

## Four Topics From 20th Century Philosophers

OLLI Summer 2025

Wednesdays: 4 Sessions 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM

Start: Wed 5/14/25 End: Wed 6/4/25

This course will **not** be recorded.

### The Team

#### Tech Host:

Allen Dart

#### Class leader

Robert Yanal

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### Class Schedule

#### 5/14 After Warhol: What is Art?

Required: "The Artworld" by Arthur Danto

Optional: Plato, Republic, Bk. X

#### 5/21 What is Consciousness?

Required: "What is it Like to be a Bat?" by Thomas Nagel

Optional: Descartes, Meditations 1 and 2

#### 5/28 AI: Can machines think?

Required: "The Chinese Room" by John Searle

Optional: Alan Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence"

#### 6/4 The Experience Machine

Required: "Happiness" by Robert Nozick

Optional: "Letter to Menoeceus" by Epicurus

**Readings** are in on my blog site: [http://bobyanal.com/?page\\_id=108](http://bobyanal.com/?page_id=108)

### Outside resources

[Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#). You can look up "The Definition of Art" or "Chinese Room" or ...

### Class format

First hour: lecture with Keynote slides. Put questions, comments in "chat".

Last half hour: Questions, comments addressed.

## General Introduction

Anglo-American analytic philosophy began in England with Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore, who taught and wrote in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These philosophers, along with others, tried to solve certain problems and wrote in a clear, crisp style. Russell first wrote about reference in language, Moore about what “the good” could be. These influences begat a kind of philosophy practiced in England, and then in America.

Philosophy in France and Germany was heavily influenced by Martin Heidegger, especially in the writings of Jean-Paul Sartre. Continental philosophy addressed different issues from analytic philosophy.

The purpose of the course is to give students a sense of some important developments in American analytic philosophy in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Please do the required reading before class. Philosophy done right is hard, but so is mathematics, physics, and economics. Get what you can out of the reading; my lectures should fill in the gaps.

## Reading Guides

### “The Artworld” by Arthur Danto.

Beginning	A brief discussion of Socrates’s (Plato’s) theory on art as imitation
Sec I	Challenges to the imitation theory of art (IT); the emergence of the real theory (RT) of art
Sec II	We won’t discuss this.
Sec III	Warhol’s <i>Brillo Boxes</i> ; the stockroom and the artworld.
Sec IV	We won’t discuss this.

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### “What is it like to be a bat” by Thomas Nagel.

The essay is complicated. Here is one important section:

You can start with “Conscious experience is a widespread phenomenon” (p. 436) and read to “... the crudest form of cognitive dissonance.” (p. 441)

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### “The Chinese Room” by John Searle.

Read most of this essay. We won’t discuss the “Replies” except for the first, “The Systems Reply”

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### “The Experience Machine” by Robert Nozick.

This is the shortest and easiest of the four readings. Read it all.