



CORE- Worldviews and the Human Person

Teaching guide 2026-27

BASIC INFORMATION

Brief Description of the Course:

What is the meaning of human existence? What is the origin, essence, and destiny of the human being? These questions are perennial ones, and have received very different replies in the course of history. The present course focuses on answers offered by a small selection of philosophies and religions, ancient and modern, western and eastern, with the object, firstly, of understanding their different ways of looking at reality; secondly, of critically evaluating their way of thought; and thirdly, of comparing them to see interesting similarities and differences.

This course is actually the first half of a more extensive one lasting two semesters, but may be taken as an independent subject in the first semester. It covers the following worldviews: absolute Hedonism (Aristippus) and mitigated Hedonism (Epicurus); Platonism; Hinduism; Thomism; Existentialism (Sartre).

This course belongs to the Core Curriculum of the University of Navarra <http://www.unav.edu/web/core-curriculum/inicio>

Degree: (The course is open to students pursuing a degree in any Faculty)

Module / Subject: Core Curriculum / Cultural Keys

ECTS: 3

Year and semester: 1st year (for exceptions, consult w/ international exchange office); 1st semester

Type of course: Elective

Professor: Miguel García-Valdecasas

Medium of instruction: English

Schedule: Wednesdays, 5:30-6:15 + 6:30-7:15 pm.

Room: 33 (Central Building)

[Welcoming video](#)

COURSE SYLLABUS

Part I: The ultimate questions: What is a human person (anthropos)? What is his/her origin, and what is his/her destiny?

Part II: The question of the meaning of existence. What does the human being seek in life? Does life in fact have a meaning? (The notion of an ultimate end). Everyone wants to be happy; but what does happiness consist in, exactly?

Part III: Critical examination of diverse answers:



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- Absolute hedonism (Aristippus). Brief history of Aristippus and hedonism. Maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain as a formula for happiness.
- Mitigated hedonism (Epicurus). Brief history of Epicurus and hedonism. The atomic theory applied to the human person. Achieving tranquility (ataraxia) by minimizing superfluous needs.
- Platonism. Brief history of Plato and Platonism. The World of Ideas. The actual human condition and the nostalgia for an ideal world.
- Hinduism. Brief history of Hinduism. Brahman, the universe, and the human person. The wheel of reincarnation. The goal of dissolution in Brahman.
- Thomism. Arguments in favor of the existence of a Supreme Being. Human purpose and happiness.
- Existentialism (Sartre). Brief biography of Sartre. Developing a morality without God.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Textbook:

- J. José Alviar, *Dialogue with Worldviews* (part I), EUNSA, Pamplona 2020. [Find it in the Library](#)

Reference Works in English:

- Copleston, Frederick Charles, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 1: Greece and Rome, Continuum, London 2003. [Find it in the Library](#)
- Copleston, Frederick Charles, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 11: Logical Positivism and Existentialism, Continuum, London 2003. [Find it in the Library](#)
- Elder, Joseph W., "Hinduism", *Collier's Encyclopedia*, Crowell-Collier & Macmillan, New York 1966, vol. 12, pp. 127-133. [Find it in the Library](#)
- Kerr, Fergus, *Thomas Aquinas: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford : Oxford University Press. 2009. [Find it in the Library](#)
- Maritain, Jacques, *Moral Philosophy: An Historical and Critical Survey of the Great Systems*, Scribner, New York 1964. [Find it in the Library](#)
- Spaemann, Robert, *Basic Moral Concepts*, Routledge, London 1991. [Find it in the Library](#)
- Yarza, Ignatius, *History of Ancient Philosophy*, Sinag-Tala, Manila 1994. [Find it in the Library](#)

Reference Works in Spanish

(* = obras especialmente recomendadas)

- Ayllón, José Ramón, *En torno al hombre*, Rialp, Madrid 1998. [Find it in the Library](#)
- *Copleston, Frederick Charles, *Historia de la filosofía*, vol. I: Grecia y Roma, Ariel, Barcelona 1969 y 1980. [Find it in the Library](#)
- *Copleston, Frederick Charles, *Historia de la filosofía*, vol. IX: De Maine de Biran a Sartre, Ariel, Barcelona 1969 y 1980. [Find it in the Library](#)
- Cruz Prados, Alfredo, *Historia de la filosofía contemporánea*, EUNSA, Pamplona 1991. [Find it in the Library](#)
- Choza, Jacinto / Vicente, Jorge, *Filosofía del hombre*, Rialp, Madrid 1995. [Find it in the Library](#)
- *Gambra, Rafael, *Historia sencilla de la filosofía*, Rialp, Madrid 1997. [Find it in the Library](#)
- Grenet, Paul, *Historia de la filosofía antigua*, Herder, Barcelona 1992. [Find it in the Library](#)



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- *Guerra, Manuel, *Historia de las religiones*, EUNSA, Pamplona 1984/85. [Find it in the Library](#)
- *Leclercq, Jacques, *Las grandes líneas de la filosofía moral*, Gredos, Madrid 1977. [Find it in the Library](#)
- Llano, Alejandro, *La vida lograda*, Ariel, Barcelona 2002. [Find it in the Library](#)
- Maritain, Jacques, *Filosofía moral: examen histórico-crítico de los grandes sistemas*, Morata, Madrid 1966. [Find it in the Library](#)
- Merino, José Antonio, *Historia de la filosofía medieval*, BAC, Madrid 2001. [Find it in the Library](#)
- Polo, Leonardo, *Quién es el hombre*, Rialp, Madrid 1993. [Find it in the Library](#)
- *Spaemann, Robert, *Ética: cuestiones fundamentales*, EUNSA, Pamplona 1995. [Find it in the Library](#)
- Verneaux, Roger, *Historia de la filosofía contemporánea*, Herder, Barcelona 1989. [Find it in the Library](#)
- *Yarza, Iñaki, *Historia de la filosofía antigua*, EUNSA, Pamplona 1992. [Find it in the Library](#)
- *Yepes Stork, Ricardo - Aranguren, Javier, *Fundamentos de antropología*, EUNSA, Pamplona 2001. [Find it in the Library](#)

GRADING SYSTEM

- First exam (October) = 35%
- Second exam (December) = 40%
- Class participation & attendance = 25%

OBJECTIVES

This course is an exercise in the comprehension of widely differing worldviews -- ancient and modern, Western and Eastern. It aims to provide students with an experience in understanding and appraising points of view quite different from their own, and to help them develop the ability to engage in intelligent and respectful dialogue with others.

LEARNING OUTCOMES (Competencies)

- Reading and analysis of philosophical and religious texts
- Critical evaluation of ideas
- Comparison of different thought systems

FORMATIVE ACTIVITIES

- Reading of selected texts from various philosophical and religious systems
- Analysis of the concept of happiness and suffering in selected philosophies and religions
- Critical evaluation and discussion of the answers of different worldviews to the question of the meaning of life

CONSULTATION HOURS

- Wednesdays: 6:15 - 6:30 & 7:15 - 7:45 p.m., Room 33, Central Building
- other days/hours: by appointment (garciaval@unav.es)