

Pre-college Philosophy lesson 2 - Epistemology

Maddy, Addison, Sam

Goal: Get the students to question their current understanding of knowledge, truth, belief, and reasons for holding beliefs. Get them to question whether something is a piece of knowledge or a belief.

Ice Breaker and Ground Rules - 5 minutes

Names, what is your favorite fun fact

Setting ground rules - briefly touch upon principle of charity again

- Focus on classroom norms for good philosophical discussion
- Hands to ourselves

First Activity - 20 minutes

Have students make a list of things that are true and false (write it on the board)

- What does it mean for something to be true?
- What does it mean for something to be false?
- Where might the line between truth and falsity become blurred?
 - Think about how things change over time
- How might you trust (know) that something is true?
 - Sensory experience, past memories, built up belief systems, justificatory processes (etc)
 - What is memory? Is it past sensory experience? Is it a combination of past sensory experience and past or present beliefs?
- How do you know something? What is the reliability of your source? (Infinite regress argument?)
 - Perhaps discuss media/fake news when thinking about sources?
- Aliens, unicorns, fables, stories, imaginary friends - are things we create real? (shared consciousness?)
- What if you experienced something contradictory to something on the list?
 - What would it take for you to change your belief? (emphasize that changing your belief is not a bad thing)
- Nature of knowledge
 - What does it mean to know something?
 - Potentially propose the idea of justified true belief
 - What is the difference between believing and knowing?
 - What is the nature of collective knowledge? I.e: things that we learn in school and take to be true?
 - Where does knowledge come from?

In Case of lackluster discussion, optical illusion activity



- If our senses can lie to us, how can we trust them in other situations?
- Is knowledge merely our perception of reality?

Second Activity - 10 minutes

Split into groups, have one try to prove if the other exists

- Can they prove that they themselves exist?
 - Can they prove that an object not currently present exists?
- Can we rely on our senses?
 - What does it mean to rely on senses?
- If they say they can't prove others exist, what are the implications of this?
- How could we prove that they exist?
- What is the framework for proving something exists? Is there anything definitive to prove existence?

Wrap-Up - 5 minutes

- Looking back on the list of the true and false things, would you change anything?