life of self-indulgence be meaningful?);

**PQ1.03** – summarize some arguments for and against answers to three (or more) of the big questions of philosophy (e.g., arguments for and against the claim that morality is objective);

**PQ1.04** – describe the strengths and weaknesses of the main arguments used to defend answers to three (or more) of the big questions of philosophy (e.g., arguments for and against the claim that science is the best way to know what really is);

**PQ1.05** – compare philosophical approaches to some of the big questions with non-philosophical approaches (e.g., philosophy and religion regarding the question “Does God exist?”, philosophy and social sciences regarding the question “What is human nature?”).

### **Philosophical Theories**

#### **Overall Expectations**

**PTV.01** · summarize the ideas of some famous philosophers with respect to one or more of the big questions of philosophy;

**PTV.02** · describe the strengths and weaknesses of the responses to some of the big questions of philosophy defended by some major philosophers or schools of philosophy.

#### **Specific Expectations**

**PT1.01** – compare answers to some of the big questions by different philosophers (e.g., Mill and Kant about good and evil, Descartes and de Beauvoir about human nature);

**PT1.02** – describe the differences in approach to three (or more) of the big questions of philosophy by some major philosophical schools (e.g., Thomism and existentialism regarding the meaning of life, rationalism and empiricism about human knowledge, feminism and libertarianism about social justice);

**PT1.03** – describe important similarities and differences among some of the world's philosophical traditions with regard to three (or more) of the big questions (e.g., Confucianism, Platonism, Buddhism, materialism).

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## Philosophy and Everyday Life

### Overall Expectations

- ELV.01** · relate the big questions of philosophy to their own experience, reports in the news media, and their society;
- ELV.02** · demonstrate the application of philosophical theories and skills to jobs, occupations, and everyday life.

### Specific Expectations

- EL1.01** – describe what difference the answers people accept to three (or more) of the big questions of philosophy should make to their values, behaviour, and life plans;
- EL1.02** – describe the strengths and weaknesses of alternative responses to questions of applied philosophy (e.g., What decisions, if any, should medical practitioners make for patients without the patients’ consent? What obligations, if any, do humans living in the present have to future generations and to the natural environment? What obligations, if any, do humans living in the present have to redress racial or gender inequalities inherited from the past?);
- EL1.03** – apply philosophical skills such as precise writing and critical analysis to solve problems that arise in jobs and occupations (e.g., What obligations do employees have to the public, to their employers, and to themselves? When resources are scarce, how should decisions be made about their allocation?).

## Applications of Philosophy to Other Subjects

### Overall Expectations

- OSV.01** · identify philosophical theories and presuppositions in natural science, history, art, social science and humanities, and other subjects;
- OSV.02** · demonstrate how philosophical skills that are used to address the big questions of philosophy can be used effectively in other subjects.

### Specific Expectations

- OS1.01** – identify philosophical positions presupposed in some other disciplines (e.g., theories of knowledge in natural science, theories of the person in social science);
- OS1.02** – contrast alternative philosophical viewpoints in controversies discussed in other subjects (e.g., over what is just in politics or society, what is a meaningful life in works of literature, what is beautiful in fashion or art);
- OS1.03** – identify examples of fallacies in reasoning in writings from other subjects (e.g., sociology, psychology, political science).

## Research and Inquiry Skills

### Overall Expectations

- ISV.01** · apply research and inquiry skills related to philosophy appropriately and effectively;
- ISV.02** · evaluate some main philosophical arguments;
- ISV.03** · formulate and defend a response of their own to one or more of the big questions of philosophy;
- ISV.04** · effectively use a variety of print and electronic sources and telecommunications tools in research related to the big questions of philosophy;
- ISV.05** · effectively communicate the results of their inquiries.

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## Specific Expectations

### Using Reasoning Skills

**IS1.01** – correctly use the terminology of philosophical argumentation (e.g., *logical validity, begging the question, vagueness, argument from authority*);

**IS1.02** – define terms central to philosophical discussions of each of the big questions (e.g., *personal identity, nihilism, moral realism, utilitarianism, scepticism, aesthetic subjectivism*);

**IS1.03** – identify the main conclusions of some philosophical positions regarding one or more of the big questions, and the arguments used to support them;

**IS1.04** – illustrate common fallacies in reasoning (e.g., using ambiguous language to reach a conclusion, dismissing an argument because of who advanced it instead of evaluating its intrinsic merits).

### Using Research Skills

**IS2.01** – find overviews of a variety of philosophical concepts and theories by accessing such sources as encyclopedias and surveys, and report on their findings;

**IS2.02** – compile information related to the big questions of philosophy, using the Internet.

### Using Communication Skills

**IS3.01** – discuss their own views in philosophical exchanges in class with others;

**IS3.02** – clearly explain their views and display their use of philosophical reasoning skills in short written papers, using accepted forms of documentation as required.

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## Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations

The graduate is expected to be:

**A Discerning Believer Formed in the Catholic Faith Community** who

- CGE1a** -illustrates a basic understanding of the **saving story** of our Christian faith;
- CGE1b** -participates in the **sacramental life** of the church and demonstrates an understanding of the centrality of the Eucharist to our Catholic story;
- CGE1c** -actively reflects on **God’s Word** as communicated through the Hebrew and Christian scriptures;
- CGE1d** -develops attitudes and values founded on Catholic **social teaching** and acts to promote social responsibility, human solidarity and the common good;
- CGE1e** -speaks the **language of life**... “recognizing that life is an unearned gift and that a person entrusted with life does not own it but that one is called to protect and cherish it.” (Witnesses to Faith)
- CGE1f** -seeks intimacy with God and celebrates **communion** with God, others and creation through prayer and worship;
- CGE1g** -understands that one’s purpose or **call in life** comes from God and strives to discern and live out this call throughout life’s journey;
- CGE1h** -respects the **faith traditions**, world religions and the life-journeys of **all people of good will**;
- CGE1i** -integrates faith with life;
- CGE1j** -recognizes that “sin, human weakness, conflict and forgiveness are part of the human journey” and that the cross, the ultimate sign of forgiveness is at the heart of **redemption**. (Witnesses to Faith)

**An Effective Communicator** who

- CGE2a** -listens actively and critically to understand and learn in light of gospel values;
- CGE2b** -reads, understands and uses written materials effectively;
- CGE2c** -presents information and ideas clearly and honestly and with sensitivity to others;
- CGE2d** -writes and speaks fluently one or both of Canada’s official languages;
- CGE2e** -uses and integrates the Catholic faith tradition, in the critical analysis of the arts, media, technology and information systems to enhance the quality of life.

**A Reflective and Creative Thinker** who

- CGE3a** -recognizes there is more grace in our world than sin and that hope is essential in facing all challenges;
- CGE3b** -creates, adapts, evaluates new ideas in light of the common good;
- CGE3c** -thinks reflectively and creatively to evaluate situations and solve problems;
- CGE3d** -makes decisions in light of gospel values with an informed moral conscience;
- CGE3e** -adopts a holistic approach to life by integrating learning from various subject areas and experience;
- CGE3f** -examines, evaluates and applies knowledge of interdependent systems (physical, political, ethical, socio-economic and ecological) for the development of a just and compassionate society.

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**A Self-Directed, Responsible, Life Long Learner** who

- CGE4a** -demonstrates a confident and positive sense of self and respect for the dignity and welfare of others;
- CGE4b** -demonstrates flexibility and adaptability;
- CGE4c** -takes initiative and demonstrates Christian leadership;
- CGE4d** -responds to, manages and constructively influences change in a discerning manner;
- CGE4e** -sets appropriate goals and priorities in school, work and personal life;
- CGE4f** -applies effective communication, decision-making, problem-solving, time and resource management skills;
- CGE4g** -examines and reflects on one's personal values, abilities and aspirations influencing life's choices and opportunities;
- CGE4h** -participates in leisure and fitness activities for a balanced and healthy lifestyle.

**A Collaborative Contributor** who

- CGE5a** -works effectively as an interdependent team member;
- CGE5b** -thinks critically about the meaning and purpose of work;
- CGE5c** -develops one's God-given potential and makes a meaningful contribution to society;
- CGE5d** -finds meaning, dignity, fulfillment and vocation in work which contributes to the common good;
- CGE5e** -respects the rights, responsibilities and contributions of self and others;
- CGE5f** -exercises Christian leadership in the achievement of individual and group goals;
- CGE5g** -achieves excellence, originality, and integrity in one's own work and supports these qualities in the work of others;
- CGE5h** -applies skills for employability, self-employment and entrepreneurship relative to Christian vocation.

**A Caring Family Member** who

- CGE6a** -relates to family members in a loving, compassionate and respectful manner;
- CGE6b** -recognizes human intimacy and sexuality as God given gifts, to be used as the creator intended;
- CGE6c** -values and honours the important role of the family in society;
- CGE6d** -values and nurtures opportunities for family prayer;
- CGE6e** -ministers to the family, school, parish, and wider community through service.

**A Responsible Citizen** who

- CGE7a** -acts morally and legally as a person formed in Catholic traditions;
- CGE7b** -accepts accountability for one's own actions;
- CGE7c** -seeks and grants forgiveness;
- CGE7d** -promotes the sacredness of life;
- CGE7e** -witnesses Catholic social teaching by promoting equality, democracy, and solidarity for a just, peaceful and compassionate society;
- CGE7f** -respects and affirms the diversity and interdependence of the world's peoples and cultures;
- CGE7g** -respects and understands the history, cultural heritage and pluralism of today's contemporary society;
- CGE7h** -exercises the rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship;
- CGE7i** -respects the environment and uses resources wisely;
- CGE7j** -contributes to the common good.

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## Unit 2: Art and Aesthetics – What is Beauty?

**Time:** 25 hours

### Unit Description

This unit begins with an exploration of the senses. Students discuss what experiences they consider “pleasing” and “repellent” as they pertain to the five senses. They also discuss the distinction between “sense”, which refers to immediate sensory experience (body), and “sense”, which refers to meaning or intelligibility (mind). This distinction becomes evident through an analysis of their likes and dislikes concerning sense experience.

Next, students begin to investigate the belief that the self or person they are is in some sense their own creation, that human beings are their own artwork. This lays the foundation for an examination of aesthetic experiences and provides an entry-point from which to ask the philosophical question, “What is art?” Related questions include: What is the artist? What does the artist do? Is it the artist or society that determines the value and function of art? Is artistic appreciation and judgement entirely a matter of taste (i.e., beauty is in the eye of the beholder) or are there standards by which to judge the artwork’s merit? Students identify their own criteria for what they like in the arts and the role the arts play in providing venues for personal expression.

This is followed by a study of several different philosophical theories (e.g., classical, romantic, post-modern) and thinkers (e.g., Plato, Aristotle, Tolstoy, Wilde, Marcuse) as to the purpose of art and the role art criticism can play in defining whether or not an artwork represents beauty. But how does one really “know” beauty in art and is one interpretation really better or truer than another? Students then look at art from the viewpoint of the audience. This raises questions, such as: What are the criteria by which an artwork can be judged? How is the truth of an artwork to be interpreted? Why do people around the planet attend artistic productions of various kinds?

Students explore the implications of these questions by developing an argument in support of their favourite artworks from everyday life, especially artworks that involve technology and the environment (e.g., architecture, sculpture, music, film/video, graphic design, advertising).

The unit concludes with an analysis of the relationship between art, religion, and culture/group presentations that address the controversies that can arise when using artistic forms (e.g., music, dance, Church architecture, religious literature, paintings, nature) to express contemporary religious belief. This last activity raises questions about art and politics; censorship; and art and morality. Discussion of moral issues in art serves as a bridge to the next unit.

### Unit Synopsis Chart

Activity	Time	Expectations	Assessment	Tasks
1: Exploring the Senses	2.5 hours	ELV.01, ISV.03, IS3.01 CGE2C, 5e	Communication	One-page summary paper/journal writing
2: Thinking About Art	3.75 hours	PTV.02, ISV.02, PT1.01	Thinking/Inquiry	Group analysis presentation
3: A Search for Values in Art	7.5 hours	PTV.01, IS2.01, IS2.02	Knowledge/ Understanding	Class test
4: Art in Everyday Life	7.5 hours	ELV.02, OSV.01, ISV.04, PQ1.05, OS1.01, OS1.02	Application	Group presentation
5: Art, Religion, and Contemporary Culture	3.75 hours	ISV.05, IS3.02 CGE1i, 3e, 5a	Application Communication	Continuation of group presentation

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## Activity 1: Exploring the Senses

**Time:** 150 minutes

### Description

Students explore the experiences of the “pleasing” and the “repellent” as they pertain to the five senses. They are led to the distinction between “sense” which refers to immediate sensory experience (body) and “sense” which refers to meaning or intelligibility (mind). This distinction becomes evident through an analysis of the judgements that they make about sensory experience. This lays a foundation for an examination of aesthetic experiences.

### Strand(s) & Learning Expectations

**Strand:** Philosophy and Everyday Life

ELV.01 - relate the big questions of philosophy to their own experience, reports in the news media, and their society;

ISV.03 - formulate and defend a response of their own to one or more of the big questions of philosophy.

**Strand:** Research and Inquiry Skills

IS3.01 - discuss their own views in philosophical exchanges in class with others.

### Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations

CGE2c - presents information and ideas clearly and honestly and with sensitivity to others;

CGE5e - respects the rights, responsibilities, and contributions of self and others.

### Prior Knowledge & Skills

In Unit 1 (Human Nature), students were introduced to the mind/body distinction and began to develop critical-thinking skills.

### Planning Notes

Prepare a sample list of what you as a teacher find “pleasing” and “repellent” to your senses. Be prepared to share the sample list with students through the use of an overhead.

### Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. Students form five groups and are assigned one of the five senses (sight, taste, touch, smell, and hearing). They generate two lists of “objects” that pertain to their assigned sense. One list should be of objects considered pleasing and the other of objects considered repellent. A sample list shown on the overhead provides a visual example of the assignment.
2. Each group appoints a recorder and a presenter. When called upon, each group defends and explains why they formed their lists as they did. Lists are then posted at the front of the class.
3. A general discussion ensues as to commonality and differences in the list. Discussion should give rise to the recognition that people generally make judgements (positive or negative) about sensory experiences. Follow-up questions for class discussion should include: Are these judgements natural or culturally conditioned? Are they completely subjective or can they be objectively defended?
4. Assign for homework a one-page summary of students’ own views on the two questions in Strategy 3.

### Assessment & Evaluation of Student Achievement

- Informal assessment of individual participation in preparing list and subsequent group discussion
- Written summary assessed by teacher for clarity of argument and expression (teacher-developed rubric may be used)

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## Accommodations

- The length of the summary can be altered for students with weaker writing skills. They may also need teacher assistance to help formulate a written response.
- Some students may need assistance in identifying various experiences for each sense. Consequently, peer assistance within the group may be required.
- A one-page summary may not be appropriate for all students. This assignment can be changed to allow students to tape-record their views on the questions, especially if the student's IEP identifies the need for accommodations of this nature.

## Resources

Diane Ackerman. *A Natural History of the Senses*.

## Activity 2: Thinking About Art

**Time:** 225 minutes

### Description

Students examine a number of examples of “art” gathered in various categories. In groups, they discuss these works/objects and answer a series of questions pertaining to them. Questions include:

- Do you like it (particular piece)? Why? Why not?
- Why might someone else like or dislike it?
- Is it “good”? How do you determine this?
- How would you persuade someone that it is “good”?
- Is it beautiful? What does this mean?
- If there is a strong emotional reaction to the work, why is this so?
- If there is a strong emotional reaction to the discussion of the work, why is this so?
- Is “art” important to you? Why?
- What purpose, if any, does art serve?

Students present their works, summarize arguments for and against the purpose of art, and develop arguments for further discussion. Analyses are critiqued for proper use of philosophical argument and reasoning skills.

### Strand(s) & Learning Expectations

**Strand:** Philosophical Questions

PQ1.03 - summarize some arguments for and against answers to three (or more) of the big questions of philosophy.

**Strand:** Philosophy and Everyday Life

EL1.01 - describe what difference the answers people accept to three (or more) of the big questions of philosophy should make to their values, behaviours, and life plans.

**Strand:** Research and Inquiry Skills

IS1.01 - correctly use the terminology of philosophical argumentation (e.g., logical validity, begging the question, vagueness, argument from authority);

IS1.04 - illustrate common fallacies in reasoning (e.g., using ambiguous language to reach a conclusion, dismissing an argument because of who advanced it instead of evaluating its intrinsic merits).

### Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations

CGE3c - think reflectively and creatively to evaluate situations and solve problems;

CGE5e - respect the rights, responsibilities, and contributions of self and others.

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## Prior Knowledge & Skills

Students need to review the correct terminology of philosophical argumentation introduced in Unit 1. They also need to be able to identify common fallacies in reasoning.

## Planning Notes

The teacher provides students with samples of “art” or students are instructed to bring in examples of artwork from various categories as described in Strategy 1.

## Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. Students are divided into five or six groups. Each group is assigned a category of “art” works. Categories may include the following:
  - slides of paintings of various styles;
  - musical pieces of various genre;
  - samples of poetry;
  - videos of dance;
  - photographs of faces;
  - comics;
  - sculptures;
  - clothes;
  - graffiti.
2. Each group member selects one piece of art and answers the questions listed in the activity Description. Once completed, the group listens to the various responses of its members. After each member has reported his/her responses, the members of the group can question and critique the answers they have heard.
3. Each group is then given the following information/instructions related to a possible scenario:
  - The Canadian Gallery for the Arts is looking for works of art to be added to its collection.
  - Your group must select one piece of art from your collection and prepare a presentation as to why you think it should be selected for display. Groups should record reasons for and against the selection of each piece.
  - To help with the decision, there also needs to be a panel of judges. Your group must select one member from your group to serve on the Canadian Gallery for the Arts panel. The task of the panel is to establish the criteria it will use to judge works of art worthy of display. Only two of the entries will be selected.
4. Groups discuss which art piece they want to support and begin to prepare their presentation to the panel.
5. Panel members discuss among themselves the criteria they will use to evaluate the submissions.

## Assessment & Evaluation of Student Achievement

- Informal observation by teacher of student contributions to group activity (e.g., clarity of presentation, correct use of philosophical argumentation)
- Self-assessment of group participation
- Evaluation of conference notes by teacher re: criteria for selection of the group’s art piece
- Evaluation by teacher of criteria selected by panel members

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## Accommodations

Students who have difficulties with abstract concepts may need extra help from the teacher or a peer tutor concerning criteria for selection.

## Resources

### Websites

<http://www.art.unt.edu/ntieva/artcurr/aes/aes0.htm>

<http://www.bu.edu/wcp/MainAest.htm>

<http://aesthetics-online.org/>

<http://www.film-philosophy.com/>

## Activity 3: A Search for Values In Art

**Time:** 450 minutes

### Description

Students now turn their attention to various philosophical theories that address the question “what is art?” The activity begins with an overview of various theories that are concerned not only with the nature of art, but also its value. These include a) imitation theories, b) formalism, c) Romanticism or emotionalist theories, and d) the theory of aesthetic fineness. As well, students read and discuss philosophical theories about art (e.g., Plato, Aristotle, Tolstoy, Wilde, and Marcuse) as found in the Western tradition and also several theories of non-Western thinkers. Through their discussions and research, students are able to identify and apply various philosophical positions that affirm or critique their own views about art, how art is created, and what spectators look for in art.

### Strand(s) & Learning Expectations

**Strand:** Philosophical Theories

PTV.01 - summarize the ideas of some famous philosophers with respect to one or more of the big questions of philosophy;

PTV.02 - describe the strengths and weaknesses of the responses to some of the big questions of philosophy defended by some major philosophers or schools of philosophy;

PT1.01 - compare answers to some of the big questions by different philosophers (e.g., Mill and Kant about good and evil, Descartes and de Beauvoir about human nature).

**Strand:** Research and Inquiry Skills

ISV.01 - apply research and inquiry skills related to philosophy appropriately and effectively;

ISV.02 - evaluate some main philosophical arguments.

### Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations

CGE2b - reads, understands and uses written materials effectively;

CGE5b - thinks critically about the meaning and purpose of life.

### Prior Knowledge & Skills

Students need to know how to read for comprehension and how to compile notes on the various philosophical positions.

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## Planning Notes

- Materials for this activity can be presented in several ways. If using a textbook that has a chapter on the philosophy of art (e.g., *About Philosophy* by Robert Paul Wolff), students can be assigned readings as a basis for discussion and whole-class learning. If no textbook is available, students can be assigned a philosopher and asked to research, using the Internet, what that philosopher thought about art. A third approach is for the teacher to provide the material through classroom presentation (e.g., board outlines, overhead presentations, electronic slide presentation).
- A good place to begin this activity is with some common reference points about the nature of art. For example, the term art is itself ambiguous. It can refer to a certain kind of activity and also to a certain kind of object. Thus, to study art usually means to learn how to carry out a skilled activity whereas a museum of art refers to the objects that are found there. Most philosophical discussions about art address the creative activity of art and its social value.
- Art as a creative activity excludes those activities which are instinctive or reflex, habitual, or random. Rather, art as an activity requires skill, raw material, and a deliberate manipulation on the part of the artist to achieve some purpose.
- Students may require a working definition of art as a basis for discussion (e.g., “Art happens when anyone in the world takes any kind of material and fashions it into a deliberate statement”, from Thomas Hoving, *Art for Dummies*).
- Art, in its broadest generic sense, then, includes such things as “industrial arts” and the “art of cooking.” Often, though, discussions of art have more to do with what is called ‘fine’ art. Theories that provide an answer to the question, “What is fine art?”, include: imitation theories, formalism, emotionalist theory, and the theory of aesthetic fineness.
  - Imitation theories interpret art as either a literal mirror of “life” or else it draws upon and tries to clarify “life”. There is a close relationship between art and human experience outside of art. In defining fine art:
    1. the theory of simple imitation argues that fine art is a faithful, literal duplication of the objects or events of ordinary experience;
    2. it looks like and reminds us of what we know in reality apart from art (e.g., simple imitation);
    3. the value of the art-object depends upon the degree or its resemblance to the model – it is true to life;
    4. the “model” must be organized and made significant, and there must be some enhancement of its interest, if the created object is to be one of “fine art”;
    5. the theory of the imitation of essences argues that artists do not simply “copy” life but select from the raw material of real life and use their art to express its universal significance or its universal essence;
    6. fine art captures a characteristic or property shared by all members of a certain class, by virtue of which they are members of that class;
    7. the theory of imitation of the moral ideal argues that art ought to capture or depict events that are praiseworthy, that the value of art lies in its ability to imitate the ideal and communicate a moral message that brings about beneficial consequences (i.e., art of Greco-Roman antiquity).

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- The Formalist theory of art holds that true art is a world of its own, with no responsibility to copy or borrow from life. In defining fine art, this theory argues that:
    1. its purpose and values are uniquely its own;
    2. the subject matter is of relatively slight importance in relation to what is intrinsic and peculiar to painting (i.e., line, mass, plane, colour, lighting) which is often abstract;
    3. the elements distinctive of the media are organized into a formal pattern which is aesthetically valuable;
    4. these elements of design display a certain interplay or tension which arouses an aesthetic emotion in the spectator.
  - The Emotionalist Theory, the basis of Romanticism in art, argues that:
    1. art is a record of human emotion and a vehicle for communicating it to others;
    2. artists should be under the influence of emotion and reveal the sincerity and individuality of the artist;
    3. art should be spontaneous, vital, and an expression of the artist's personality;
    4. art does not have to "picture" beautiful things but can work with diverse subjects such as the exotic, macabre, or repulsive;
    5. spectators who contemplate the work of art share in the emotion of the artist (i.e., the spectator experiences the emotional force of the artist and says things like "this is what I felt", "this art moves me").
  - The theory of Aesthetic "Fineness" argues fine art:
    1. emphasizes its value for aesthetic perception as something splendid to perceive (i.e., attracts us aesthetically which can even include things in nature);
    2. should be judged solely on its intrinsic ability to produce aesthetic interest and perceptual appeal;
    3. does not necessarily depend on the artist's purpose to produce such appeal;
    4. can be greatly appreciated even when it is not beautiful but bitter, gloomy, and heart-rending;
    5. is catholic in its appreciation of the richness and complexity of all art forms.
  - Students now have four distinct theories of art that can be used as a foundation for the study of philosophical theories concerning the value and purpose of art. They vary from theories that stress the importance of subject matter and the artist's personality to those that favour the work of art itself and the aesthetic appeal it carries. The effort to answer the question, "What is art?", seems to suggest that there are many answers, that art is perennially changing and growing and that the challenge of trying to bring some clarity and agreement to the field is just as challenging today as it was for the philosophers who are referenced in this activity.

### **Teaching/Learning Strategies**

1. The teacher begins by providing an overview of various theories that attempt to answer the question "what is art?" (See Planning Notes.)
2. Students are then assigned readings/excerpts from various Western philosophers (e.g., Plato, Aristotle, Tolstoy, Wilde, Dewey) together with several non-Western philosophers (e.g., Innocent C. Onyewuenyi) and assigned the following questions:
  - What is art according to this philosopher?
  - What value does art have as a human creation for this philosopher?
  - What role does art play in society for this philosopher?
3. If assigned readings are not available in textbook form, students are directed to complete the assignment by using the Internet when possible or accessing such sources as encyclopedias and articles.

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4. Once research is completed, the teacher directs a classroom discussion about each philosopher. Students are directed to add new information or ideas to their summary notes on each philosopher when appropriate.
  5. At the end of the teacher-led discussion, students reassemble into their groups. They discuss the various philosophical theories just studied and determine which philosophical position best fits their earlier discussions concerning their choice of artwork for the Canadian Gallery for the Arts.
  6. The group continues to prepare for its presentation to the panel of judges by choosing quotations and references from the appropriate philosopher that they feel will strengthen their argument/case.

### **Assessment & Evaluation of Student Achievement**

- Formative assessment by the teacher of student notes on the various philosophers
- Formal test (multiple-choice/short-essay answers) of the various philosophers' viewpoints about art and its role in society

### **Accommodations**

- Students who experience reading difficulties require appropriate summaries of the readings prepared by the teacher.
- Students who experience difficulties in note taking require more time to complete their assignments and may need the assistance of a peer tutor to help organize their notes.
- The teacher may prepare a handout of board notes to assist students who have difficulty copying from the board.
- Students may also use technology in organizing and presenting their information, especially if the exceptional student's IEP calls for this kind of assistance.

### **Resources**

Aristotle. *Poetics*.

Horner, Chris and Emrys Westacott. *Thinking through Philosophy—An Introduction*.

Inannone, A. Pablo. *Through Time and Culture: Introductory Readings in Philosophy*.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgement*.

Sheppard, Anne. *Aesthetics: An introduction to the philosophy of art*.

Wolff, Robert Paul. *About Philosophy*.

## **Activity 4: Art In Everyday Life**

**Time:** 450 minutes

### **Description**

This activity invites students to integrate their philosophical study of the ideas of some famous philosophers concerning the value of art with their culminating task for the unit, the group presentation to the panel of judges from the Canadian Gallery for the Arts. Through their presentations, students describe their own philosophical stance towards art and aesthetics by organizing their presentation around the following three components:

- Basic Information – a description of the art work;
- Interpretation – an argument that identifies why the group believes this artwork is important and why it has value;
- Evaluation – a critical appraisal of how the inclusion of this artwork benefits Canadians in their everyday life.

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## Strand(s) & Learning Expectations

### Strand: Philosophy and Everyday Life

ELV.02 - describe the difference the answers people accept to three (or more) of the big questions should make to their values, behaviour, and life plans;

EL1.02 - describe the strengths and weaknesses of alternative responses to questions of applied philosophy (e.g., What decisions, if any, should medical practitioners make for patients without the patient's consent? What obligations, if any, do humans living in the present have to future generations and to the natural environment? What obligations, if any, do humans living in the present have to redress racial and gender inequalities inherited from the past?).

### Strand: Applications of Philosophy to Other Subjects

OSV.01 - identify philosophical theories and presuppositions in natural science, history, art, social science and humanities, and other subjects;

OSV.02 - demonstrate how philosophical skills that are used to address the big questions of philosophy can be used effectively in other subjects;

OS1.01 - identify philosophical positions presupposed in some other disciplines (e.g., theories of knowledge in natural science, theories of the person in social science);

OS1.02 - contrast alternative philosophical viewpoints in controversies discussed in other subjects (e.g., over what is just in politics or society, what is a meaningful life in works of literature, what is beautiful in fashion or art).

## Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations

CGE4g - examines and reflects on one's personal values, abilities, and aspirations influencing life's choices and opportunities.

## Prior Knowledge & Skills

- Students need to be reminded of the features of an effective group presentation (e.g., style, organization, clarity, effective use of group members, creativity, use of resources).
- If students plan to use technology for their presentation (e.g., presentation software, overheads, video), they must be familiar with its technical operation.

## Planning Notes

- Students should be provided with a schedule as to when the group presentation is to occur.
- Students should be provided in advance with the assessment rubric used for evaluation of the group presentation. If possible, students should be involved in the development of the rubric.
- Panel members must submit their criteria for judging the various artworks prior to the start of the presentations.
- Each group should be given 30-45 minutes for its presentation.
- Panel members must be prepared to provide a rationale/critical appraisal of the presentations.

## Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. Students are given classroom time to finalize their group presentations. They are informed by their teacher that their presentation must include: i) basic information about the work of art, ii) why the group selected this piece to present to the panel as their selection, and iii) why the inclusion of this artwork to the Canadian Gallery for the Arts will be of benefit to the everyday life of Canadian citizens.
2. Groups sign up for a presentation time. They are provided with the assessment rubric, which is used by the teacher and by their peers to evaluate the presentations.
3. Members of the panel provide the teacher with an outline of the criteria they will be using to judge the various submissions. The criteria must illustrate a thoughtful and well-reasoned philosophy of art appreciation (i.e., it cannot be based on subjective attitudes alone).

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4. Each group is given 30-45 minutes for its presentation.
  5. When all the groups have finished, the panel announces its decision and provides a rationale for their selection. Students can ask questions or critique the panel's decision, but must provide reasons for their challenge of the decision based on a philosophical stance.
  6. The teacher thanks the groups for their work and announces that due to the quality of their efforts, the Vatican museum would also like to consider new artworks for inclusion in their collection.
  7. Groups meet for a final time to discuss whether their selection for the Canadian Gallery for the Arts would be suitable for inclusion at the Vatican or whether they need to select a new submission, one more conducive to religious sensibilities.

### **Assessment & Evaluation of Student Achievement**

- Evaluation of group presentations by teacher based on assessment rubric
- Peer assessment of group presentations based on assessment rubric
- Teacher assessment of submission by panel as to correlation between judgement criteria and rationale for final selection of the two art pieces

### **Accommodations**

- The teacher conferences with groups that have students with special needs to ensure that everyone has a meaningful part in the presentation.
- The length of presentation for special needs students can be altered.

### **Resources**

Selected art slides to be used in presentations

Excerpts from videos that portray the group's submission (e.g., video of dance routine)

## **Activity 5: Art, Religion, and Contemporary Culture**

**Time:** 225 minutes

### **Description**

This activity is designed to engage students in an exploration of the relationship between art, religion, and contemporary culture. Students review their philosophical positions concerning art and aesthetics in relation to the religious significance of artistic expression. To that end, students discuss such topics as the nature of religious art, the criteria for aesthetic appreciation within religious and secular institutions, censorship, and the Church's role in developing a "catechesis through art."

### **Strand(s) & Learning Expectations**

**Strand:** Research and Inquiry Skills

ISV.05 - effectively communicate the results of their inquiries;

IS3.02 - clearly explain their views and display their use of philosophical reasoning skills in short written papers, using accepted forms of documentation as required.

### **Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations**

CGE1i - integrates faith with life;

CGE3e - adopts a holistic approach to life by integrating learning from various subject areas and experiences;

CGE5b - thinks critically about the meaning and purpose of life.

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## Prior Knowledge & Skills

- Students are familiar with the information and skills addressed in Activities 1, 2, 3, and 4.
- Students are familiar with various forms of religious expression found in churches and Catholic schools (e.g., stained glass windows, music, liturgical dance, icons).
- Students are familiar with the term “censorship”.

## Planning Notes

- This activity lends itself to three distinct yet interrelated content topics for presentation and discussion. They include i) an explanation and presentation of the topic of “sacramental imagination” in Roman Catholic thinking, ii) a presentation on the Church’s historical relationship with the arts as a venue for religious expression, and iii) controversies that can arise when using artistic forms (e.g., music, dance, Church architecture, religious literature, paintings) to express contemporary religious belief.
- Sacramental imagination or consciousness refers to the belief that the world is gracious, meaningful, and worthwhile. This principle reflects the deep conviction in Catholicism that all reality is imbued with the hidden presence of God, that we encounter and respond to God’s grace and desire for us through the ordinary of life. The use of water, oil, bread, wine, incense, and ashes are but a few examples of how the raw materials of life can convey religious meaning when used in religious ways. For a fuller treatment of this topic see Andrew Greeley’s book, *The Catholic Imagination*.
- Throughout history, the Church has been both a home for the arts and a sponsor of the arts. This is especially true of the role that music and visual arts have played in the Church’s liturgical and architectural past. Many examples of religious art and music exist, both Western and non-Western, that demonstrate this close connection. More recently, drama and dance have also found their way into the Church’s repertoire of artistic venues for religious worship and celebration.
- This close connection between the arts and religious expression, however, has not developed without controversies. It is important to point out the Church’s relationship with such controversies both in historical and contemporary times (e.g., iconoclasm and the rejection of certain contemporary art forms such as “gangsta rap” for its dehumanizing message or when it is offensive).

## Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. Students return to their groups to discuss whether the Vatican Museum would accept their artwork submission or whether they need to pick something else that is more suitable to a “religious” context.
2. Each group shares, with the whole class, their decision and the reasons they would give to support their argument.
3. The teacher presents information on the Church’s relationship with the arts as illustrated through its principle of sacramental imagination, its history, and the efforts by the Church to both accept contemporary art forms while maintaining certain standards of suitability. Presentations might include:
  - notes on the meaning of the term “Catholic imagination” and “sacramental imagination”;
  - slides or video presentations of the use of the arts for religious expression (e.g., excerpts from Pope John-Paul II’s *Letter to Artists*, April 4, 1999; excerpts from the pastoral letter called *Toward a Pastoral Approach to Culture*, 1999, published by the Pontifical Council for Culture).
4. The teacher leads a discussion with the class to determine whether the criteria for aesthetic judgement applied to the Church should be different from that of Canada’s National Gallery.
5. Students are assigned the task of writing a letter to the Pontifical Council of Culture. The purpose of the letter is to demonstrate their use of philosophical reasoning skills, using accepted forms of documentation as required, to convince the council to accept the artwork of the group for submission to the Vatican Museum.

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### **Assessment & Evaluation of Student Achievement**

- Informal assessment by the teacher of classroom participation and group discussion.
- Evaluation by the teacher of the letter.

### **Accommodations**

Students who have learning disabilities in the area of writing may need assistance in the writing process or may choose alternatives to writing to complete the project (e.g., a collage that illustrates a similar message).

### **Resources**

Greeley, Andrew. *The Catholic Imagination*.

Groome, Thomas. *Educating For Life*.

Pontifical Council for Culture. *Toward a Pastoral Approach to Culture*.