

Resources for Pre-College Level Philosophy Teachers

Steve Goldberg
Oak Park and River Forest High School
Oak Park, Illinois

Bio: Steve Goldberg has taught history and philosophy for the past twenty years at Oak Park and River Forest High School. He currently teaches Philosophy Advanced and Modern Middle Eastern History Advanced. He also teaches World History and Asian Studies. Goldberg has a Ph.D. in philosophy and has published two books in philosophy, one that he authored and another that he co-edited, as well as several articles in history, philosophy, and education journals and magazines. Goldberg has been a reader and table leader for AP World History for several years.

1. Syllabus for Philosophy Course
2. Cooperative Philosophy Project Proposal

1. Syllabus for Philosophy Course

Introduction:

Philosophy is a varied, often-changing discipline, one without a fixed body of information that can be mastered easily and all at once. Instead, a grasp of philosophy's concerns, methods, and traditions demands the persistent searching that characterizes the doing of philosophy. In keeping with this description of philosophy as an activity rather than a subject matter, the class encourages careful critical inquiry, debate, and reflection upon fundamental, perennial questions about the human condition and our most fundamental beliefs.

The class includes readings from philosophers, classical and modern, as well as short works of literature and films that explore imaginatively philosophical issues. Although the course must be partly historical--philosophers nearly always work with one eye fixed on their own traditions--it will be organized around a set of central themes or issues: ethics, justice and the state, free will and determinism, the rationality of religious belief, the problem of evil, the meaning of human existence, the mind-body problem, personal identity, artificial intelligence, knowledge of other minds and the external world, the nature of truth.

The class has five basic objectives:

- To acquaint the student with the ideas, methods, and issues central to philosophy;
- To provide students with an intellectual foundation for the study of their cultural heritage;
- To invite self-reflection and an inquiring attitude into perennial questions;
- To sharpen students' critical thinking and ability both to analyze and write arguments with
clarity and precision;
- To encourage shared inquiry through good will, careful listening, and thoughtful conversation
about the issues of the course.

Readings:

Pojman (ed.), *Philosophy: The Quest for Truth (7th edition)*

Numerous photocopied readings (about half the material for the course)

Topics

1. Ethics: relativism, egoism, utilitarianism (Mill), deontological ethics (Kant), virtue ethics (Aristotle), applied ethics
2. Free Will and Determinism: fatalism, hard determinism, compatibilism, existentialism
3. Philosophy of Mind: mind-body problem, personal identity, artificial intelligence, skepticism
4. Philosophy of Religion: rationality of religious belief, problem of evil, meaning of human existence
5. Political Philosophy: justification of state (social contract theory), distributive justice (Rawls, Nozick), democracy, rights and liberties

Questions of metaphysics (nature of reality) and epistemology (nature and limits of knowledge) will be integrated into discussion of the above topics.

Course Expectations and Evaluation:

Careful reading of all assigned material is crucial for both a firm grasp of the issues and ability to contribute meaningfully to class discussion. In addition to the daily reading, students will be assigned periodic **in-class and formal essays** on major topics each quarter; occasional **group activities** (e.g., debates on applied ethics). **Class participation** counts for 20% of each quarter grade.

Participation and Discussion:

Expectations for Class Discussion

Discussion is group inquiry, not merely group talk. We will try to understand our readings and reach answers on the important questions they raise. Group inquiry only works when the insights of many people are made public. It requires that these perspectives be received with respect but subjected to respectful scrutiny and criticism. For these reasons I want you to feel free and positively encouraged to speak your mind even when you suspect that others may disagree. You should reflect before speaking, build on previous comments, help discover the meaning that others are struggling to express, be open to persuasion, and bend to the weight of evidence and reasoning. You must be prepared to substantiate your factual and textual claims, to defend your value judgments, to show the connection between your premises and conclusions, and to use the diversity of insights and perspectives in the class to advance your understanding of the readings and their themes. The ultimate premise of class discussion is that each of us can learn from each of us. If you accept the principle that discussion is group inquiry, then your uncertainty about a question is a good reason to speak, not a good reason to remain silent. If you don't have answers, but feel uncertain, then you can help the cause by asking questions to zero in on what is difficult.

I understand that some people are shy, some intimidated, and some simply pre-empted by others' comments. I will try to maintain an atmosphere in which each student's contribution is welcomed and respected, and otherwise look primarily to the quality of oral contributions. Note for the shy: quality of oral contributions cannot be judged from a sample of zero. Note to the loquacious: quality of oral contributions is not a function of quantity, not even a little bit. Good discussions require a reasonably civilized conquest of timidity. They require good listening and good will. If you want respect, insights, seriousness, and a healthy balance of speaking and listening from others, you must give the same to them.

Grading Policy

Though I don't recommend students make it a habit, they can take advantage of "midnight madness" to avoid turning in late papers. A paper hand-delivered to my mailbox (134 Ashland, River Forest) before midnight on the due date will not be penalized. Late papers have four consequences: 1) a one-grade reduction, 2) no comments, 3) slow return, 4) and no opportunity to rewrite for a higher grade. Students who turn in their papers on time may revise for a higher grade. (The old grade is erased and replaced with the higher grade from the revised paper.)

Journal Questions:

Keep a spiral binder or notebook solely for your journal entries. I will pose a journal question (JQ) roughly once a week—sometimes more, sometimes less. The question will never be completely open-ended but it will be sufficiently broad to invite a range of possible responses. The aim of journal entry questions is to encourage independent exploration of readings, arguments, and issues raised in the class. The journal is your work in progress, a place to test your ideas on paper. I don't expect polished, finished work, but I do expect reflections--at times serious, at times playful--that show evidence of

careful reading, listening, and analysis. Entries should not be treated as short paragraphs to be dashed off as a perfunctory assignment but as an ongoing record of your best effort to engage issues as they arise in class discussion and the reading. I will collect four or five students' journals every week after the second week of school.

Topics, Issues, Activities, Readings, and Assignments

Ethics

- **Issue: Introduction to normative ethics: preliminary discussion of criteria for distinguishing right from wrong**

Activity: Raging River Moral Dilemma; Worksheet on Nature of Morality

- **Issue: Ethical Relativism: Is morality relative to cultural norms?**

Activity: Analysis of anthropological cases; assessment of arguments from readings

Readings:

Benedict, *A Defense of Moral Relativism* (H)

Sumner, *A Defense of Cultural Relativism* (H)

Fluehr-Lobban, *Cultural Relativism and Universal Rights* (H)

Perlez, *Uganda's Women: Children, Drudgery, and Pain* (H)

Edgerton, *Sick Societies* (H)

Pojman, *Who's to Judge* (H)

Naipaul, *Our Universal Civilization* (H)

The Universal Nations Charter: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (H)

Rachels, *Morality is Not Relative*

Miner, *Looking for the Nacirema* (H)

(JQ): (1) Is disagreement about moral truth comparable to disagreement about the objective shape of the earth? Why or why not? (2) Does cultural anthropology strengthen or weaken the claims for moral relativism? Why or why not?

Essay: Why I am or am not a moral relativist

- **Issue: Egoism: Is morality reducible to self-interest? Should morality be reducible to self-interest? Why should I be moral? Why shouldn't I be selfish?**

Activity: Prisoner's Dilemma, screening of *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, analysis of cases and readings

Readings:

Plato, *Ring of Gyges* (from *Republic*)

Rand, *In Defense of Ethical Egoism*

Rachels, *A Critique of Ethical Egoism*

Butler, *Benevolence and Self-Interest* (H)

Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (H)

JQ: (1) Does the ability to redescribe any act as an instance of self-interest strengthen or weaken the case for psychological egoism? (2) How would you behave differently in possession of the ring of Gyges? What are the implications for the basis of “morality”?

Essay: Compare and contrast Plato’s treatment of the ring of invisibility with Allen’s in *Crimes and Misdemeanors*. Does the film support Glaucon’s argument or Socrates’ reply? Explain.

- **Issue: Utilitarianism: Should the morality of an action be judged according to its social utility or long-term consequences for society?**

Activities: Happiness Box thought experiment, analysis of cases, application of criteria for evaluating an ethical theory, use of music to test Mill’s distinction between “high” and “low” pleasures

Readings:

Mill, *Utilitarianism*

Bloom, *Closing of the American Mind* (H)

Harris, *Moral Theories*

JQ: (1) Apply act utilitarianism to selected cases (e.g., euthanasia, breeding veal calves, breaking promises). (2) Does the music experiment support challenge Mill’s high/low distinction? (3) Apply both rule and act utilitarianism to selected cases (e.g., conceiving one child to save another) and compare their respective results.

Essays: (1) Assess the effectiveness of rule utilitarianism in addressing the weakness of act utilitarianism. Compare and contrast Mill’s conception of happiness with Aristotle’s. (2) Create a scene and assign roles to no fewer than THREE of the philosophers we have studied in recent weeks (Mill, Kant, Aristotle, Nietzsche, Wilson). You also may introduce other characters (e.g., yourself, historical personages), but the dialogue should represent, apply, and test the views of the philosophers you have chosen on the question: What is the “good” in our actions and our lives? Humor and creativity are welcome, but remember that your dialogue can’t be successful without showing real mastery of philosophical points of view. Be sure to have philosophers (or their proxies) contest each other’s ideas from their respective points of view (e.g., Aristotle criticizing Kant for identifying moral goodness with choosing duty *against* desire). Issue: Deontological Ethics: Should the morality of an action be judged according to the individual’s motive of duty rather than the desire to achieve the greatest happiness for the greatest number?

Activities: Inquiring Murderer and Desert Island justice thought experiments; analysis and application of Kant’s First and Second Categorical Imperatives to cases (e.g., Casablanca)

Readings:

Kant, *The Moral Law*

Harris, *Moral Theories* (H)

Frankena, *A Reconciliation of Two Systems of Ethics* (H)

JQ: What is the mark of goodness: having the right desires or resisting one’s desires to what is right from a sense of duty? Is the death penalty compatible with treating a person as an end in himself? Compare and contrast Kant’s procedure for identifying duties with rule utilitarianism.

- Essay: Why does Kant introduce a second categorical imperative? How does it relate to the first? Are the two combined necessary and sufficient for specifying moral duties? Use examples to illustrate your points.
- **Issue: Virtue Ethics: Should morality be judged not in terms of the motive or consequence of an action but according to the cultivation of excellence in individual character?**

Activities: Students create their own “Aristotelian” table of virtues; screening of *The Lives of Others* on what it means to be a “good man”; close reading of Plato’s *Meno*; students examine the meaning and limits of forgiveness in light of Wiesenthal’s personal story in *Sunflower*

Readings:
Aristotle, *The Ethics of Virtue*
Plato, *The Meno*
Wiesenthal, *Sunflower*

JQ: (1) What are Aristotle’s ingredients for living well? Do you agree? Why or why not? (2) What do we learn from Socrates’ mathematics “lesson” with the slave boy? (3) Simon is silent twice, once with Carl and once with his mother after the war. Why is he silent? Do you believe he did the right thing? Explain.

Essays: (1) In light of our study of ethics, which philosophical approach do you think is more fruitful: (a) identification of abstract principles and procedures to guide individual acts or (b) a theory of human nature that specifies what is needed to cultivate good moral character? Explain both positions in light of the philosophers we have read, giving your reasons for claiming the superiority of one approach over the other. (2) Based on your reading of the *Meno*, discuss the relationship between knowledge and virtue. (3) Revisit Wiesenthal’s question in *Sunflower* on whether he should grant forgiveness to the dying SS officer. Drawing widely from responses in the “Symposium,” address what you see as the powers and limits of forgiveness. (4) Compare Nietzsche and Aristotle in their respective approaches to “excellence” of individual character. How are the two philosophers compatible or incompatible in their respective views of human “excellence”?
 - **Issue: How do Nietzsche’s genealogy of morals and E.O. Wilson’s sociobiology challenge the authority of traditional ethical theories? What is the significance of this challenge to moral and religious authority?**

Activities: Close analysis of Nietzsche’s *Gay Science*; discussion of the role of science in understanding morality

Readings:
Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (H)
Wilson, *Morality as Biology* (H)

JQ: (1) How does Nietzsche explain the origin and genesis of teleological ethics and religion? (2) How does his thought experiment of the weight confront us with an alternative to living teleologically? Is the naturalistic fallacy itself a fallacy? Discuss.

Essays: Compare and contrast Nietzsche and Wilson's attempts to naturalize and de-deify morality. Compare the methods do they use to challenge the metaphysical (or transcendental) theories identified with traditional morality and assess the effectiveness of their respective critiques.

- **Issue: Applied Ethics Project: How can broadly conceived ethical theories be applied to specific, all-too-real moral problems?**

Activity: Applied Ethics Project that divided students into groups on specific topics (e.g., world hunger, bioethics). Each group researches a topic in the library and then develops and teaches a lesson to the class

JQ: Students who are not teaching on a given day are expected to summarize and comment on the reading set by the presenting group.

Essay: In addition to presenting as a member of a group, each individual student writes an applied ethics that meets the following objectives: (a) establishes the historical, cultural, or political context for the topic; (b) carefully identifies the philosophical questions associated with the topic; (c) carefully represents and assesses competing points of view; (d) discusses relevant cases and examples; (e) carefully defines key concepts, draws key distinctions, and represents core arguments; (f) defends a thesis.

Freedom & Determinism

- **Issue: What is a free act? Do we ever act freely? How is being free different from being fated? From randomness? Why should we care whether we are free?**

Activity: Newcomb's Paradox, story of Osmo, Paradise Island thought experiment, close reading of *Notes from the Underground*

Readings:

Taylor, *Fate*

Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground* (H)

A Clockwork Orange [video clips]

JQ: (1) An unconscious woman is carried into a room, the door is locked behind her and, upon regaining consciousness, she decides, without knowing that she can't leave, that she wants to remain in the room. Is the woman free? (2) What does it mean to make an entirely free decision? What characteristic must be present for an act to be free? (3) Why does the underground man believe he must be miserable in order to assert his freedom? Does he succeed? (4) Are we, who are ignorant of our futures, no freer than Osmo?

Essays: The underground man, convinced that he is ineffectual, is shocked to learn that he has gained an audience for his rambling notes. Write a letter in reply from the perspective of the adjusted, active, engaged man or woman (the sort of person for whom he has contempt). Regardless of whether you choose to scold him, congratulate him, or sympathize with him, address both his arguments and his way of life and your notes *to* the underground.

- **Issue: Is free will compatible with determinism? Why do we, or should we, want to possess a free will that is incompatible with determinism? Does such a freedom exist in the natural world and, if so, where?**

Activity: Formal debate on hard versus soft determinism; oral reading of *No Exit*

Readings:

D'Holbach, *Are We Completely Determined?*

Stace, *Compatibilism*

Frankfurt, *Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person*

Hospers, *A Psychoanalytic Defense of Hard Determinism (H)*

Dennett, *I Couldn't Have Done Otherwise: So What? (H)*

Williams, *Moral Luck (H)*

- **Issue: Does existentialism offer a viable, credible alternative to soft determinism as a radical defense of human freedom? What is the relationship between consciousness and freedom? How does existentialism challenge traditional theories of human nature?**

Sartre, *Existentialism as a Humanism*

Sartre, *The Wall (H)*

Sartre, *No Exit (H)*

JQ: (1) Sartre says humans are “condemned to be free.” Why does he characterize freedom as a burden? Do you agree? (2) What is the meaning and significance of Sartre’s claim that “existence precedes essence”? Do you agree with his assessment of human uniqueness?

Essay: (1) Evaluate Sartre’s argument for radical freedom based on consciousness and Frankfurt’s for limited freedom based on will. Which argument is stronger? Why? Is either argument successful in defending human freedom against the claims of hard determinism? Why or why not? (2) Write a dialogue that draws widely for its ideas from the readings. The Dialogue may play with setting, character, and tone but also should do justice to the central questions raised at the beginning to the unit: Is free will compatible with determinism? Why do we, or should we, want to possess a free will that is incompatible with determinism? Can we make sense of a freedom or free will that is incompatible with determinism? Does such a freedom actually exist in the natural order and, if so, where? Both essays and dialogues should address these questions, though how you organize your argument is entirely up to you. When you write your dialogue, please don't simply use the characters to mouth summaries of the reading. Make sure that they engage each other in rational argument. You may end your dialogue with a decisive "winner"--one voice emerging more forcefully than the others--but I am not requiring it.

- **Issue: When is someone too sick to be bad? When should we grant mitigated responsibility to agents who perform illegal or immoral acts?**
Activities: Prosecution and defense teams present closing arguments based on transcript of William Hinckley trial
Reading: Transcript of Hinckley trial
JQ: Write closing statement addressing one of the following criteria for mitigated responsibility: mental disorder, ability to conform to the law, ability to appreciate wrongfulness

Philosophy of Mind

- **Issue: Epistemology: What can we know? Can we know anything? What is truth?**
Activities: thought experiments on idealism and materialism, technological corrections of first-person experiences; analysis of Sartre and Russell's critiques of first and second meditations; discussion of whether the tar water (or beer) I drink is an idea in my mind; video clips from *Waking Life*
Readings:
 Plato, *Allegory of the Cave* (from *Republic*) (H)
 Descartes, *Meditations I and II*
 Hospers, *Arguments Against Skepticism* (H)
 Berkeley, *The Principles* (H)
 Locke, *Empiricist Theory of Knowledge*
 Hume, *The Origin of Our Ideas and Skepticism about Causal Reasoning*
 Borges, *The Circular Ruins*
JQ: (1) Do we know ourselves with greater certainty than we know our bodies and the world around us? (2) How can we know the external world? Is the world an idea in my mind? Why or why not? (3) How do I know other minds?
- **Issue: Mind-Body Problem: What am I? A mind or a body? If both, how do they interact? Might computers have software minds embedded in hardware bodies?**
Activities: What Does Mary Know? thought experiment, Chinese room thought experiment, Bats thought experiment, Schumann thought experiment, video clip from *Kasparov Against the Machine*
Readings:
 Descartes, *Meditation III*
 Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*
 Churchland, *On Functionalism and Materialism*
 Nagel, *What Is It Like to Be a Bat*
 Searle, *Minds, Brains, and Programs*
 Graham, *Philosophy of Mind* (H)
JQ: (1) Does Deep Blue think within the domain of chess? (2) Is the mind lodged in the body like a captain in his ship? Why or why not?
Essays: (1) How did Descartes' method generate the mind-body problem? How have philosophers attempted to solve or dissolve the problem? Have identity

theorists succeeded in dissolving the problem by establishing that mental states are brain states? Or does the question of mind-body interaction remain a mystery that cannot be solved through scientific inquiry? Explain. (2) Have functionalists succeeded in showing how the operation of computers can illuminate the relationship between mind and brain? Is mind to software as body is to hardware? Is artificial intelligence the key to solving the mind-body problem?

- **Issue: Personal Identity: What is a person? What is identity? Do we have personal identity? If so, which criterion best applies: brain, memory, or body? What is the significance of race and gender for personal identity?**

Activities: Theseus's ship thought experiment, screening of *Memento*

Readings:

Perry, *Personal Identity: A Dialogue* (H)

Dennett, *Where Am I?* (H)

Plato, *Alcibiades* and *Phaedo*

Parfit and Vesey, *Brain Transplants and Personal Identity*

Appiah, *But Would That Still Be Me?* (H)

Hume, *Of Personal Identity*

Locke, *Our Psychological Properties Define the Self*

Zemach, *Looking Out for Number One*

Kundera, *The Hitchhiking Game* (H)

JQ: (1) Is Leonard the same person after the incident that we was before his wife's assault? (2) Which theory of personal identity is best exemplified in *Memento*: Locke, Hume, or Parfit? (3) How do you distinguish your real self from roles that you inhabit deeply?

Essays: Are you today the **same person** you were at ten? The same person you will be at thirty? Critically discuss soul, body, and memory as candidates for securing personal identity. Are arguments for any of three successful? If not, does philosophical inquiry lead ultimately to skepticism, or should we revise traditional thinking about personal identity without resorting to skepticism (e.g., social construction, Parfit's survival without absolute identity)? Explain.

Philosophy of Religion

- **Issue: Is religious belief rational? Provable? Reducible to superstition?**

Activities: Discussion of what beliefs we hold are irrational, reasonable, and provable; *Contact* [video clips]

Readings:

Aquinas, *The Five Ways*

Paley, *The Watch and the Watchmaker*

Hume, *Critique of the Teleological Argument*

Anselm, *The Ontological Argument*

Flew, Hare, and Mitchell, *A Debate on the Rationality of Religious Belief*

Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian* (H)

Pascal, *Faith Is a Logical Bet*

- JQ: (1) What evidence would convince an atheist that God exists and a theist that belief in God's existence is irrational? What are the limits of philosophical reasoning in matters of personal belief? (2) Is religious belief compatible with logic and scientific method? If not, is religious belief irrational?
- Essays: (1) Is religious belief rational (provable or reasonable). Represent both sides and argue for or against. (Core readings: Flew, Anselm, Paley, Hume)
- **Issue: Is the belief in a just and caring god compatible with the presence of human and natural suffering?**
Activities: discussion of possible responses to Ivan Karamazov and Mark Twain
Readings:
 Twain, *Letters from Earth* (H)
 Dostoevsky, *Brothers Karamazov*
 Hick, *There Is a Reason Why God Allows Evil*
 Mackie, *God and the Paradox of Omnipotence* (H)
 Smullyan, *God Is a Taoist* (H)
JQ: (1) Is there a problem of evil for one who does not believe in God? Explain. (2) How might you answer Ivan's rebellious denunciation of God with a theodicy that would give him pause?
Essays: (1) Belief in an omnipotent, all-loving (or good) god can be reconciled with the presence of moral and natural evil. Represent both sides and argue for or against. (Core readings: Dostoevsky, Twain, Smullyan, Hick, Mackie)
 - **Issue: What contribution can religion make to our understanding of the meaning of human existence? Can this question be seriously posed, let alone answered, in a secular world? Is the human need for meaning a philosophical question or a psychological problem?**
Activities: Comparison of Dante and Russell as rival world views; screening of *Wings of Desire*
Readings:
 Barth, *Night Sea Journey*
 Camus, *Myth of Sisyphus*
 Taylor, *The Meaning of Life*
 Russell, *A Free Man's Worship*
 Dante, *Divine Comedy*
 Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*
 Martin, *A Good Woman and a Fast Car*
JQ: Why do we associate meaningfulness with the ideal of permanence (e.g., paradise, heaven, immortality)? Can life be meaningful yet impermanent? Explain.
Essays: a) Life is Meaningful. (b) Life is meaningful. (c) Life is meaningless. Analyze *each* of the above statements and make a case for one of the three. (Core readings: Barth, Dante, Russell, Martin, Taylor, Frankl.)

2. Cooperative Philosophy Project Proposal

Introduction

A couple weeks ago, one of my Philosophy students mentioned in class that she had a lively exchange with her little sister on the question whether computers can cheat. Others spontaneously noted that their own dinner conversation with siblings often turned to other questions introduced in class. Everyone agreed that philosophy is not esoteric and that since its questions arise from childlike wonder, there is no reason why children could not profitably engage in structured philosophical discussion.

As a teacher, I don't primarily teach history or philosophy. I teach myself. My own students could teach themselves, I think, by working with middle school students. David White, a former colleague, taught philosophy in the Chicago public elementary schools for years and has enjoyed success with grades 4 through 9. They're responsive to philosophy, provided that it is done thoughtfully and with sensitivity to the school environment and classroom dynamic. I'm interested in training my own students to meet with Julian Middle School classes for a day either shortly before or after the winter break. I am confident that if we worked collaboratively, the classes would be fun and intellectually engaging for both my students and yours. If the project goes well, perhaps we could discuss the possibility of doing it again. I'd welcome the opportunity to strengthen ties between our respective departments and schools.

Some Guiding Assumptions

1. No specialized background in philosophy is necessary;
2. The activity should be inclusive, involving all students regardless of temperament or skill level;
3. The activity should be self-contained, requiring no advance reading or follow-up, though opportunities for extension would be welcome;
4. High school students should not represent themselves as authority figures who have the "answers" or "final word;"
5. The principal function of the high school students is to articulate a philosophical problem or question, to guide discussion, to redirect questioning, and in some cases to help interpret short written passages;
6. High school students should be receptive to functioning as a member of a democratic discussion (i.e., as both leader and peer) whose views are open to criticism;
7. Every middle school student opinion counts, but those opinions advanced with some form of justification are more reliable, at least philosophically, than those that are merely asserted;
8. When young students state or justify an opinion, their assertions or reasons may initially appear to be "off," that is, the student seems to be thinking areas that differ widely from those developed by the thought experiment or short passage;
9. When such routes of divergence occur, high school students must be prepared to decide whether to pursue the new line of thought.

Preliminary Ideas on Format

I envision four or five of my students joining each participating middle school class for one period. I would determine the total number of my students in the project according to the number of participating middle-school teachers and classes.

The middle school teacher would divide each class into student groups. (You know best how to arrange students so that they are comfortable with each other and themselves.) A high school student would lead discussion in each group. After introducing the question and thought experiment or short passage, the groups would be led through a series of questions to encourage inquiry, speculation, and analysis. I would like to vary the topic or question for each class. After enough time passed for full participation, a high school student would ask the groups to report their responses back to the entire class, either orally or in writing (e.g., butcher block paper and markers). The rest of the period could be spent (a) working through follow-up questions as a class, or (b) working through follow-up questions in groups. It is also possible that the middle school teacher and I could take greater responsibility for open class discussion. Because you know your students well and what sort of pedagogy is most effective, I'm happy to defer to you on other possible formats for inquiry and discussion.

Suggested Philosophical Questions for Middle School Classes

All the following possible topics are familiar to my students, although they would have to work on adapting ideas and lines of reasoning to middle school students. Stated differently, each group's challenge would be to develop, with my help, effective methods for motivating its chosen question with your students.

1. Who are my friends? (one page reading from Aristotle)
2. Where has time gone? (one page reading from Augustine)
3. Can computers think? (Chinese Room thought experiment)
4. Am I the same person I was a year ago, or ten years ago? (Paradox of the Heap)
5. What is happiness? Is happiness all that matters (Happiness Box thought experiment)
6. Am I free? (story of Osmo)
7. Is what is right what society tells me is right? (morality worksheet on relativism, a few cases)
8. Does a tree make a sound in the forest if no one can hear it? (one page reading from Berkeley)
9. Does order in the world mean that God exists? (one half page reading from Aquinas)
10. Should I ever tell a lie? (cases)
11. Are there times when I should be violent? (one page passages from Gandhi and King)
12. Should I be selfish? (prisoner's dilemma)