



Practical Session 1

Common Sense vs. Philosophy

Discussion • Case studies • Key concepts

Instructor: _____ Date: _____

By the end of today, students can...



What we will practice

- Distinguish “common sense” from philosophical reflection
- Explain why early philosophy is a shift from myth to reason
- Separate empirical (scientific) questions from philosophical ones
- Use core vocabulary (ontology, epistemology, ethics, etc.) in discussion

Tip

Use “I claim... because...” and ask “What do we mean by...?”

Agenda (suggested timing)

Part	Activity	Time
1	Warm-up: Common sense vs. philosophy	
2	Thales: “All is water” (myth → logos)	
3	Boundary problem: science vs. philosophy	
4	Definition workshop: wisdom vs. critique	
5	Key quotes (Socrates → Wittgenstein)	
6	Modern dilemmas: Big Bang, objectivity, virtual worlds	
7	Review + vocabulary check	

Can “common sense” replace philosophy?

Activity

Think → Pair → Share

Common sense

- Practical, intuitive, “what usually works”
- Often implicit (assumptions stay hidden)
- Relies on habit, tradition, experience
- Good for quick decisions

Philosophy

- Critical and systematic reflection
- Makes assumptions explicit and examines them
- Asks “What is X?” “Why?” “How do we know?”
- Useful when values, meaning, or limits are at stake

Prompt: Is it possible to live without a worldview? If you say “no”, where does it come from?

Thales: “All is water” — why it matters



From myth → to explanation

Thales proposes a single underlying principle (arche) instead of a story about gods.

Discuss: What makes this a breakthrough rather than a new myth?

Vocabulary

arche = first principle / primal element



Guiding questions

- Is the claim testable or at least arguable?
- Does it reduce many phenomena to one principle?
- Does it invite criticism and revision?
- What evidence would count for / against it?

The boundary problem: science vs. philosophy

Group task

Decide: empirical (scientific) or philosophical — and explain your criteria.

More empirical

How does the brain work?

How to build a state?

How do vaccines create immunity?

How do algorithms rank content?

More philosophical

What is consciousness?

What is a just society?

What counts as “health”?

What is a fair algorithm?

What is philosophy?

Pythagoras

- philo + sophia = “love of wisdom”
- a way of life and self-formation
- seeks meaning and the good life

Modern view

- critical analysis of concepts and arguments
- tests assumptions, definitions, and values
- clarifies what can/cannot be known

Question to debate

Philosophy as a way of life (ancient)



Socrates

“The unexamined life is not worth living.”

Discuss: Is critical thinking required for happiness?



Aristotle

“All men by nature desire to know.”

Discuss: Is philosophy a natural human need—or an elite pursuit?

Knowledge, morality, language (modern)



Descartes

"I think, therefore I am."

Why is thinking treated as indubitable proof of existence?



Kant

"The starry heavens above me... and the moral law within me."

How does philosophy connect cosmos and ethics?

Wittgenstein

"Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language."

Could many "problems" be confusion of language?

If science explains how... does philosophy still matter?

Science tends to ask

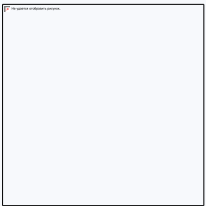
- How did the universe begin?
- What mechanisms caused X?
- What predictions can we test?
- Which model fits the data best?

Philosophy tends to ask

- Why is there something rather than nothing?
- What counts as an explanation?
- What assumptions do models rely on?
- What is the meaning of “cause” or “beginning”?

Debate: Can the “why” be answered in the same way as the “how”?

Worldview as “spectacles”



If a worldview is like a pair of glasses...
can we ever take it off to see reality “as it is”?

Claim A: Objectivity is possible

- Bias can be reduced by methods and peer critique
- Shared standards make knowledge public
- Better tools → better measurements

Claim B: Objectivity is always partial

- Every view uses concepts shaped by culture/language
- Values affect what we study and why
- Replacing one “lens” with another is not removal

Virtual worlds: what is “primary”?

Engels’ classic framing (material vs. spirit)

In the digital context: Which is primary—physical medium (server/hardware) or informational code that constructs reality for the mind?

Position 1: Hardware first

- No medium → no code running
- Energy and constraints shape the possible
- Material failures end the virtual world

Position 2: Code first

- Code defines the “laws” of the virtual world
- Meaning is informational, not physical
- Same hardware can host many realities

Which domain does each statement belong to?

Task

Choose a domain and justify your choice in one sentence.

1

“The universe expanded from a singularity 13.8 billion years ago.”

Domain: _____ Reason: _____

2

“Thou shalt not kill.”

Domain: _____ Reason: _____

3

“Existence precedes essence.”

Domain: _____ Reason: _____

Connect the concepts (fill in the blanks)

Instructions

Work in pairs. Use the vocabulary list. (6–8 minutes)

1. While _____ asks what reality is made of, _____ asks how we can prove our knowledge of it is true.
2. The early Milesian physicists were primarily concerned with finding the _____, the material source of the cosmos.
3. Immanuel Kant used _____ to set limits on what the human mind can grasp, while his _____ focused on what we ought to do.
4. A philosophical _____ requires an individual to be capable of _____, which is the deep critical analysis of one's own thoughts and fundamental beliefs.
5. In the debate over knowledge, scientists strive for total _____, whereas existentialists argue that human _____ always tints our perception of the truth.
6. While _____ studies the rules for constructing valid arguments, _____ analyses how we perceive and evaluate beauty in art and nature.
7. _____ itself is not a mere collection of facts; it is an active pursuit of wisdom that unites scientific inquiry with personal values.

Answer key

Self-check

1. Ontology / Epistemology
2. Arche
3. Epistemology / Ethics
4. Worldview / Reflection
5. Objectivity / Subjectivity
6. Logic / Aesthetics
7. Philosophy

Core terms for philosophical discourse

Ontology

[ɒn'tɒlədʒi]

the study of being and existence

Epistemology

[ɪ,pɪstə'mɒlədʒi]

the study of knowledge: methods, limits, validity

Ethics

['eθɪks]

moral principles: right and wrong conduct

Logic

['lɒdʒɪk]

rules of valid reasoning and argument

Aesthetics

[i:s'θetɪks]

beauty, art, taste, the sublime

More terms (use them in your answers)

Worldview	[ˈwɜːrldvjuː]	a framework of beliefs shaping interpretation of existence
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Reflection	[rɪˈflekʃn]	critical self-examination of beliefs and thought
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Objectivity	[ˌɒbdʒekˈtɪvəti]	judging by facts rather than personal feelings
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Subjectivity	[ˌsʌbdʒekˈtɪvəti]	the internal perspective shaped by individual experience
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Arche	[ˈɑːrki]	the first principle / primal element of all things
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Philosophy	[fɪˈlɒsəfi]	rational inquiry into knowledge, reality, and meaning
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Exit ticket (2 minutes)

Kant's questions (choose ONE)

Write a short answer to the question you choose—and why?

- What ought I to do?
- What may I hope?
- What is man?

Homework (optional)

In 150–200 words: Describe your own worldview. Which assumptions do you notice after reflection?