



## **PARTNERS ACADEMIC SUMMER SCHOOL 2026**

### **Syllabus for Philosophy**

#### **Subject Area**

This syllabus is for PARTNERS applicants seeking to progress to the degrees of:

- V500 BA Hons Philosophy
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#### **Aims**

To allow students to demonstrate their potential to succeed in specified degree programmes by showing a grasp of entry-level subject-specific knowledge, understanding, cognitive and subject-specific skills.

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#### **Learning Outcomes**

A good knowledge and understanding of ...

- By the end of the summer school, students will be expected to have a basic understanding of a diverse range of philosophical theories and arguments concerning the role of rationality and error in the context of a number of different philosophical concerns.
- Students will be introduced to a range of thinkers from the history of philosophy and so will be expected to come away with a formative grasp of their philosophical concerns and approaches, which will provide a useful foundation when studying each thinker in more depth as part of the undergraduate programme.
- By the end of the Summer School, students will also understand the fundamentals of crafting clear, pointed, and arguable claims in the context of academic writing and presentation, as well as in everyday conversation.

The ability to apply this knowledge and critical understanding to...

- Students will engage in group discussions and other group activities during each session of the summer school and will be encouraged to ask questions and seek clarifications during and after lecture portions.
- Additionally, dedicated sessions will involve students engaging in close, guided reading exercises of key texts, during which students will be

encouraged to seek clarification and discuss specific points of interest or difficulty with staff and other students.

- The formative assessment will directly relate to these dedicated reading sessions, for which students will be expected to formulate and present specific points of discussion on the basis of these readings, including responding to questions from staff and students.

Competence in...

- Close reading and textual analysis; application of philosophical theories and concepts to written/spoken assignments; thinking critically to develop philosophical arguments; engaging in collaborative and open discussion of philosophical ideas and arguments with peers and teaching staff.

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## Summer School Syllabus

### Welcome and Overview

- This introductory session will consist of informative short talks, alongside group discussion and activities in order to get to know each other, learn more about studying philosophy and gain an overview of the summer school.

### How AI Thinks: Probability, Optimisation, and Error

- Through group discussion and activities, we will consider how humans have typically understood truth and error differently to artificial intelligences (AI), which think in terms of probability and optimisation rather than in terms of certainty, knowledge, or verification. Through collaborative investigation, we will set the stage for a critical exploration of different relationships and conceptualisations of error in philosophy.

### Plato, Verisimilitude, and Error

- Through lecture and group discussion, we will analyse Plato's Simile of the Sun, the Simile of the Line, and the Allegory of the Cave from Republic. In so doing, students will learn Plato's account of how we transition from error to knowledge, and why it is that we must depend on verisimilitude and error rather than 'truth'

### Descartes, Doubt and Error

- In this session, students will learn how Rene Descartes takes the fact that he previously believed many errors to be true to be the starting point of a new approach to philosophy and the sciences. Through lecture and group discussion, we will discuss how he attempts to subject all his previously

held beliefs to philosophical doubt in order to find at least one principle that is absolutely true and can serve as a secure basis for all other knowledge.

### Nietzsche, Truth and Lies

- Philosophy has almost always taken truth to be good in itself. Similarly, morality has almost always valued telling the truth as virtuous. In this lecture and group discussion, we will learn why Friedrich Nietzsche considers this valuation of truth to be merely a prejudice that, ironically, hides an important truth: that we may be in error in the belief that the truth is always better than a lie and that it might be lies - and not truth - that make life liveable.

### Freud, Error, and the Unconscious

- Through lecture and group discussion, we will learn about Sigmund Freud's examination of 'parapraxes' ('Fehlleistung', sometimes translated as 'error'), challenging the common view that everyday errors—slips of the tongue, misreadings, forgetfulness—are mere accidents. Instead, he posits that they are psychically determined by the interference of unconscious wishes and that these 'errors' paradoxically provide knowledge of important truths.

### Irigaray, Mimesis, and Critique

- Through lecture and a group discussion, we will learn about Luce Irigaray's radical critique of metaphysics and psychoanalysis. Examining how conceptualisations of error and knowledge by other philosophers have marginalised the feminine and produced erroneous conceptualisations of sexual difference, Irigaray demonstrates an alternative mode of thinking through error, knowledge, and sexual difference together.

### Adorno, Rationality and Superstition

- In this lecture and group discussion, we will consider Theodor Adorno's interest in why superstitions like astrology seem to have found renewed popularity in an age of scientific rationality. Students will learn why Adorno argues that these belief systems are neither wholly rational nor wholly irrational but one of many modern forms of what he calls 'pseudorationality'.

### Guided Reading of the Primary Texts

- In this online session, students will engage in independent but supported guided reading and group discussion of texts by thinkers covered in previous sessions.

## Course Reflection and Assessment Brief

- This online session will involve lecture and group discussion reflecting on the course, as well as introducing the course assessment

## Assessment Discussions

- Students will deliver and discuss prepared responses to the assessment brief on the basis of their readings of the primary texts online for the formative assessment part of the Summer School.
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## Activities for Personal Study

Students may want to revise their chosen readings and continue to prepare for their assessment outside of the dedicated sessions. Optional resources (such as additional readings) will be provided but these will not be required.

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## On-Campus Teaching:

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> (PM), Monday 29<sup>th</sup> & Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> June

## Online Teaching:

Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup>, Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> & Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> (AM only) July

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## Formative Assessment Details

A verbal presentation and discussion and a written discussion  
More details will be given during the event by your Academic Strand Lead.

## Hand-in Method

Digital

## Assessment deadline

Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 3pm