



# Reynolds High School

## Introduction to Philosophy

### Syllabus



**Teacher:** Jesse Vella  
**Room #:** W-11

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#### **Required Materials:**

Every student will be required to have a notebook for this class and something to write with every day.

#### **Course Requirements:**

All students will be held to the highest standard. All students are expected to demonstrate excellence in the following behaviors that will assist them in learning as much as she/he can this year.

#### **1. Time Management**

- Productive use of time will be essential to your success in class, being tardy or having unexcused absences is unacceptable.
- The class period should be used effectively.
- Work must be completed on time.

#### **2. Ability/Willingness to Learn**

- Everyone needs to push themselves to develop as learners.
- Daily assignments, projects, and other tasks will be completed; you will be graded based on the quality and effort put into your assignments.
- Participation is an important part of learning. Make sure you participate in class activities and discussions regularly.

#### **3. Teamwork/Cooperation**

- Everyone's opinion is valuable to our discussions. There will be no negative comments, unconstructive criticism, or inappropriate behavior.
- It is important to work effectively with students, teachers, administrators, and the community.

#### **4. Responsibility**

- Everyone will follow the rules in the student handbook and abide by the rules and decisions of the RHS Administration.
- It is your responsibility to keep the room neat and organized to ensure the success of duties and events.

**Course Description:** This is an elective course designed to teach students how to “do philosophy.” The focus is not on memorizing important figures and time periods for a test. The focus is to help students clarify and analyze concepts and arguments relating to the big questions in life. Students will be given space to ask questions, not only to wonder, but to develop rational and useful conversation and thinking skills to become better thinkers. Through extensive dialogue students will challenge assumptions, reasoning and conclusions to analyze and write arguments with clarity and precision. Ultimately, this course should encourage shared inquiry through good will, careful listening and thoughtful conversation.

## Units of Study:

This course is designed to be fun and organic. I want the questions to come from students and I want students to lead the learning. My role is facilitator, but I can alter that role as needed.

Much of the course is taught through popular culture as it so familiar to students. From that point we can look deeper into philosophical ideas that are all around us, all the time. I will organize the units of study around themes this year and through these themes we will explore the larger philosophical implications.

### Semester 1

Simplicity  
Communication  
Perspective  
Flexibility  
Empathy

### Semester 2

Individuality  
Belonging  
Serenity  
Possibility  
Joy

Through these units we will learn to use philosophy as a tool to better understand ourselves, the world around us, each other and learn how to “do” philosophy.

## Grading Policy:

Your grade will depend on your ability to listen to and participate in philosophical discussions and lectures, in class simulations, multimedia presentations, an essay presentation (with a question and answer session) and the critical viewing of documentaries and “philosophical” films. Your grade will be determined by both formal and informal assessments. Your final grade will be reported on a traditional A-F scale. For most assignments you will use self-grading. I have developed a rubric that allows students to self-assess in a way that holds students accountable and provides excellent reflection and growth. The grading scale is called **ECQC**. Students must reflect on four aspects of thinking and learning in a writing at the completion of each assignment.

### ECQC:

**Effort**- discuss and describe the effort you applied to this assignment. Was this your best effort? If it was not your best effort, why not?

**Care**-did you care about this assignment? In detail describe how and why you cared about this assignment.

**Quality**-is this a product of quality? How do you know? What makes this quality work? If you do not consider this work to be quality, why not?

**Communication**-did this writing communicate all that you intended? How do you know?

**Late Work**—late work is only accepted if a conversation has happened between you and Mr. Vella. Late work is only accepted if you communicate! Life is complicated, but you must let Mr. Vella know what is going on. Once we communicate about your situation, we can then make a plan that best supports your educational development. This includes re-takes of quizzes and tests.

Please contact me with any questions you might have. Email is the best way to reach me:

[jvella@rsd7.net](mailto:jvella@rsd7.net)

<u>Areas of Grading</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1. Summative Assessments	100%

**I have read the above syllabus with my student and understand the requirements.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Student Name**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Student Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Parent/Guardian Name**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Parent/Guardian Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

I will collect your syllabus, give you credit and then return it.