**This is an archival version of Thomas Wartenberg’s syllabus for Philosophy 280: Philosophy for Children, originally offered at Mt. Holyoke College. Please do not reproduce without written permission from Thomas Wartenberg.**

The highlight of this course will be your having the opportunity to teach philosophy at the Martin Luther King Charter School of Excellence in Springfield. We will teach an introduction to philosophy course to the second graders there using childrens' books.

Of course, the question of whether children are actually capable of the type of abstract thought characteristic of philosophy is an important issue and, indeed, one that we will discuss. Our primary focus, however, will be on preparing you for what I assure you will be an amazing experience: facilitating philosophical discussions among the second graders themselves.

# Syllabus

**Note**: Readings labeled (ER) are available at the course ella site. PP Stands for Plato and a Platypus... Big Ideas stands for Big Ideas for Little Kids

All readings are to be done for the date on which they are listed. They will be discussed then.

6-Sep Introduction to the Course

In Class

Screen "Teaching Children Philosophy" and "Picture Book Philosophy"

7-Sep Practice Discussion #1 and Video screening

**Assignment**

**Begin Journal** NOTE: Please keep referring to the ella site for all assignments due

13-Sep Why Philosophy for Children?

Read

Big Ideas for Little Kids, Preface and Chapters 1 and 2; Kennett and Smith (ER); Matthews (ER); Creswell (ER)

14-Sep Workshop with Gail Herman on reading aloud

Read

The Read-Aloud Handbook (ER)

**Assignment**

**Practice reading a picture book of your choice**

20-Sep The Community of Inquiry

Read

Big Ideas, Ch. 3 and 4; Kennedy (ER); Gardener (ER)

21-Sep "Dragons and Giants" and look at the book module

27-Sep Facilitating

Read

Splitter and Sprod, "Places for Thinking" (ER); Big Ideas, Ch. 7; Golding (ER);

28-Sep More Demonstrations

4-Oct Planning a Philosophy Class

Read

Big Ideas, Ch. 5 and 6; Wartenberg "Perspectives"(ER)

5-Oct Getting Ready for MLK

Read

PP, Philogagging

**For the next eight weeks, every Thursday we will leave from campus to travel to MLKCSE.**

Our teaching sessions at the school will run from 2

00-2:45 p.m.

NOTE

IF MOUNTAIN DAY FALLS ON A THURSDAY, WE WILL MEET. WE CAN NEGOTIATE AN ALTERNATIVE TREAT.

11-Oct Visit to MLK Charter School: Assemble in front of Skinner by 1:15. DO NOT BE LATE.

Read

MLK Dress Code

::watch "Freedom Writers" (on ella under "Streaming Media Reserves")

12-Oct Planning for First Session at MLK! Remember that your Lesson Plan is due by noon. Come to class prepared with your questions about teaching "Dragons and Giants"

Read

"Ethics" in PP; David Pears, "The Anatomy of Courage" (ER) NOTE: I realize that there may not be time for you to read the second reading each week by Friday. You need to have it read prior to developing your Lesson Plan to help you understand the philosophical area. I have also developed reading guides for most of the articles we will be reading.

18-Oct Teach "Dragons and Giants"

**Remember the schedule of assignments that will hold from now on**

::1. Lesson Plan due on Tuesday by 5 p.m. (one per pair) ::2. Journal entry due by Sunday at 10 p.m. (each person) ::3. Transcript due by Sunday at 10 pm (one per pair)

19-Oct Planning Meeting for "Frederick" Social and Political Philosophy

Read

"Social and Political Philosophy" in PP (\*NB: There is a joke in this section about rape that is in incredibly poor taste.);"Guide for Levine" (ER)"Idleness" (ER); Big Ideas, chapter 9

25-Oct Teaching "Frederick"

26-Oct Planning Meeting for "Knuffle Bunny" Philosophy of Language ::Read "Philosophy of Language" in PP; Quine "Two Dogmas"(ER); Big Ideas, chapter 14;

1-Nov Teaching "Knuffle Bunny"

2-Nov Planning meeting for "The Important Book" Metaphysics

Read "Metaphysics" in PP; "Guide for Copi" (ER)

Copi, "Essence and Accident" (ER); Big Ideas, chapter 10

**Assignment**

**Find Book for Your Own Module and submit your choice**

8-Nov Teach "The Important Book"

8-Nov, 4:30 p.m. Talk on Philosophy for Children in Australia, Sarah Davey Chesters

9-Nov Planning Meeting for "Morris the Moose" Informal Logic

Read

Big Ideas, chapter 13; Wartenberg, "Morris" (ER); "Logic" in PP; "Informal Logic" from Stanford Encyclopedia

15-Nov Teach "Morris the Moose"

16-Nov Planning Meeting for "Emily's Art" Aesthetics

Read

"Guide for Stephen Davies"(ER);Davies, "Evaluation of Art" (ER); Big Ideas, chapter 15;

29-Nov Teach "Emily's Art"

30-Nov Planning Meeting for "The Giving Tree" Environmental Ethics

Read

"Guide for Taylor" (ER); Paul Taylor, "The Ethics of Respect for Nature" (ER); Big Ideas, chapter 12

6-Dec Teach "The Giving Tree" :: NO JOURNAL THIS WEEK

7-Dec Final Class ::Plan Children's Visit to Campus

Read

Big Ideas, Chapter 17

12-Dec 9:30-11:50 a.m. MLKCSE Visit to MHC—Note Time and Date ::Visit to Bio Labs, Art Museum, and Organ in the Chapel ::Reception for students at 11 a.m. in Blanchard'

# Requirements

What follows are all the things you are required to do as part of this course.

1. **Attendance** I expect you to attend each session. This is especially important once we start traveling to MLKCSE. You absolutely cannot miss one of those sessions except for dire circumstances. You will need to give me a note from a professional if you miss any of those sessions and you MUST let me know in advance. The children and teachers at MLKCSE are relying on you! Your absence directly impacts them and the Philosophy for Children program. Any other unexcused absences will result in your final grade being lowered one step, e.g. from an A- to a B+
2. **Reflective journal** This is an experiential course. You will be doing things and learning skills as well as reading. To get the maximum benefit out of this feature of the course, you will need to keep a journal in which you reflect upon your ideas and experiences DURING the course. You need to post your journal entries into your drop box each **Friday by midnight**, so that we can get them back to you by the following Tuesday. You should include comments on the class sessions as well as the readings. They do not need to be long, but you will find that having this record will help you with your final paper as well. You need to upload it into the assignments folder in your ella site.
3. **Lesson Plan and Transcript** You will be put into pairs of two students for your visits to MLKCSE. Each time that you go into MLKCSE, your team will need to prepare a lesson plan. This will involve your modifying the question set for each book in a way that you think will work for you. The plan will give you a framework for the discussion that you will be leading. Make sure to use the form provided for this purpose. The Lesson Plan is due on the **Wednesday** prior to your teaching session by **noon.** Your team will also have to make a transcript of the discussion that you have lead using the audio tape as a basis. The transcript must be uploaded to your ella site by **10 p.m.** on the **Sunday** following your session so that we can evaluate them in a timely fashion. These will be valuable resources for your final papers. Upload each to your ella assignment folder
4. **Book Module** As part of the course, you will have the opportunity to create a book module that will remain on the teaching children philosophy website. There are a number of steps to do this. It is a good idea to start looking for books early, since it may take you a while to find one that is really suitable for a philosophical discussion. For help in figuring out what these should look like, see the instructions on this website. Note that you will have to build your book module on this website, so you may want to generate the the various elements of your book module in a format that will allow you to do this easily. For formatting information click on the editing help link.
   1. **Choose a book** Although any children's book can be used to teach philosophy, there are some books that are particularly suited to doing so. You will have a chance to read some of these and can use them as guides for your own choice of a book. Generally speaking, books that have clear morals such as Aesop's Fables are not well-suited since our goal is to find issues on which children can disagree. That's hard to do with a book that tells you its moral, but not impossible. It just means that the questions have to be especially well-designed. Three places where you can find children's books are the MHC library, the Gaylord library across from the college, and the Odyssey Bookshop. Rebecca at the Odyssey is a children's books specialist and is familiar with the course. You should also consult the list in The Read-Aloud Handbook. But remember that new books are being published all the time, so your own investigations can reveal great books. You must submit your choice (author's name and book title) together with a 50-word summary of the book. When you have found a book you think is suitable, make sure it is in print by doing a search on amazon.com. Your choice must be uploaded to the Book Module folder on your ella site drop box by **Nov. 1 at 5 p.m.** Save the file as YOURLASTNAME.bookchoice.doc
   2. **Write a question set:** You need to develop a question set consisting of at least three or four sets of questions. How many you need depends on your book. The idea is that this will allow others who want to teach the book but have no philosophical background to do so. These are modeled for you on this site. Your draft is due on **Nov 6 at 5 p.m.** To turn in your draft, paste the question set into the appropriate place on your book module page. Make sure to save your changes. Once your question set is looked over, you will receive feedback right on your book module page in the form of reviewer notes. These notes will help you to revise and strengthen your question set.
   3. **Prepare a philosophical introduction** The idea here is to give a parent or teacher some background in the philosophical issues that you raise in your questions about your book. You need to be concise and very clear, using no jargon that will be off-putting to the general public. Again, consult the book modules on this site for guidance. **Prepare a philosophical introduction** The idea here is to give a parent or teacher some background in the philosophical issues that you raise in your questions about your book. You need to be concise and very clear, using no jargon that will be off-putting to the general public. Again, consult the book modules on this site for guidance. Like with the question set, you will get reviewer notes with feedback to help you revise and strengthen your philosophical introduction.
   4. **Scan the cover of your book and 4 images.** More detailed instructions for doing this can be found on the Scanning Images page on this site. Once you the images saved as jpeg files, you can upload them directly onto your book module page. For placement ideas, consult with the other book modules. For instructions on uploading the images, see the "How to Add a Book Module" page. For detail instructions concerning formatting, etc. click on the Editing Help link, and then on "Images.” Images should be uploaded to the site and added to your book module page by **5 p.m. on Nov. 22.**
   5. **A revised version of the entire book module** is due on **Dec.11 at 5 p.m.** Make your changes directly to your book module page, and save them. You will get one last round of feedback before your final module is due.
   6. **Your Book Module is Due** All final changes to your book module in terms of both content and aesthetic should be complete by **Dec. 20 at 5 p.m.** For all of this, Hina, Anarkalee and I are prepared to help you. DO NOT HESITATE to get assistance if you need it!

**Policies**

**Confidentiality**

It is important to respect the privacy of the students with whom you are working. That means that you should not reveal their identities as individuals in any way that might cause them harm or embarrassment. Your transcripts should list their actual names, but any other references you make to them, such as in your term papers, must disguise their actual identities. Please abide by this rule. It is very important.

**Late Policy**

Late work will be graded downwards, and the penalty will increase each day. In cases of emergency, of course, this penalty will be waived, but you must either notify me in advance, if possible, or else as soon as you can afterwards. In these cases, we will work out some reasonable arrangement so that you can get the work to me by a later date.

**For Students with Disabilities**

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with disabilities. Talk to me at the beginning of the course to work out details of accommodations (which may include alternative grading arrangements). I am happy to help however I can.

**Academic Honesty**

Remember that Mount Holyoke has an honor code. You are expected to hand in your own work for this course -- though you can consult with others, all written assignments must consist of your own words. Do not quote without citation; never represent another person’s ideas or words as your own. Failure to comply with this policy will result, at a minimum, in a failing grade for the course, and it may result in more serious consequences. If you have any questions about it, please come and talk to me.

NOTE 1: Whenever you use the words of another author, you must provide a reference for the quote. Failing to do so is plagiarism. Even if you do not intend to cheat or deceive, you must use your own words or else acknowledge that the words in your paper are borrowed from someone else!

NOTE 2: Laptops must have all internet connections turned off. They may only be used to take notes in class. You will be penalized if I find your laptop is connected. It goes without saying that you cannot use cellphones in any way during class.

**Your final grade will be computed as follows:**

Lesson Plans 10%

Transcripts 10%

MLKCSE Sessions 15%

Reflective Journal 20%

Book Module 15%

Class Participation 15%

Attendance 5%

Final Journal Entry 10%

# Class Assignments

**Journal Assignment**

You are to keep a journal of your experience of the course. You should make an entry every week by Friday at 5 p.m. Your journals should be submitted via the Drop Box option in Ella. Save your file as: name\_Journal#.doc. We will comment on your journals and post them back to you by Monday at midnight.

What should you be writing about? Your journal is intended to be a record of your critical reflection on all of the different aspects of the course. This means that each entry needs to include at least some reflection on: 1. The class period; 2. The readings; and, once we have gone into the school, 3. Your experience in the MLK classroom. The journals do not need to be polished essays. You should include your questions, concerns, half-baked ideas, etc. Remember, the journals will be one of your primary resources when you go to write your final paper.

How long should each journal entry be? They will differ from week to week, depending on what's happened, but you should aim for 2-3 pages doubled spaced each week.

There is a sample journal entry on the ella site that you should take a look at.

**Lesson Plans**

For each of the sessions at the MLKCSE, you will have to submit a lesson plan. You will find the Lesson Plan Form on the website. Just fill it out for each session and submit it by noon on the Tuesday before your session. This will give us time to respond. See instructions for doing so on the Requirements page.

The Lesson Plan is your plan for how you will teach the book to the children. Although a central part of it will be your adaptation of the relevant question set, you will also have to think about how to prepare the children to have the philosophical discussion. This will involve your making sure that they understand the book – both the words themselves and the story – for this is a necessary prerequisite for our philosophical discussion.

The two team-members should work on this together. Although one of you will have the central responsibility for leading the discussion, the other should be prepared to help out when she sees that it would be helpful. You are a team and need to work together. Although the person who is not leading the discussion will be taking notes on it to assist in summarizing what took place at the end of the session during the reflection period, she should also step in when she thinks it useful.

It may be obvious, but it is crucial that you are really familiar with the book you will be teaching. This means that you need to read it more than once and be certain that you understand how it raises the philosophical issues that it does. Discussing this together – as well as practicing the read-aloud – can be very helpful in assuring that you are prepared for your session.

Here is a sample lesson plan that teachers have used at the school for teaching Tusk Tusk, a book about prejudice and war. You can use it as a guide, although you will have to develop a specifically philosophical set of topics for the After Reading section using the question sets on the website.

Sample Lesson Plan Tusk Tusk (Suggested K-2) By David McKee

Vocabulary:

* tusk
* potter
* decide
* “licked his chops”
* battle

Before Reading: Prior Knowledge

Talk about interesting or new vocabulary from the book. Give synonyms. Talk about the way the word sounds. Look at cover and title and make predictions about the story.

During Reading:

Emphasize new vocabulary words—stop and discuss the word in context. Frequently ask what will happen next (make predictions).

After Reading:

Lots of stories tell us a lesson. What do you think is the lesson in this story? (Re-read the last line) What do you predict would happen next if the story were to continue?

Choose a graphic organizer that best supports the structure of the story. Ask students to summarize the story orally. What happened in the beginning? What happened in the middle? What happened at the end? What was the problem or conflict in the story? How did the characters solve the problem?

Please use the lesson plan form for making your lesson plan. You can access it either with the link on the main course page or on ella.

**Lesson Plan for Session #\_\_\_**

**Your Names:**

**Title:**

**Author:**

**Vocabulary:**

(3 – 5 words)

**Before Reading: Prior Knowledge**

**During Reading:**

**After Reading:**

**Transcript Assignment**

You must create a transcript of each session you have with the MLKCSE students. This transcript should be a complete record of the discussion that you led. It will serve a number of purposes. First, you have to use it as a resource for your term paper. Second, we may use it as part of various research efforts to document the benefits of doing philosophy with school children. So it is very important that you transcribe EVERYTHING that takes place during the session.

What you will be transcribing is the recording that you make of your session. Media Resources will provide each team with a tape recorder. Ben Paul from MR will come to class to explain the use of the recorders as well as give you more specific instructions on how to pick them up from the Library. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO COME TO OUR MLKCSE SESSIONS WITH THE TAPE RECORDER.

In writing the transcript, you should use the actual first names of the students. But when it comes to writing your papers, you must create pseudonyms to protect the identity of the students. This is a precaution that has been requested by MLKCSE for their students’ safety and is necessary also to conform to Federal requirements on research with human subjects.

There is a sample transcript below.

**Transcript Template:**

Your first and last name, Your partner’s first and last name

Philosophy 280

Date (month, day, year)

**Session #: *Book Title***

The following students were present during today’s philosophical session:

* Name
* Name
* Name

The following transcript shows the discussion verbatim that developed:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name of Speaker: | This is where you will type what the person said. |
| Name of Speaker: | This is where you will type what the person said. |
| Name of Speaker: | This is where you will type what the person said. |
| Name of Speaker: | This is where you will type what the person said. |
| Name of Speaker: | This is where you will type what the person said. |
| Name of Speaker: | This is where you will type what the person said. |

Note: This transcript must be uploaded to your Ella site by **noon** on the Monday following your session.

Save the file as YOURLASTNAME.transcript#number.doc (ex: SYKES.transcript#1.doc). Make sure to upload this file to **both** of your Ella drop boxes. Each partner needs to have the transcript uploaded into their **own**Ella drop box.

**Guidelines for Your Philosophical Introduction**

As with the question sets, the purpose of the philosophical introduction is to help adults lead

philosophical discussions with our web materials. As you know, the thought of discussing philosophical issues with kids can be intimidating to those without any philosophical training. We want to help put their minds at ease by giving them a sense of what issues are addressed in the question set. So, to begin, you need to be very clear on what issues you have raised in your questions. (Hopefully, this is easy!) Then, what you need to do is to tell them a bit about the philosophy of the issue.

For Arnold Lobel's story “Dragons and Giants,” one might start the philosophical introduction like this:

Bravery is one of a set of concepts that philosophers have called “virtues.” These terms all refer to types of behavior that are deemed admirable. Other examples of virtues include “patience” and “self-control.” Virtue theory is one of the basic approaches to philosophical ethics.

When it comes to thinking about specific virtues, such as courage or bravery, philosophers disagree about a range of different questions. For example, it might seem that there are certain people whose work entails that they always act courageously, like a fireman or a policeman. The feature of their work that seems important here is that it is dangerous. So a fireman must be brave because he must confront dangerous situations as part of his job. But not all acts that are dangerous are courageous, nor are all acts that in which someone faces a danger courageous….

Again, the idea is to help the facilitator understand what the issues are that the question sets raise based upon this story.

Don’t make your introduction too long. You don’t want to intimidate the adult by having an overwhelming amount of information that they will feel they have to assimilate before beginning to talk to the kids. But be sure to give a sufficiently clear survey of the issues.

Here are some suggestions:

1. Do not include a long summary of the story. Your book module has a separate story summary before the philosophical introduction. What is crucial here is introducing the philosophy not the story.
2. Be clear about what the philosophical issues your question sets raise are, such as “What makes an action brave?”, and specify what philosophers have said about it. In order to develop this part of your philosophical introduction, you probably will have to do some research. There are a variety of different on-line sources that you might wish to look at:
   1. Philosophy Talk: [www.philosophytalk.org](http://www.philosophytalk.org)
   2. Stanford Online Encyclopedia of Philosophy: plato.stanford.edu
   3. The Routledge Online Encyclopedia of Philosophy: access from the card catalogue at Mount Holyoke
   4. Note: While wikipedia is often useful, its philosophy entries are often quite weak. So use it with extreme caution.
3. Once you have researched your topics, present the results in clearly written prose. You need to indicate different positions that philosophers have taken on the topics, so that the teacher/facilitator gets a sense of what the children might say. The introduction will help them recognize when the children are actually making interesting philosophical points.
4. You can indicate some of the ways in which the story presents the issues you have discussed if you think that will be helpful. Remember not to use this introduction to show off your knowledge of philosophy. The names of philosophers are not helpful and, often, neither are specific philosophical terms. Sometimes, though, as you outline different positions on an issue it is helpful to use philosophical terms.