

PH3C4-15 Schopenhauer

26/27

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

[Reading lists can be found in Talis](#)

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 (12%)
Seminars	8 sessions of 1 hour (5%)
Private study	124 hours (83%)
Total	150 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 A1

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Assessment component			
1000 word essay	20%		Yes (extension)
Reassessment component is the same			
Assessment component			
2500 word essay	80%		Yes (extension)

Weighting

Study time

Eligible for self-certification

Reassessment component is the same

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 Core option list F for:

- Year 4 of UMAA-GV18 Undergraduate Mathematics and Philosophy with Intercalated Year