

Course outline 2022

# /UNDERSTAND OUR WORLD: HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES

April 2022 - August 2022

*There are no dangerous  
thoughts;  
thinking itself is dangerous.*

- Hannah Arendt



# /Our Philosophy



## *Improve the Self | Benefit the Society*

In response to the constant pressures of financial rationalisation, Australian universities are often increasing course fees while cutting funding for various departments (particularly in the Arts), thus academia is judged by financial performance rather than edification. This is also common in the USA and UK. The Australian government has increased Arts course fees by 113% in 2020/21 while decreasing prices for STEM courses.

A further push to focus on the commercialisation of research is another example of neoliberal ideology permeating academia and knowledge production.

Universities are increasingly focusing on narrow vocational skills to make students career-ready, or awarding qualifications based on repetitive assessments at the expense of a holistic education: one that develops humane and knowledgeable critical thinkers. This 'siloed' approach to education, inspired by the division of labour to which it seeks to conform, often leaves graduates with numerous intellectual 'blind spots'.

# /Our Philosophy



This is why First Philosophy focuses on a holistic and multidisciplinary approach often absent from the university - connecting the dots between these seemingly independent and distinct fields gives a wider perspective in understanding ourselves and the world around us, with more authenticity.

When we connect ethics with economics, philosophy with science, or literature with psychology, we can draw critical conclusions and benefit from a holistic worldview. More importantly, we care about an internal change that knowledge brings to our lives, missing in the corporatisation of academia.

We hope for knowledge development and education systems without a constant need to refer to labour market productivity or bottom line accounting.

The current public discourse around topical issues requires clear reasoning, sound knowledge and a critical study of worldviews. *Understand our World: the humanities and social sciences* was developed to fill this gap and address the knowledge, thinking and analysis that can be provided through studying the humanities.



# /Course Outcomes

## ***Develop Critical Thinking***

Develop how to think deeply, critically and analytically through logical reasoning, philosophy, and academic disciplines to navigate your way through the world.

## ***Understand Complexity***

Learn new ways of visualising causes, correlations and effects. Through the theories, events and ideas behind issues, we navigate the flow-on impacts of decision making on strategy.

## ***Question Prejudice & Fallacy***

Identify and question biases and fallacious assumptions in the way people view the world, affirm a point, or provide reasoning reflecting an ideology.

## ***Understand the Real World***

Understand real world implications of when ideas go both right and wrong. Identify issues before they happen by connecting the dots, and notice what is left unsaid in the media by movers and shakers to analyse critically.

# /Course Outcomes

## ***Develop Social Sensitivity***

Develop cultural and social sensitivity through understanding the perspectives of people from various and diverse backgrounds. Discover a world beyond American, Eurocentric or soon to be Chinese worldviews.

## ***Elevate Ethical Reasoning***

Study applied ethics through various disciplines which teach us a language to differentiate the wrong from right. Moral reasoning is vital at a time when money and utilitarianism rules society.

## ***Increase Aesthetic Awareness***

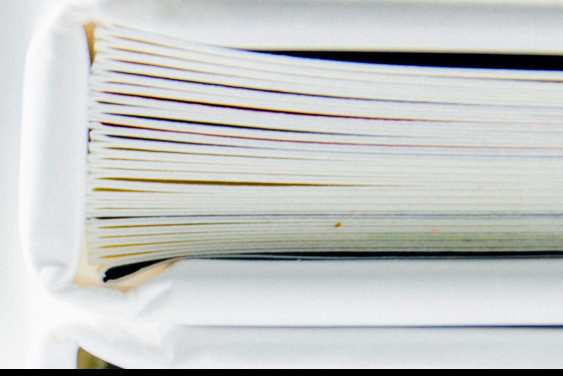
Be acquainted with literary, artistic, and cultural expressions of genius from various civilisations, addressing the social, political, economic and ethical issues covering topics from Homer to hip hop.

## ***Improve Lateral Thinking***

Improve lateral thinking, creativity and problem solving by approaching challenges and problems with a deep appreciation of the ways thinkers in the past creatively solved the problems of their times.



# /Course Delivery



## The Course covers:

- Content: 18 topics over 20 lectures,
- Timeline: 20 weeks (with a break after 10 weeks), and,
- Dates: April 11 to August 29, 2022.

## For each week, students complete:

- 1-hour live seminar (for standard participants),
- 2-hour pre-recorded lecture before the seminar, and,
- Required readings / viewings before the seminar.

## Please note:

- No Assessments: There are no assessments for this course. Students may request to present on a topic should they wish to be assessed.
- Readings: Weekly readings, videos and other resources are divided into Essential (compulsory) and Supplementary (non compulsory).
- Time Commitment: Live seminars are approximately one hour in duration, but may run a little longer, depending on the nature of discussion and questions.

# /Course Structure

## Part I (Week 1-10)

### 1. FOUNDATIONS

Introduction to  
Thinking  
History of Ideas I  
History of Ideas II

### 2. HUMAN BEING

Human Nature  
Psychology  
Emotions

### 3. KNOWLEDGE

Education  
Philosophy I  
Philosophy II  
History & Philosophy of  
Science

## Part II (Week 11-20)

### 4. THE WORLD

History & Historiography  
Sociology & Anthropology  
Law & Justice

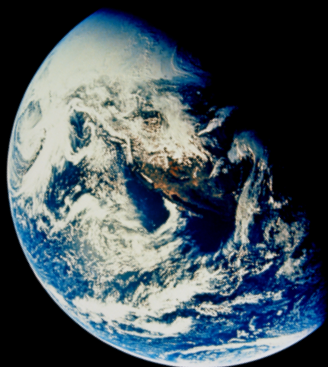
Power & Politics

Economics & Political  
Economy

Art & Art Theory

Literature & Criticism

Media & Communications  
Technology & Engineering  
Now & The Future





# /Course Calendar

## **PART I**

Week 1 - April 11: Introduction to Thinking

Week 2 - April 18: History of Ideas I

Week 3 - April 25: History of Ideas II

Week 4 - May 02: Theories of Human Nature

Week 5 - May 09: Psychology

Week 6 - May 16: Emotions

Week 7 - May 23: Education

Week 8 - May 30: Philosophy I

Week 9 - June 06: Philosophy II

Week 10 - June 13: History and Philosophy of Science

**Break: June 20 – 26**

## **PART II**

Week 11 - June 27: History and Historiography

Week 12 - July 04: Sociology & Anthropology

Week 13 - July 11: Law & Justice

Week 14 - July 18: Power & Politics

Week 15 - July 25: Economics & Political Economy

Week 16 - August 01: Art & Art Theory

Week 17 - August 08: Literature & Criticism

Week 18 - August 15: Media & Communications

Week 19 - August 22: Technology & Engineering

Week 20 - August 29: Now & the Future

PART 1

# 1. Foundations



# Topic 1

## Introduction to Thinking: Logic and Reasoning

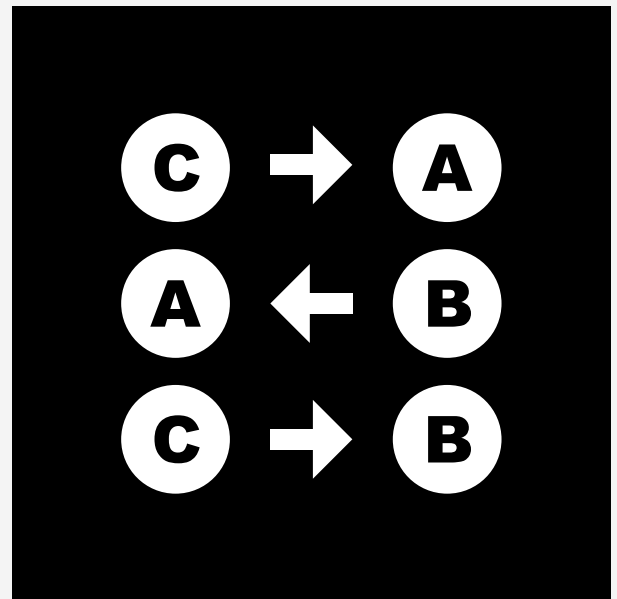
We all think we are reasonable individuals, but what does it mean to reason or to be logical? How do we reason through arguments? Is there only one way to be logical? or, do we have a number of logics?

In this topic, we cover some foundational concepts concerning what it is to think and think well. We will touch on various types of logic - propositional, predicate and modal.

We will look at different types of statements and consider whether they can make valid arguments.

We also focus on:

- reason and rationality,
- anatomy of an argument,
- validity / soundness of arguments,
- the broader features of how we can speak about the world in a way that is directed towards truth.



*"Logic is invincible because in order to combat logic it is necessary to use logic."*

- Pierre Boutroux

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**"The object of philosophy is the logical clarification of thought."  
- Ludwig Wittgenstein**

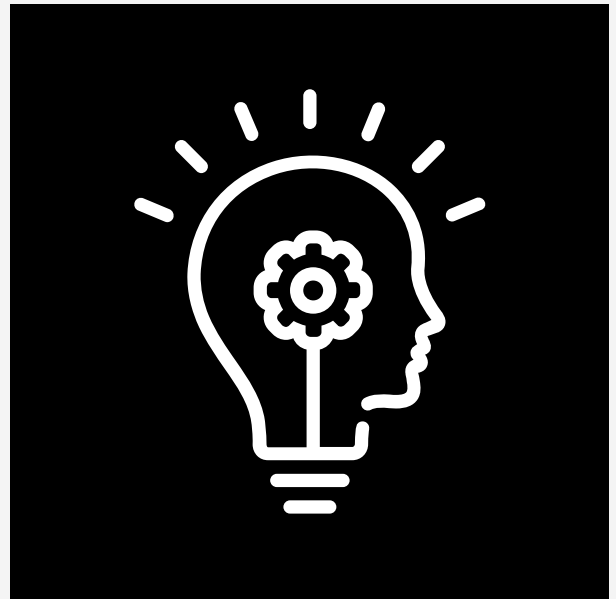
## Topic 2

# History of Ideas I & II

To understand the present, we must delve into the past.

Covered over 2 lectures, this topic runs through the history of Western intellectual thought - thinkers, events and major turns. We question the development of these ideas, benefits, harms and query why we exclude other civilisational contributions when we speak of Western intellectualism. We trace some of the key philosophical, political, economic, sociocultural, scientific, literary and artistic ideas that have shaped the course of Western history, bringing us into the current century.

This lecture will take a chronological look at societies and ideas from the ancient to the classical period, to the rise of modernity, and finally to contemporary times. In many ways, this is a roadmap of the entire course, connecting the dots between theory, practice and popular culture - all through the prism of intellectual history.



*"One resists the invasion of armies, one does not resist the invasion of ideas."*

- Victor Hugo

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**"Human history is, in essence, a history of ideas."  
- HG Wells**



PART 1

## 2. Human Being

# Topic 3

## Theories of Human Nature

What is the human being?

What are we as human beings? Rational animals? Economic animals? Religious animals? Or, to many now, just animals?

What we see ourselves as being has real consequences for how we actually choose to be and become.

This topic covers thirteen theories of human nature, human *being* and human disposition in how we define the essence of ourselves, including Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Plato, Aristotle, Christianity, Islam, Kant, Marx, Darwin, Freud, Sartre and Feminism.



*"Of course, when I say that human nature is gentleness, it is not 100% so. Every human being has that nature, but there are many people acting against their nature, being false.*

- Dalai Lama

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**"Man is the only creature who refuses to be what he is."  
— Albert Camus**

## Topic 4 Psychology

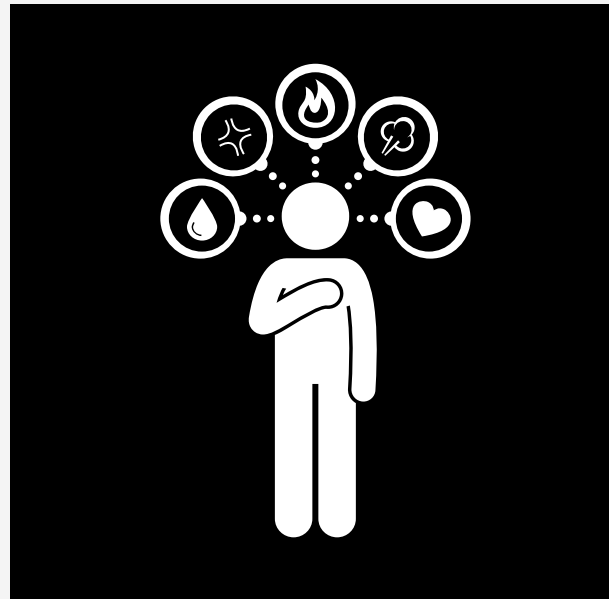
Psychology explores what is perhaps the most complex and interesting thing in the universe — the human psyche.

This topic will provide a birds-eye overview of this timeless and fascinating discipline, including:

- historical developments,
- major schools of thought, and
- current controversies.

This will help you better appreciate the subtleties of studying the mind and its importance in the world today.

The topic also looks into the nature of psychology and how we may be able to understand theories behind trauma, motivation, mental health and wellbeing. Such topics are highly relevant to contemporary society and public policy.



*"Don't become a mere recorder of facts, but try to penetrate the mystery of their origin."*

- Ivan Pavlov

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**"Sometimes people hold a core belief that is very strong. When they are presented with evidence that works against that belief, the new evidence cannot be accepted. It would create a feeling that is extremely uncomfortable, called cognitive dissonance. And because it is so important to protect the core belief, they will rationalize, ignore and even deny anything that doesn't fit in with the core belief."**

**- Frantz Fanon**



## Topic 5 Emotions

Although we might like to call ourselves rational animals, our reason may often give way to other powerful drivers of our behaviour — our emotions.

Philosophers, thinkers and scientists cannot agree on what emotions actually are, yet the power of emotions instigates our actions, moves entire civilisations, and is a fundamental part of the meaning of our lives.

This topic takes an interdisciplinary approach to illuminate the role of emotions in human experience across time.

We cover such emotions as love, fear, anger, gratitude, desire and happiness, especially focusing on implications for human behaviour.



*"Your intellect may be confused but your emotions will never lie to you"*

- Roger Ebert

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**"The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart"**

- Helen Keller

# PART 1

## 3. Knowledge

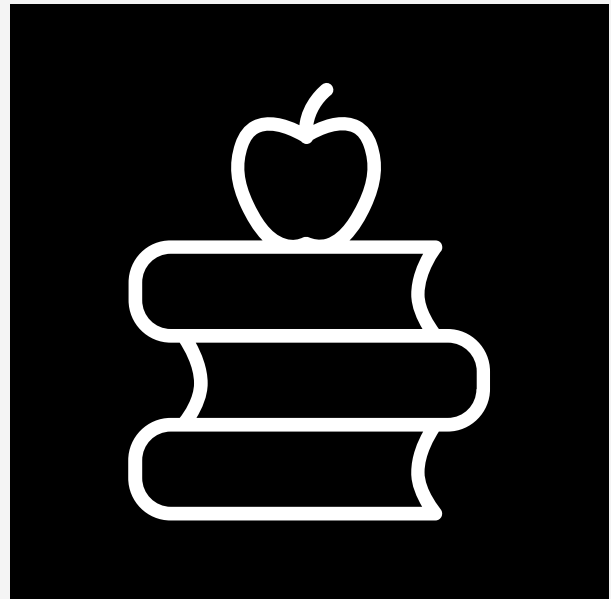
## Topic 6 Education

Education is everywhere. We all want to be educated. But what is an education and what does it mean to be educated?

From the latin *educere*, to 'lead out', we can ask where are we being led out from and what are we being led into?

In this topic we will explore the various understandings of education as discussed by philosophers, theorists, and critics of education and pedagogy, contrasting and comparing a diversity of views relating to the value, means and ends of education.

We will look into the historical and contemporary methods and modes of education and question: what does it mean to be educated today?



*"To deny education to any people is one of the greatest crimes against human nature."*

- Frederick Douglass

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**"If education is beaten by training, civilisation dies."  
- CS Lewis**

# Topic 7

## Philosophy I & II

The heart and source of our course.

Philosophy is concerned with the fundamental issues and questions that make up human inquiry.

The categories of investigation here are so general in nature that the conclusions we seek to draw could potentially have universal or at least wide ranging significance.

In this topic we analyse a number of philosophical notions such as existence, values, and knowledge.

We end by looking at the merits of rational argumentation and the systematic presentation of one's point of view.

We also look into how doing philosophy today can help us ask questions, find solutions and solve some of our practical problems of life.



*"Be a free thinker  
and don't accept  
everything you hear  
as truth. Be critical  
and evaluate what  
you believe in.*

- Aristotle

first philosophy 

**"There will be no end to the troubles of states, or of humanity itself, till philosophers become kings in this world, or till those we now call kings and rulers really and truly become philosophers, and political power and philosophy thus come into the same hands."**

- Plato



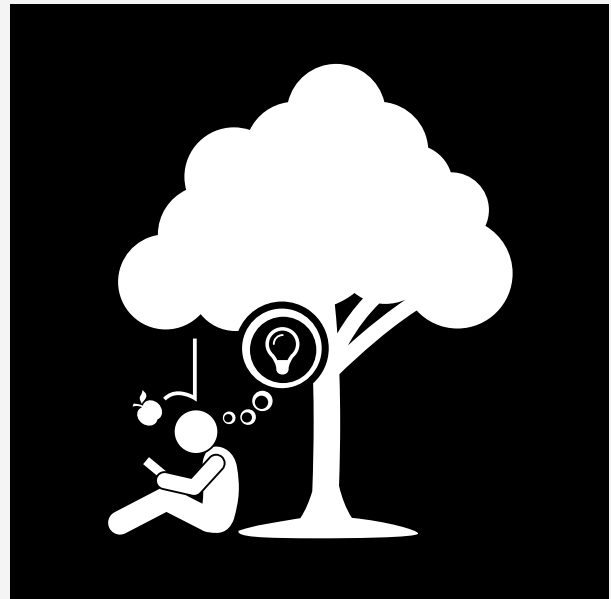
## Topic 8

# History & Philosophy of Science

Science as a means to knowledge is a mainstay of the modern world. In this topic we will attempt to unpack a number of key questions such as:

- (1) What is Science?
- (2) What is its cultural, economic, social, and political significance?
- (3) What are the various historical factors which led us to the scientific paradigm we have today?, and,
- (4) What, if anything, does science leave out?

Understanding the epistemic program of Science will position you to speak intelligently about broader themes such as knowledge, power and control, governments and policies, trust and authority. In an era of pandemics, vaccine mandates, nuclear science, and AI, the philosophy of science is more important than ever.



*Science gives us  
knowledge, but only  
philosophy can give  
us wisdom.*

- Will Durant

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**"Science is what you know. Philosophy is what you don't know."  
- Bertrand Russell**

# PART 2

## 4. The World

## Topic 9 History & Historiography

If the past is a foreign country, then how do we navigate it?

How do we make sense of the mass of raw information we find when looking at the past, and how can we be sure that we haven't been duped into a faulty understanding of this new territory?

And once we discover what happened historically, how can we draw lessons from history to lead better lives in our own world today?

These questions are what Historians grapple with, and this topic will give you a glimpse into how they make sense of our past, major theories that shape their work and why history is an important field to study.



*"A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots."*

- Marcus Garvey

**"History is no longer just a chronicle of kings and statesmen, of people who wielded power, but of ordinary women and men engaged in manifold tasks. Women's history is an assertion that women have a history"**

**- Toshiko Kishida**

## Topic 10 Sociology & Anthropology

Considered a 'science of humanity,' anthropology examines the interplay of cultural, socioeconomic, political, and environmental factors in human and community development. It furthers our knowledge of who we are, how we came to be, and imagine what we might be in the future, including "imagining how others imagine the world" in order to understand diverse human behaviours.

Sociology studies social life, social change, and the social causes and consequences of human behaviour. Sociologists investigate the structure of groups, organizations, and societies, and how people interact within these contexts.

What are the demarcations between sociology and anthropology, and what have we learnt through them? From family and social media, to culture and economic classes, as well as race and gender, both anthropology and sociology cover a great deal of subject matter.

This topic will study anthropological and sociological theories, phenomena and cases, and their implications for the contemporary society.



*"The purpose of  
anthropology is to  
make the world safe  
for human  
differences."*

- Ruth Benedict

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**"History is, strictly speaking, the study of questions; the study of answers belongs to anthropology and sociology." - WH Auden**



# Topic 11

## Theories of Law & Justice

Why do good people quarrel? If everybody only wants to make the world a better place, then why does it seem like we only want to get in the way of each other's work?

At the heart of these rifts is a disagreement about what justice is, and how it is to be pursued.

Drawing from philosophy, science, and raw human experience across the centuries, thinkers have constantly grappled with the challenge of determining how people should act and organise their societies to pursue justice.

This topic will give you a glimpse into this challenge and what it means for us today. We will focus on definitions, theories of jurisprudence, and types of justice including distributive, retributive, procedural and restorative.



*"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny."*

- Martin Luther King Jr

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**"Never mistake law for justice. Justice is an ideal, while law is a tool."  
- LE Modesitt Jr**

## Topic 12

# Power & Politics

Politics is the study of power and governing systems. From workplace politics to political ideologies and news stories, we cannot escape politics. In fact, human beings are defined by some as political animals.

This topic highlights the development of political philosophy, political ideologies, theories and governance — from conservatism to fascism, democracy to theocracy, we cover the entire A to Z of politics.

This includes feudalism to liberal capitalism that ultimately creates contemporary globalism, dialectical Marxism and its prescription of socialism and communism, to the rise of colonialism and racism that lead to the genocide of indigenous populations globally. We also analyse multiculturalism and feminism, plus the foundations of International Relations theory.



*"There is a moral obligation, I think, not to ally oneself with power against the powerless."*

- Chinua Achebe

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**"It is not possible to rule well without having been ruled."**

**- Aristotle**

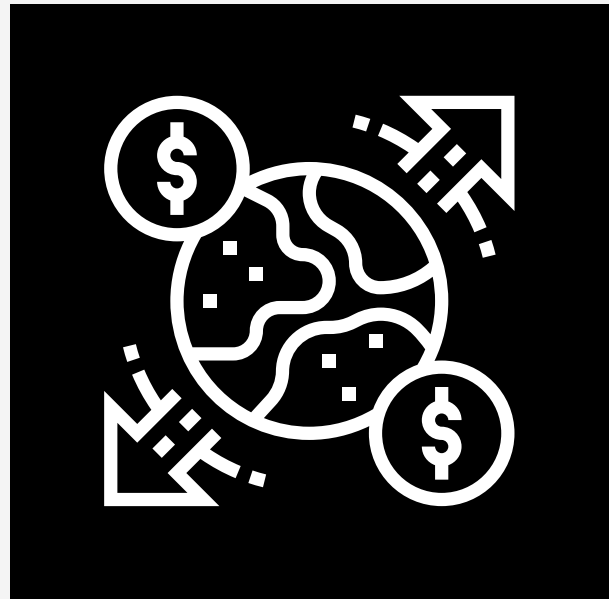
## Topic 13

# Economics & Political Economy

How does the economy affect us all, from each individual to entire nations? What is money? Can we imagine a world without capitalism?

This topic defines, delineates and discusses various aspects of local and world economy. Economics, in its basic definition is a social science concerned with the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services and transfer of wealth. Economics drives the need for supply and demand of all markets: from the social to the political.

Learn the difference between the economy, economics, political economy and various schools of thought from radical political economy to mainstream economics. The topics covered include microeconomics, macroeconomics, issues in global political economy, and various schools of thought including Keynesian, Austrian, ecological, Marxian, Institutional, and among others, feminist economic theory.



*“Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist.”*

- John Maynard  
Keynes

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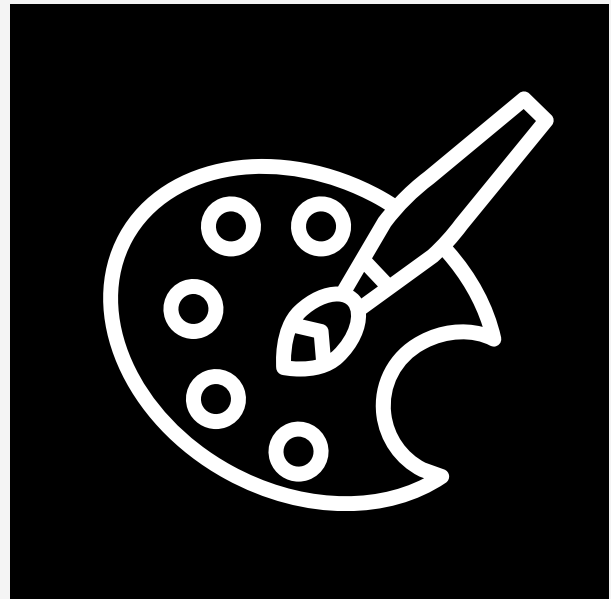
**"In hip hop, as in neoliberalism, economics bullied politics out of the picture." - Mark Fisher**

## Topic 14

# Art & Art Theory

*"The fundamental difference between art and beauty is that art is about who has produced it, while beauty depends on who's looking."* This often shared quote becomes an interesting gateway to understanding the role of aesthetics, beauty, and art in society, asking whether beauty indeed is subjective.

What is art? What should be art? The highest form of perfection often becomes art whether in architecture, engineering, or skill, yet we struggle to define it. Learn about art's various forms, and art history through theories such as imitationalism, formalism and emotionalism, and epochs and movements such as renaissance, baroque, surrealism, minimalism and among others modernism and postmodernism. Come explore contemporary art from film to music, as we take you through the brilliance of Nolan and the lyricism of Tupac, all simplified into one topic.



*"The essence of all beautiful art, all great art, is gratitude."*

- Freidrich Nietzsche

first philosophy 

**"Black literature is taught as sociology, as tolerance, not as a serious, rigorous art form." - Toni Morrison**



## Topic 15

# Literature & Criticism

Literary theory analyses texts through various frameworks and schools of thought — whether the text is written, filmed or performed. Similarly, literary criticism is the evaluation and interpretation of literature.

Through critiques and theories of literature, we understand the story and canons of Western thought and literary movements, thinkers, and periods. From ancient fables to science fiction, literature, films, and books have shaped society with their ideas and social commentary. In return, society's and human influence have impacted the epochs of thought in literature.

This topic covers various schools of literary theories from Formalism, Historicism, Reader response, to Modernism and Postmodernism, Psychoanalysis, Structuralism and Post-Structuralism, Deconstruction, Colonialism and Post Colonialism, and many more.



*"Man is essentially a story telling animal, but a teller of stories that aspire to truth.*

- Alasdair MacIntyre

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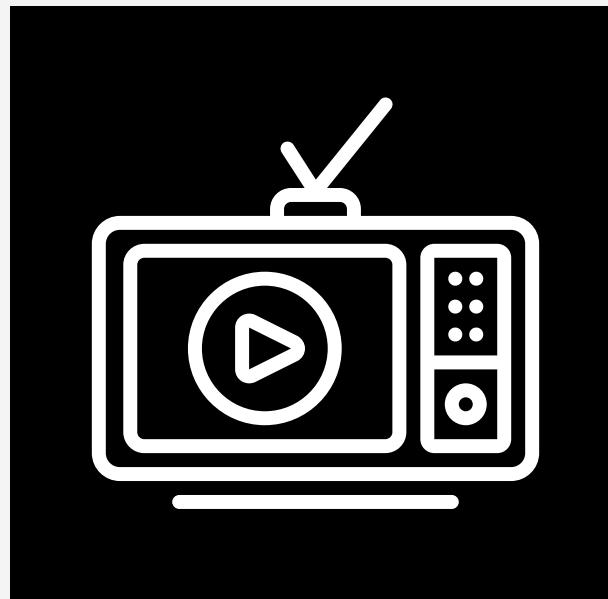
**"The decline of literature indicates the decline of a nation."  
- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe**

## Topic 16 Media & Communication

Today, we live in the age of open mass media where global communication takes place instantly, while placing the subject - You - in the centre.

News sources readily use amateur phone footage. The omnipresent social media entails that every person with a phone has the ability to instantly livestream via the internet to any living room. Simultaneously, an independent media is a sacred institution of a healthy liberal democracy, that ought to report accurately and hold the powerful accountable.

In this topic we will look at the role of the media over the years, the theories associated with media as well as its impact sociologically and politically.



*“The media’s the most powerful entity on earth. They have the ability to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent, and that’s power. Because they control the minds of the masses.”*

- Malcolm X

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**“The smart way to keep people passive and obedient is to strictly limit the spectrum of acceptable opinion, but allow very lively debate within that spectrum — even encourage the more critical and dissident views. That gives people the sense that there’s free thinking going on, while all the time the presuppositions of the system are being reinforced by the limits put on the range of the debate.” - Noam Chomsky**

## Topic 17

# Technology & Engineering

One of the defining signs of today's progress is technological advancements and engineering feats. Yet technology, and its root word "techne" is as old as philosophy itself.

What is technology and how do we differentiate it from science? From Artificial Intelligence (AI) to genetically modified organisms (GMO foods), technology throws at us many challenges and ethical dilemmas in the name of science and economic profit.

We cover the philosophy of engineering and philosophy of technology through the ages and delve into the issues of today from the adverse effects of technology to the ethical responsibility of self-driving cars and the social implications of Facebook's Metaverse.



*"Technology should improve your life, not become your life."*

- Billy Cox

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**"Scientists study the world as it is; engineers create the world that has never been."**

**— Theodore von Karman**

## Topic 18

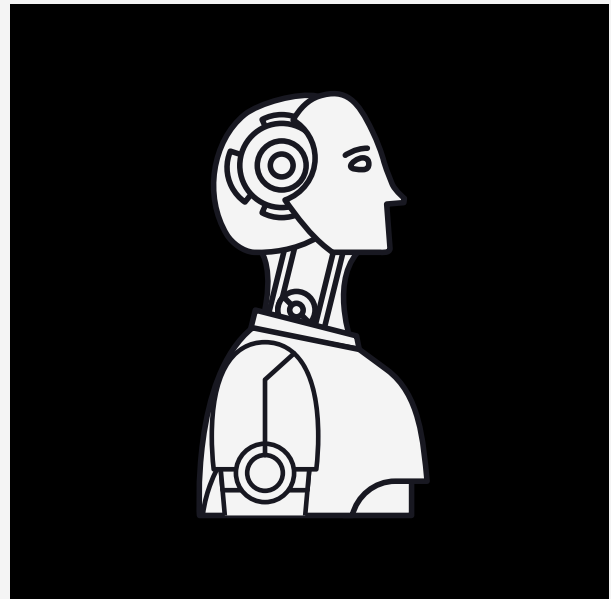
### Now & the Future

The previous lectures have brought us up to speed with the past and the present.

In this topic we look forward into the future and ask what great challenges can we expect? How can we prepare ourselves for the rapidly changing educational, industrial, political, climatic, and social landscapes of the 21st-century and beyond?

We look at the global social, political, economic and technological trends to identify philosophical implications for the human being and society at large.

We discuss the disciplines and theories within future studies and the predictions made by leading thinkers today.



*"If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses."*

- Henry Ford

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**The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read or write; they will be those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.**  
— Alvin Toffler

*Love is an action,  
never simply a feeling.*

- bell hooks

If you love what we do,  
please spread the word.