



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Department
Of
Philosophy.



Reading suggestions:
Philosophy

Reading suggestions

We don't require students to do any reading before they arrive at Sheffield (just as we don't require students to have studied philosophy at A level). But it may be that you'd like to read some philosophy, either to find out more about philosophy, or because you're already aiming to study philosophy at Sheffield and you'd like to prepare yourself for your time as a student. There are different ways to start reading in philosophy. None is better or worse than the other. Everything here depends on your tastes and preferences. Try several things until you find something which suits you and which you enjoy.

Philosophical classics

One possibility is to start with some of the great philosophical works from the past. These books are the real stuff, but will be very hard in places. So don't be surprised or discouraged if you find them puzzling and difficult to understand. Academic philosophers are still debating how to understand the influential arguments in these texts:

- Plato, *The Republic* (≈ 380 BCE)
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (≈ 350 BCE)
- René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641)
- David Hume, *Dialogues on Natural Religion* (1776)
- Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1790)
- J. S. Mill, *On Liberty* (1859) *Utilitarianism* (1863)
- W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)
- Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* (1912)
- Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952)

The Plato, Aristotle and Descartes books come in many good, but different, translations (Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* were written in Greek, Descartes' *Meditations* in Latin).

Contemporary introductions to philosophy

There are a number of very good recent books, explicitly aimed at giving an accessible introduction to philosophy as a whole. Four excellent introductions are:

- Brenda Almond, *Exploring Philosophy: The Philosophical Quest* (Blackwell, 1994)
- Edward Craig, *Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2002)
- Thomas Nagel, *What Does It All Mean?* (Oxford University Press, new edition 1989)
- Karen Warren, *An Unconventional History of Western Philosophy: Conversations between Men and Women Philosophers* (Rowan and Littlefield, 2009)

Contemporary introductions to particular topics

It might be that you have already developed an interest in a particular area of philosophy which you would like to pursue. The list below includes volumes on Ancient Philosophy, Ethics, Feminism, Logic, Metaphysics, Philosophy of Mind, Philosophy of Science, Political Philosophy and Social Philosophy – the titles will give the subject area away.

- Albert Atkin, *The Philosophy of Race* (Routledge, 2012)
- Julia Annas, *Ancient Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2000)
- Helen Beebe, *Free Will: An Introduction* (Palgrave, 2013)
- Christopher Bennett, *What Is This Thing Called Ethics?* (Routledge, 2010)
- Patricia Churchland, *Touching A Nerve: Our Brains, Our Selves* (W.W.Norton, 2013)
- Earl Connee & Theodore Sider, *Riddles of Existence: A Guided Tour of Metaphysics* (Oxford University Press, new edition 2012)
- Douglas Hofstadter & Daniel Dennett, *The Mind's I: Fantasies and reflections on Self and Soul* (Penguin, London, 1982)
- Uma Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third-World Feminism* (Routledge, 1997)
- Samir Okasha, *Philosophy of Science: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2002)
- Jennifer Saul, *Feminism : Issues and Arguments* (Oxford University Press, 2003)
- Raymond Smullyan, *What is the Name of this Book: The Riddle of Dracula and Other Logical Puzzles* (Dover Publications, 2011)
- Jonathan Wolff, *An Introduction to Political Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 2006)
- Linda Zagzebski, *Philosophy of Religion: An Historical Introduction* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2007)

A useful online resource

A final way to pursue an interest in specific areas of the subject is via the online Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy plato.stanford.edu. The articles here are written by professional philosophers. There is rigorous academic editing. Any philosopher would be proud to publish in the Stanford Encyclopedia. There is an extremely good search function. Each article concludes with a bibliography, and links to related articles in the Encyclopedia. And it is entirely open access. A tremendous resource, which is great for exploring your own interests.

Podcasts and other media

Podcasts is also a good way of engaging with philosophy, and there are several good series including the BBC's In Our Time:

www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01f0vzr

Philosophy Bites:

philosophybites.com

The website Aeon also specializes in articles with a philosophy focus:

aeon.co/philosophy