

PH3C4-15 Schopenhauer

24/25

Department

Philosophy

Level

Undergraduate Level 3

Module leader

David Bather Woods

Credit value

15

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) was a German philosopher unlike any other, and he liked it that way. Schopenhauer's contemporaries were top university professors who extolled Western philosophy as the pinnacle of human thought and expressed themselves in often impenetrably abstract technical terms. He eschewed academia, looking instead to the ancient East as the font of all knowledge, and wrote in elegant, lucid prose, overflowing with wit and wisdom. Perhaps best known for his pessimistic thesis that it would be better for life and the world never to have existed, Schopenhauer's intellectual influence is most evident not among other philosophers – except for such enthusiasts as the early Friedrich Nietzsche and Ludwig Wittgenstein – but rather the droves of writers, artists, and musicians who were deeply inspired by his work. This module is an introduction to the fundamentals of Schopenhauer's philosophy, including his contributions to metaphysics, epistemology, aesthetics, and ethics, but it also introduces, examines, and critiques Schopenhauer's engagement with developments in contemporary thinking around such social topics such as gender and sexuality, and perennial existential topics such as the value of existence and the fear of death.

Module aims

The module aims (1) to introduce students to the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer; (2) to cover a wide range of philosophical topics, including Schopenhauer's contributions to metaphysics,

epistemology, aesthetics, ethics, and beyond; (3) to engage students in close reading of primary and secondary source materials; (4) to engage students in real-time critical discussion of primary and secondary source materials through seminars and class discussions; (5) to engage students in written critical analysis of primary and secondary source materials through coursework assignments; and (6) to engage drawing their own conclusions about the topics and defending them with reasons and arguments.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Topics by week

1. Introduction

A contextual introduction to the life, works, and thought of Arthur Schopenhauer, including personal and intellectual biography.

2. The World as Will and Representation

An introduction to Schopenhauer's post-Kantian epistemology and metaphysics, including a special focus on his signature philosophy of the will.

3. The Right and the Good

An introduction to Schopenhauer's moral and political philosophy, including his critique of Kantian deontology, his own ethical theory of compassion, and his contractarian political theory.

4. Beauty and the Sublime

An introduction to Schopenhauer's aesthetics, including a special focus on his description and evaluation of aesthetic experience, his philosophy of the arts, and his theory of the sublime.

5. Pessimism and Asceticism

An examination and assessment of Schopenhauer's philosophical pessimism and ethics of asceticism, including intellectual context of late 19th century philosophy.

6. Love, Sex, and Gender

An examination and assessment of Schopenhauer's views on love, sexuality, and gender, including a special focus on Schopenhauer's defence of homosexuality and a critique of Schopenhauer's misogyny.

7. Europe versus the Rest of the World

An introduction to Schopenhauer's engagement with non-European philosophy, including a special focus on his critique of nationalism and Eurocentrism and his philosophy of race.

8. Death and the Afterlife

An introduction to Schopenhauer's philosophy of death, including his defence and critique of suicide and his argument for the indestructibility of humanity's true essence.

9. Conclusions

Concluding thoughts on the above topics.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- acquire knowledge and understanding of the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer, derived from engagement with primary and secondary source materials
- increase their knowledge and understanding of topics in philosophical fields such as metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, and more
- improve their skills and abilities in close reading and analysis of primary and secondary source materials
- improve their skills and abilities in oral debate, listening, and communication about philosophical topics and argument
- improve the quality of their academic writing, including skills in organisation and presentation of written work
- improve their skills and abilities in critical reflecting on their knowledge and understanding, drawing an independent conclusion, and developing and defending an argument in support of their conclusions

Indicative reading list

Primary sources

Arthur Schopenhauer, *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*

Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*

Arthur Schopenhauer, *The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics*

Arthur Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*

Sample secondary sources by main topics

1. The World as Will and Representation

Janaway, Christopher. *Self and World in Schopenhauer's Philosophy*. Oxford: OUP, 1999.

Kisner, Manja. 'Schopenhauer's Metaphysical Two-Aspect Account of the World and the Will to Life.' In *The Schopenhauerian Mind*, eds. David Bather Woods & Timothy Stoll. London: Routledge, 2023.

2. The Right and the Good

Bather Woods, David. 'Schopenhauer on the State and Morality.' In *Palgrave Schopenhauer Handbook*, ed. Sandra Shapshay. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Cartwright, David. 'Schopenhauer's Narrower Sense of Morality'. In *The Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer*, ed. Christopher Janaway. Cambridge: CUP, 1999.

Marshall, Colin. 'Schopenhauer and Non-Cognitivist Moral Realism.' *Journal of the History of Philosophy* (2017) 55.2: 293–316.

Norberg, Jakob. 'Schopenhauer's Critique of the State.' In *The Schopenhauerian Mind*, eds. David Bather Woods & Timothy Stoll. London: Routledge, 2023.

Puryear, Stephen. 'Schopenhauer and Modern Moral Philosophy.' In *The Schopenhauerian Mind*, eds. David Bather Woods & Timothy Stoll. London: Routledge, 2023.

Shapshay, Sandra. *Reconstructing Schopenhauer's Ethics*. Oxford: OUP, 2019.

3. Beauty and the Sublime

Foster, Cheryl. 'Ideas and Imagination.' In *The Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer*, ed. Christopher Janaway. Cambridge: CUP, 1999.

Foster, Cheryl. 'Schopenhauer and Aesthetic Recognition.' In *Schopenhauer, Philosophy, and the Arts*, ed. Dale Jacquette. Cambridge: CUP, 1996.

Hassan, Patrick. 'The Significance of Nichtigkeit in Schopenhauer's Account of the Sublime.' In *The Schopenhauerian Mind*, eds. David Bather Woods & Timothy Stoll. London: Routledge, 2023.

Shapshay, Sandra. 'Schopenhauer's Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art.' *Philosophy Compass* (2012) 7.1: 11–22.

Shapshay, Sandra. 'Schopenhauer's Transformation of the Kantian Sublime.' *Kantian Review* (2012) 17.3: 479–511.

Vandenabeele, Bart. *The Sublime in Schopenhauer's Philosophy*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

1. Pessimism and Asceticism

Beiser, Frederick. *Weltschmerz: Pessimism in German Philosophy, 1860–1900*. Oxford: OUP, 2016.

Janaway, Christopher. 'Schopenhauer's Pessimism.' In *The Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer*, ed. Christopher Janaway. Cambridge: CUP, 1999.

Plümacher, Olga. 'Pessimism.' *Mind* (1879) 4.13: 68–89.

Simmons, Byron. 'Schopenhauer's Pessimism.' In *The Schopenhauerian Mind*, eds. David Bather Woods & Timothy Stoll. London: Routledge, 2023.

2. Love, Sex, and Gender

Bather Woods, David. 'Schopenhauer's Sexual Ethics.' In *Schopenhauer's Moral Philosophy*, ed. Patrick Hassan. London: Routledge, 2021.

Battersby, Christine. 'Schopenhauer's Metaphysics and Ethics: Mapping Influences and Congruities with Feminist Philosophers.' In *The Palgrave Handbook of German Idealism and Feminist Philosophy*, ed. Susanne Lettow and Tuija Pulkkinen. London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2022.

Brilmyer, S. Pearl. 'Schopenhauer and British Literary Feminism.' In *The Palgrave Schopenhauer Handbook*, ed. Sandra Shapshay. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Grimwood, Thomas. 'The Limits of Misogyny: Schopenhauer, "On Women".' *Kritike* (2008) 2.2: 141–143

Norman, Judith. 'Pushing Back: Reading The World as Will and Representation as a Woman.' In *Schopenhauer's The World as Will and Representation: A Critical Guide*, ed. Judith Norman and Alistair Welchman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022.

Tevenar, Gudrun von. 'Schopenhauer on Sex, Love and Emotions.' In *A Companion to Schopenhauer*, ed. Bart Vandenabeele. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

3. Europe versus the Rest of the World

Janaway, Christopher. 'Schopenhauer, Europe, and Eurocentrism.' In *The Schopenhauerian Mind*, eds. David Bather Woods & Timothy Stoll. London: Routledge, 2023.

Janaway, Christopher. 'Schopenhauer's "Indian" Ethics.' In *Schopenhauer's Moral Philosophy*, ed. Patrick Hassan. London: Routledge, 2021.

Nicholls, Moria. 'The Influences of Eastern Thought on Schopenhauer's Doctrine of the Thing-in-Itself.' In *The Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer*, ed. Christopher Janaway. Cambridge: CUP, 1999.

Norberg, Jakob. 'Schopenhauer's Critique of Nationalism.' *The German Quarterly* (2022)

95.3: 276–292.

4. Death and the Afterlife

Jacquette, Dale. 'Schopenhauer on Death.' In *The Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer*, ed. Christopher Janaway. Cambridge: CUP, 1999.

Jacquette, Dale. 'Schopenhauer on the Ethics of Suicide.' *Continental Philosophy Review* (2000) 30: 43–58.

Janaway, Christopher. 'Schopenhauer's Consoling View of Death.' In *Essays on Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*. Oxford: OUP, 2022.

Marshall, Colin. 'Schopenhauer on the Futility of Suicide.' *Mind* (forthcoming).

Research element

Students will produce essays that require research into relevant primary and secondary literature and the development of independent critical analyses and arguments.

Subject specific skills

Students will be able to discuss clearly in speech and in writing the issues raised by their close reading and critical analysis of the set texts and materials. Students will be able to engage with these texts in a way that demonstrates relevant and appropriate philosophical and scholarly skills. Student will be able to critically evaluate the relevant secondary literature.

Students will be able to analyse and critically evaluate the key ideas and arguments presented in the primary texts and materials, and come to an independent assessment of their merits with the aid of relevant secondary literature.

Transferable skills

Students of this module will be able to engage in critical analysis of complex written materials, present and evaluate logical arguments, draw their own conclusions from their knowledge and understanding of the subject matter, develop and defend their conclusions with a rigorously constructed line of argument, present their arguments and conclusions in written and oral form, engage in bidirectional oral discussion of their conclusions, listen to and provide feedback on the arguments and conclusions of their peers, receive feedback and implement feedback on the quality of their work, and reflect on their level of knowledge, skill, and ability in order to improve.

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	18 sessions of 1 hour (8%)
Seminars	8 sessions of 1 hour (4%)
Total	220 hours

Type	Required
Private study	124 hours (56%)
Assessment	70 hours (32%)
Total	220 hours

Private study description

No private study requirements defined for this module.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A

	Weighting	Study time
1000 word essay	20%	20 hours
2500 word essay	80%	50 hours

Feedback on assessment

Students will have their essays returned with written comments. Students can share or discuss a one-page plan for each essay and will receive either verbal or written comments (as preferred).

Availability

Courses

This module is Optional for:

- UPHA-VL78 BA in Philosophy with Psychology
 - Year 2 of VL78 Philosophy with Psychology
 - Year 3 of VL78 Philosophy with Psychology
- Year 4 of UPHA-VL79 BA in Philosophy with Psychology (with Intercalated year)
- UPHA-L1CA Undergraduate Economics, Psychology and Philosophy
 - Year 2 of L1CA Economics, Psychology and Philosophy
 - Year 2 of L1CC Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Behavioural Economics Pathway)

- Year 2 of L1CD Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Economics with Philosophy Pathway)
- Year 2 of L1CE Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Philosophy and Psychology Pathway)
- Year 2 of L1CF Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Tripartite Pathway)
- Year 3 of L1CA Economics, Psychology and Philosophy
- Year 3 of L1CC Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Behavioural Economics Pathway)
- Year 3 of L1CD Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Economics with Philosophy Pathway)
- Year 3 of L1CE Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Philosophy and Psychology Pathway)
- Year 3 of L1CF Economics, Psychology and Philosophy (Tripartite Pathway)
- UMAA-GV17 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 2 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 2 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 2 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 3 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 3 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
 - Year 3 of GV17 Mathematics and Philosophy
- UMAA-GV18 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year
 - Year 4 of GV18 Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year
 - Year 4 of GV18 Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year
- Year 4 of UMAA-GV19 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Specialism in Logic and Foundations
- UPHA-V700 Undergraduate Philosophy
 - Year 2 of V700 Philosophy
 - Year 2 of V700 Philosophy
 - Year 3 of V700 Philosophy
 - Year 3 of V700 Philosophy
- Year 4 of UPHA-V701 Undergraduate Philosophy (with Intercalated year)
- Year 4 of UPHA-V702 Undergraduate Philosophy (with Work Placement)
- UPHA-VQ72 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature
 - Year 2 of VQ72 Philosophy and Literature
 - Year 3 of VQ72 Philosophy and Literature
- Year 4 of UPHA-VQ74 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature (with Work Placement)
- Year 4 of UPHA-VQ73 Undergraduate Philosophy and Literature with Intercalated Year
- UPHA-V5L2 Undergraduate Philosophy and Politics
 - Year 2 of V5L2 Philosophy and Politics
 - Year 3 of V5L2 Philosophy and Politics
- Year 4 of UPHA-V5L3 Undergraduate Philosophy and Politics (with Intercalated Year)
- Year 4 of UPHA-V5L4 Undergraduate Philosophy and Politics (with Work Placement)
- Year 4 of UPHA-VL80 Undergraduate Philosophy with Psychology (with Work Placement)
- UPHA-VQ52 Undergraduate Philosophy, Literature and Classics
 - Year 2 of VQ52 Philosophy, Literature and Classics
 - Year 3 of VQ52 Philosophy, Literature and Classics

- Year 4 of UPHA-VQ53 Undergraduate Philosophy, Literature and Classics (with Work Placement)
- UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics
 - Year 2 of V7MR Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite with Economics Major)
 - Year 2 of V7MP Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite)
 - Year 2 of V7MP Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite)
 - Year 2 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
 - Year 2 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
 - Year 2 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
 - Year 3 of V7MR Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite with Economics Major)
 - Year 3 of V7MP Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite)
 - Year 3 of V7MP Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite)
 - Year 3 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
 - Year 3 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
 - Year 3 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
- UPHA-V7MW Undergraduate Politics, Philosophy and Law
 - Year 2 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law
 - Year 2 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law
 - Year 3 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law
 - Year 3 of V7MW Politics, Philosophy and Law