

PATVIRTINTA
 Vilniaus universiteto Kauno fakulteto tarybos
 2025 m. kovo 12 d. nutarimu
 Nr. (1.15 E) 620000-TPN-8



COURSE UNIT (MODULE) DESCRIPTION

Course unit (module) title	Code
Fundamental Problems of Philosophy (Pamatinės filosofijos problemos)	

Academic staff	Core academic unit(s)
Coordinating: assoc. prof. dr. Audronė Rimkutė	Institute of Social Sciences and Applied Informatics, Kaunas Faculty, Vilnius University

Study cycle	Type of the course unit
First	General university studies

Mode of delivery	Semester or period when it is delivered	Language of instruction
Face-to-face / remotely (on-line)	Autumn, Spring semester	English

Requisites	
Prerequisites:	Co-requisites (if relevant):

Number of ECTS credits allocated	Student's workload (total)	Contact hours	Individual work
5	130	48	82

Purpose of the course unit
This course aims to provide knowledge about the fundamental problems of philosophy and their historical evolution and develop skills in critical thinking, argumentation, and philosophical analysis.

Learning outcomes of the course unit	Teaching and learning methods	Assessment methods
By the end of this course, students will: be able explain major philosophical problems and their historical development; compare the ideas of key philosophers on the same issues; formulate, argue and defend their own views on fundamental philosophical issues.	Interactive lecture, discussion, problem-based learning, self-study of literature, preparation of presentations	Test of open-ended and closed questions, assessment of presentation according to criteria, activity assessment

Content	Contact hours							Individual work: time and assignments	
	Lectures	Tutorials	Seminars	Workshops	Laboratory work	Internship	Contact hours, total	Individual work	Tasks for individual work
1. Introduction to philosophy and its problems. What is philosophy? The value of philosophical inquiry Overview of major branches of philosophy. Historical development of philosophy.	2		2					7	Berlin, I. 1960. The purpose of philosophy. In <i>Concepts and categories</i> . 1–11 pp. 2. Russel, B. 1950. Philosophy for laymen. In <i>Unpopular Essays</i> , 21–32 pp.
2. The problem of reality (Metaphysics) What is real? The theories of basic element and the beginning of the universe The beginnings of idealism and materialism. Plato's theory of ideas. The metaphysics of Aristotle. The naturalistic materialism.	4		2					7	Plato. 2004. <i>The Republic</i> . 208 – 229 pp. Locke, J. 2015 (1690) No innate speculative principles in the mind. In <i>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> . 22-39 pp.
3. The problem of the source of Knowledge (Epistemology) What can we know? The controversy between the rationalism and empiricism. The theory of apriorism. The problem of scientific method. Deduction and induction as methods of science. The hypothetical deduction.	4		2					7	Descartes, R. 2017 (1641) Meditation 1. Of the things which may be brought within the sphere of the doubtful. Meditation II. Of the Nature of the Human Mind; and that it is more easily known than the Body. In: <i>Meditations on first philosophy</i> . 6-12 pp. Hume, D. 2017 (1748). <i>Of Miracles</i> . In: <i>An inquiry concerning human understanding</i> . 75-91 pp.

4. The problem of truth. The classic theory of truth and its alternatives. The dispute between the scepticism, relativism and veritism.	4		2					7	Popper, K.R. The problem of induction. In: <i>The logic of scientific discovery</i> . 4-26 pp. Russel, B. <i>On induction</i> . In: <i>The problems of philosophy</i> . 45-52 pp.
Midterm	2							16	Preparation for the exam
5. The problem of human nature. The questions of anthropological philosophy. The concept of human nature. Trends of anthropological philosophy. Intellectualism and voluntarism as theories of human nature. The materialist theories of human nature. The existentialist theories of human being.								7	Camus, A. 1942. Absurdity and suicide. In <i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i> . 3–10 pp. Frankl, V. 1984. <i>The Case for a Tragic Optimism</i> . In: <i>Man's search for meaning</i> . 139-154 psl.
6. The problem of liberty. The concepts of positive and negative liberty. Liberal political philosophy. Natural and human rights. "Laissez faire" policy. Ontological and ethical individualism. Liberal ideologies.	4		2					7	Mill, J. S. 2001 (1859) Of the Limits to the Authority of Society over the Individual. In <i>On liberty</i> , 69–75 pp. Goodin, R. E. (1997) <i>Permissible paternalism: saving smokers from themselves</i> . In <i>H. LaFollette (ed.), Ethics in practice: an anthology (pp. 320-325)</i> . Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers
7. The problem of equality. Equality before the law, equality of wellbeing, equality of opportunities. Egalitarianism. Collectivism and socialism. Socialist political philosophy. Socialist ideologies.	4		2					7	Singer, P. 1989. All Animals Are Equal. In: Tom Regan & Peter Singer (eds.), <i>Animal Rights and Human Obligations</i> . 148-162 pp. Machan, Tibor R. 1991. Do Animals Have Rights?

									<i>Public Affairs Quarterly</i> , Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 163-173.
8. The problem of tradition and change in political philosophy.	4		2					7	Mill, J. S. 2001 (1859) Of individuality, as one of the Elements of Well-being. In <i>On liberty</i> , 52–69 pp. Fromm, E. 2008 (1941) The illusion of individuality. In: <i>Escape from Freedom</i> , 387–412 pp.
Exam								17	Preparation for the exam
Total	32		16					48	

Assessment strategy	Weight %	Deadline	Assessment criteria
Midterm test	25%	8 th week	Midterm test consists of 30 open and closed questions that have to be answered in 1 hour. The questions of the test are from the material of the first 4 themes. 95 – 100 % of correct answers – excellent knowledge and abilities (10 marks). 85 – 94 % of correct answers – very good knowledge and abilities (9 marks). 75 – 84 % of correct answers – good knowledge and abilities (8 marks). 65 – 74 % of correct answers – average knowledge and abilities (7 marks). 55 – 64 % of correct answers – sufficient knowledge and abilities (6 marks). 45 – 54 % of correct answers – weak knowledge and abilities (5 marks). 0 – 44 % of correct answers – insufficient knowledge and abilities (4 marks).
Proponent's presentation during seminar	25%	According to seminars schedule published on Moodle	Each student is required to prepare an analysis of a selected philosophical text and present it during the seminar. In the analysis, the student must outline the main ideas of the chosen author and summarize them at the end in three to five concise theses. The analysis should include precise quotations from the text as well as the student's general interpretations. The student will present their analysis using a PowerPoint (.ppt) presentation and must be prepared to advocate for the author's ideas and defend them against the opponent's critique. The presentation should consist of 10 to 15 slides and last approximately 10 to 15 minutes. The PowerPoint file must be uploaded to Moodle before the seminar. Following the proponent's presentation, an assigned opponent will respond with counterarguments. The proponent must then engage in the discussion by

			<p>replying to the opponent's critiques and defending the author's position.</p> <p>This assignment is graded on a scale from 4 to 10 points. Failure to prepare, present, or participate in the assigned discussion will result in a grade of 0 for this task.</p>
Opponent's presentation during seminar	25%	According to seminars schedule published on Moodle	<p>Each student is required to prepare a critical analysis of a selected text. The student must first outline the main arguments presented in the text and then critically evaluate them by providing three to five counterarguments. The analysis should include precise quotations from the text and well-reasoned counterarguments. Each counterargument must be clearly explained and justified.</p> <p>The student will present their analysis using a PowerPoint (.ppt) presentation and must be prepared to articulate and defend their critique of the author's ideas. The presentation should consist of 10 to 15 slides and last approximately 10 to 15 minutes. The PowerPoint file must be uploaded to Moodle before the seminar.</p> <p>Following the presentation, an assigned opponent will respond to the proponent's arguments and must be prepared to engage in a critical discussion.</p> <p>This assignment is graded on a scale of 4 to 10 points. Failure to prepare, present, or participate in the assigned discussion will result in a grade of 0 for this task.</p>
Exam test	25%	Session	<p>Midterm test consists of 30 open and closed questions that have to be answered in 1 hour. The questions of the test are from the material of the last 4 themes.</p> <p>95 – 100 % of correct answers – excellent knowledge and abilities (10 marks).</p> <p>85 – 94 % of correct answers – very good knowledge and abilities (9 marks).</p> <p>75 – 84 % of correct answers – good knowledge and abilities (8 marks).</p> <p>65 – 74 % of correct answers – average knowledge and abilities (7 marks).</p> <p>55 – 64 % of correct answers – sufficient knowledge and abilities (6 marks).</p> <p>45 – 54 % of correct answers – weak knowledge and abilities (5 marks).</p> <p>0 – 44 % of correct answers – insufficient knowledge and abilities (4 marks).</p>
Activities in the class	Additional points	Each seminar	Students who participate in discussions during the seminars actively get additional points that are added to their marks of midterm or exam tests or oral presentations, if they are below 10.
The final grade of the course is rounded half up.			
The assessment strategy for an external exam	Weight, %	Deadline	Assessment criteria
Test from the material of the whole course material	60 % 40%	By agreement	The test consists of 40 closed and 10 open questions from the whole course material. Its assessment criteria are the same as studying in a full-time way.

2 practical assignments			Both assignments must be completed individually. The evaluation criteria are the same as studying in a full-time way.
Rules for the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) models when studying this subject			
<p>Students are permitted to use AI for the following purposes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating visualizations required for completing the assignments; • Correcting the language of assignment texts; • Searching for additional literature. <p>However, AI is strictly prohibited from being used to generate or interpret the final text of the assignment, it must be authentic and written self-reliantly.</p> <p>Disclosure of AI Usage: In the introduction of their work, students must explicitly state which AI tools they utilized and how they applied them to complete the assignment.</p> <p>Any AI-generated components of the assignment (e.g., data visualizations) must be clearly identified, specifying the AI tool used. For further details, please refer to the <i>Dirbtinio intelekto naudojimo Vilniaus universitete gaires</i>, approved by the university senate on June 18, 2024, resolution No. SPN-54).</p>			

Author (-s)	Publishing year	Title	Issue of a periodical or volume of a publication	Publishing house or web link
Required reading				
Berlin, I.	1990	The purpose of philosophy. In <i>Concepts and categories</i> . 1–11 pp.		Pimlico
Russel, B.	1950	Philosophy for laymen. In <i>Unpopular Essays</i> , 21–32 pp.		Ruskin House
Plato	2004	<i>The Republic</i> . 208 – 229 pp.		Hackett Publishing Company
Locke, J.	2019	No innate speculative principles in the mind. In <i>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> . 22-39 pp.		Global Grey
Descartes, R.	2017	Meditation 1. Of the things which may be brought within the sphere of the doubtful. Meditation II. Of the Nature of the Human Mind; and that it is more easily known than the Body. In: <i>Meditations on first philosophy</i> . 6-12 pp.		Global Grey
Hume, D.	2007	Of Miracles. In: <i>An inquiry concerning human understanding</i> . 75-91 pp.		Oxford University Press
Popper, K.R.	2005	The problem of induction. In: <i>The logic of scientific discovery</i> . 4-26 pp.		The Taylor & Francis
Russel, B.		On induction. In: <i>The problems of philosophy</i> . 45-52 pp.		Ruskin House
Camus, A.	1942	Absurdity and suicide. In <i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i> . 3–10 pp.		New York: Vintage Books
Frankl, V.	1984	The Case for a Tragic Optimism. In: <i>Man's search for meaning</i> . 139-154 pp.		Beacon Press

Mill, J. S.	2001	Of the Limits to the Authority of Society over the Individual. In <i>On liberty</i> , 69–75 pp.		Global Grey
Goodin, R. E.	1997	Permissible paternalism: saving smokers from themselves. In H. LaFollette (ed.), <i>Ethics in practice: an anthology</i> , 320-325 pp.		Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers
Singer, P.	1989	All Animals Are Equal. In: Tom Regan & Peter Singer (eds.), <i>Animal Rights and Human Obligations</i> . 148-162 pp.		New Jersey: Prentice-Hall
Machan, Tibor R.	1991	Do Animals Have Rights?	<i>Public Affairs Quarterly</i> , Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 163-173.	
Mill, J. S.	2001	Of individuality, as one of the Elements of Well-being. In <i>On liberty</i> , 52–69 pp.		Global Grey
Fromm, E.	2008	The illusion of individuality. In: <i>Escape from Freedom</i> , 387–412 pp.		Continuum
Recommended reading				
Goodin, Robert E., Philip Pettit, Thomas Pogge (eds.)	2017	<i>A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy</i>		Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
Perry, J., Bratman, M. Fischer, J. M. (eds.)	2013	<i>Introduction to philosophy</i>		New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press
Russel, B.	1912	<i>The Problems of Philosophy</i> .		https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/5827
Solomon, Robert C., Higgins, Kathleen M	2010	<i>The Big Questions A Short Introduction to Philosophy</i>		Wadsworth, Cengage Learning