

COURSE OUTLINE & FAQ's

Meeting from Friday 1st October at the Friends Meeting House, 126 Hampton Road, redland, Bristol, BS6 6JE. Meeting is from 7.15pm to 9.15pm for 10 sessions.

Cost is £10 and free for full time students.

Half term week is 25th-31st October (no meeting).

Week 1: The wisdom within

These opening sessions consider how philosophy can help us enjoy richer, less stressful lives.

What is practical philosophy?

'What would a wise person do here?'

Philosophy means the love of wisdom. Our course is intended to show how philosophy can help us enjoy richer, less stressful and more useful lives. This opening two sessions consider these aims, and introduces simple exercises in mindfulness and the application of wisdom you can practise in daily life.

Week 2: Know thyself

Who or what am I?

What is my potential?

Who am I, really? My body? My emotions? My strongly held beliefs? My soul? Possibly all of these? Possibly none?

Such questions have preoccupied philosophers down the ages. We look at practical ways to explore who we really are and how to tap our true potential.

Week 3: Being awake

What is our state of awareness?

Why does it fluctuate during the day?

Often the most notable quality of wise people is their alertness to the subtleties of a situation. They are awake, perceptive and curious.

We look at deeper levels of awareness, and consider how we may become more awake to ourselves, our surroundings, and the events we meet.

Week 4: The present moment

Living in the now, mindfulness.

What is the potential of the present moment?

We review our own experience of attention through a model featuring attention centred, captured, open and scattered, and how these each relate to the past, present and future.

re the extraordinary brightness and freedom naturally available in the present moment. A straightforward practice is introduced

Week 5: Living justly

Plato's views on justice.

What does it mean to live justly?

According to Plato, justice and injustice do not start 'out there'. They begin within us. For justice to prevail, Plato suggests that we must learn to avoid being 'tyrannised' by our passions and fears to the extent they overrule our reason.

We discuss the practicality of Plato's ideas on justice in our daily lives.

Week 6: The Threefold Energy

The Vedic model of three fundamental energies.

Sometimes we seem not to have enough energy, or the wrong kind. A wise person can act consistently despite these varying conditions.

We consider how to recognise differing energies, how to gain and conserve them and how to use them wisely.

Week 7: The light of reason

What is reason? How can it enrich our lives? We look at guidelines for Socratic dialogue and how to use them. Developing reason in decision-making and action are also discussed, with practical applications. Obstacles to reason are considered. Everyone has the faculty of reason and we can all use it and develop it.

Week 8: The power of beauty

What is beauty?

Is there such a thing as absolute beauty?

Beauty has the capacity to open the heart and bring delight. In this session we discuss our direct experience of beauty in its different form: of the sensory world, of thought, of feelings, of the inner nature, and of conduct.

We consider Plato's idea of there being ultimately one beauty – beauty absolute – 'not knowing birth or death, growth or decay'.

Week 9: Unity in diversity

Looking for the common thread in life.

▷ effect of finding unity?

When we look around, we see enormous diversity in nature. The wise person looks for the unifying factor: that which allows all this apparent diversity to be seen as part of a single whole.

Seen in this way, life then has the best chance of being led freshly and openly.

Week 10: The desire for truth

What is truth?

How does the desire for truth show itself?

Practical philosophy is about discovering the truth of things – not theoretically, but in our own experience.

In this final session we look back and ask ourselves how our search for truth has fared as the term has progressed. We discuss what has been discovered and how, in our own way, we may continue to develop it in our daily lives.

General Course Frequently Asked Questions

How do I register for the course?

By completing the form or Email bathandbristolphilosophy@gmail.com or by calling 07873230651. If you register online, you will receive a confirmation email and be added to our register. If you register by phone you will receive a text confirming your registration.

Course fee is £10 (free to full time students).

Introductory Practical Philosophy FAQs

1. How is the course run?

A tutor presents material, and leads a discussion based on what arises. Being practical rather than academic, the emphasis is on personal knowledge. Students are encouraged neither to accept nor reject the ideas put forward, but to test them in practice for themselves, in the light of their own experience. In this way, for those who wish, the whole week between sessions can become a learning opportunity.

As the course continues, the most vivid and valuable part of the evening meetings is often sharing what has been seen in daily life between individual sessions.

2. Do I need any previous qualifications?

No. The course is intended for everyone, regardless of education, occupation, race, political or religious belief.

3. What does 'Practical Philosophy' mean?

The course is practical in the sense that it is designed to be of direct use in our everyday lives. The intention is to stimulate enquiry and through this expand the way we look at the world and ourselves.

4. Is there a break?

There is a break for 15-20 minutes half way through the evening so you can use the facilities and get refreshments (tea/coffee/cake/biscuits). There is a charge for these so please bring change.

Handouts provided or do I need to take notes?

Handouts are provided free of charge by email at the end of each evening. They contain the main points covered, readings, and practical exercises for you to do in the week.

6. What happens on the first evening?

You should arrive by 7pm for a prompt start at 7.15pm, and to be shown into the meeting room and seated. The group tutor will introduce the class and course content. You are encouraged to take a full and active part by responding to the questions asked from the material. There will be a break at about half way through the evening for refreshments. The meeting will end at 9.15pm.

7. Where is the course held?

The course is held in Bristol, meeting at the Quaker Meeting House, 126 Hampton Road, Redland, Bristol BS6 6JE. We rent rooms in the building and are not Quakers or of any religious denomination.

