

Advanced Social Studies: Western Philosophy
Maybeck High School: Spring 2011
Teacher: Michael Ditmore
mjditmore@comcast.net

SYLLABUS
INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Course Description:

Introduction to Philosophy intends to introduce students to a variety of important philosophical texts and authors, but also to introduce them to the process of analyzing philosophical writing and in turn of writing about philosophy. In addition to these goals, students will be exposed to the life-altering questions about the nature of their own lives, meaning, existence, purposiveness, and what constitutes the good life in the framework of their own experience. Students will learn to outline and write abstracts of the primary texts we study and to use these preliminary analyses in stages to produce independent writing of their own in response to the assigned primary texts. Students will engage in close reading, discussion, and verbal and written analysis of primary material by Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Hume, Berkeley, and Nietzsche. We will supplement our readings with readings and discussions from a secondary text: *Archetypes of Wisdom: an Introduction to Philosophy*, by Douglas J. Soccio.

Course Goals:

Students will broaden their understanding of the intellectual heritage of western humanity; will broaden and deepen their writing and analytical skills; will receive advanced preparation for any coursework they might want to pursue in the future that involves writing and analysis; and will emerge with a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them through a rigorous pursuit of the basic elements of this difficult but rewarding subject.

Required Readings:

- Soccio, Douglas J. *Archetypes of Wisdom: an Introduction to Philosophy*, fifth edition, Belmont California: Wadsworth /Thomson, 2004
- Other readings will include selections from Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, and Nietzsche

Final Grade Components.

- 25%: In-class discussion
- 25%: Two Short papers, and one-ten page interpretive paper
- 25%: Quizzes, in class writing, and analytical essay exams
- 25%: Comprehensive three-hour final exam including essays on major issues