

DEPARTMENT OF AESTHETICS AND PHILOSOPHY

THE ENGLISH AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES UNIVERSITY, HYDERABAD

Course title	IDEAS THAT MATTER: PHILOSOPHY AND SELF-TRANSFORMATION
Category	New Course
Course code	MAAPHE 606
Semester	Semester IV, January – May 2026
Number of credits	5 credits
Maximum intake	30
Day/Time	Tuesday and Thursday 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm
Name of the teacher	Dr. SREEDHARAN. T.
Course description	<p>Contemporary philosophy is often seen as one academic discipline among many. But throughout much of its history, philosophy was not conceived of as a narrow discipline, but as an all-encompassing “way of life”—even the most abstract theoretical contemplation was embedded within concrete, practical concerns with a view of uncovering the “good life.” The course intends to explore this alternative conception of philosophy; to see whether it remains viable and how one might live an examined, philosophical life.</p> <p>Philosophy has long been seen as a path for self-transformation, advocating both reflective inquiry and resolute questioning to deepen, enrich, and fundamentally alter one’s experience of the self and the world. Philosophy and self-transformation are deeply interrelated: philosophical practice, across traditions, is as much about changing oneself and one’s way of life as it is about unravelling truths and values related to existence. Philosophers across history—from the Upanishadic teachers, the Buddha, Lao Tse, Confucius, Heraclitus, Socrates, Plato, Diogenes, the Stoics, Hypatia, Rousseau, Spinoza to Kierkegaard, Thoreau, Nietzsche and Camus—have conceived philosophical reflection and self-cultivation as essential for transcending a superficial, habitual existence in favour of a more authentic, ethically and existentially meaningful life. Eastern philosophies, such as those found in Daoism, Confucianism and Indian thought, focus on self-unfoldment as the process of discovering and integrating truths and values and harmonizing oneself with broader social and cosmic orders.</p> <p>Philosophical self-transformation is a life-long, dynamic process. It requires self-awareness and self-reflection, openness to change and self-renewal.</p> <p>The course will study the thought of key figures in non-Western and Western intellectual traditions in a spirit of critical self-inquiry with a view to open up new ways of looking at one’s self and the world so that in course of time we can achieve a transformation in perspective, values, and way of living.</p>

	<p><b>LEARNING OUTCOMES:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To familiarize with the thought of thinkers from diverse intellectual traditions who have thought deeply and rigorously about how to live a good life.</li> <li>• To draw broad connections and to steer clear of false equivalence across thinkers from different ages and traditions.</li> <li>• To understand, appreciate, and critically engage with perspectives different from our own. To reconstruct the philosophical positions of authors through the close reading of select texts.</li> <li>• To justify philosophical positions with reasoned argument in a rigorous way – through an understanding of critical thinking and problem solving.</li> <li>• To express philosophical positions orally and in writing precisely and clearly.</li> <li>• To develop a taste for self-understanding and self-knowing as a lifelong learning process.</li> </ul>
Course delivery	Lecture and discussion
Evaluation scheme	<p>Internal Assessment: 40%</p> <p>Written examination (40 marks)</p> <p>Final Assessment: 60%</p> <p>Written examination (60 marks)</p>
Reading List	<p>Pierre Hadot. <i>Philosophy as a Way of Life</i>.</p> <p>Samuel Enoch Stumph and James Fieser. <i>Socrates to Sartre and Beyond: A History of Philosophy</i>.</p> <p>Douglas J. Soccio. <i>Archetypes of Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy</i>.</p> <p>Norman Melchert and David. R Morrow. <i>The Great Conversation: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy</i>.</p> <p>James Miller. <i>Examined Lives: From Socrates to Nietzsche</i>.</p> <p>Gideon Baker. <i>Questioning: A New History of Western Philosophy</i>.</p>