Socrates in Homeroom: 
A Case Study for Integrating Philosophy across a High School Curriculum

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Abstract: How should we teach philosophy in high schools? While electives are useful, I advocate going further to integrate philosophy into each traditional subject. High school instructors, working with philosophers, first teach logic as a foundation for asking philosophical questions within their subjects. Students are then encouraged to think about how they reason and what assumptions they are making in each subject. In English, students might consider what makes a novel a work of art; in science, they might explore what it means to call a theory “true.” Unlike an elective model, my approach ensures that all students benefit from philosophy during their secondary education. I conclude the paper with suggestions for implementation.

1. Introduction

Since the work of Matthew Lipman, the philosophy for children (P4C) movement has sought ways to bring philosophy into precollege education. At the high school level, offering philosophy electives seems an effective way to introduce students to philosophy. Yet, while P4C advocates should certainly continue to lobby for electives, I maintain that they should be only one part of a more ambitious plan to bring philosophy to every high school student. In this paper, I explore teaching philosophy by integrating it into the overall curriculum of our high schools through collaborating with more traditional subject teachers. In the second section, I briefly explain the benefits of philosophy at the high school level and argue that integrating philosophy across the curriculum helps to address some of the shortcomings of an exclusively elective approach. In the next section, I provide an overview of the integrative curriculum that I designed and used at my own high school. I then address some of the problems a school may face in implementing...
my approach, before concluding with some suggestions for adopting this approach in the near future.

2. Philosophy in Secondary Education

Philosophy should be an integral part of high school curricula. If the goal of secondary education is to prepare our students for both college-level work and for becoming critical, reflective individuals, then philosophy is an indispensable component of our students’ education. Philosophy teaches practical skills, and it invites students to tackle larger questions about their own education and values. Practically, philosophy trains students to think logically in their other subjects. Yet, philosophy has wider pedagogical benefits too, because it encourages students to think about the value of their education as a whole as well as their own personal core values. Thus, before discussing elective and integrative approaches to teaching philosophy, we need first to consider both the practical and pedagogical benefits of high school level philosophy.

First, practically speaking, philosophy teaches students to think rigorously and systematically about important ideas and concepts in a way that is often not part of the traditional high school curriculum. Logic is an integral part of the philosophical method, and it is already, at least implicitly, present in any class that teaches critical thinking. Rarely in our students’ traditional courses, though, do they learn such logical techniques as identifying informal fallacies, distinguishing deductive from inductive arguments, or evaluating arguments for validity or strength. Explicitly teaching such skills, however, would benefit students in their academic work and in their thinking generally. For example, a 2011 UNESCO report claims, “Because the aim of teaching philosophy is to develop critical judgement and the rational analysis of human experience, it can offer valid intellectual tools, additional to and complementing technical and scientific subjects.” Additionally, Harry Reinert of Edmonds Senior High School claims that philosophy can help bridge the gap between high school and college level work, saying that “Many former students have reported back to us that the training they received in employing abstract concepts, not to mention some of the authors actually read, had given them a firmer foundation than most of their classmates had for doing college level work.” Thus, logic and rational thinking, the philosopher’s intellectual tools, help our students to develop into more reasonable, sophisticated thinkers, whether they attend college or not.

Yet, philosophy’s value is not only about developing logical and critical thinking skills; it also raises wider pedagogical issues about the value of our students’ education as well as about their own personal
value systems. First, philosophy shows students how to raise meta-level questions about their core subjects, thereby encouraging them to reflect on why studying any subject is valuable. Consider, for example, a literature course in which students read Boccaccio’s *Decameron*. In addition to discussing the artistry of the work, one could also raise philosophical questions about the text itself. Is the work pornographic? Do such bawdy stories corrupt the moral sentiments of readers? If so, should we teach such books to high school students? Should we censor them altogether? I would argue that these are philosophical questions about the act of studying literature. By bringing up some of the underlying questions that lurk beneath the skills of learning to read and write about literature, philosophy can provide students with ways to think about whether reading such books is valuable to their education. This can, and in my own experience does, motivate students in courses that they might otherwise see as irrelevant because it allows them to raise wider questions about the value of what they are studying.

Second, not only does philosophy enable students to examine the value of their education, it also encourages them to think more critically about their own core values. Indeed, confronting questions about one’s own values is an inescapable part of a person’s life, and high school students are already starting to think about who they are and what they believe. Maryann Ayim, for example, argues that “Value judgments are an indissoluble element in high school subjects; consequently, the examination of arguments supporting specific value judgments is similarly indispensable. This implies, at the very least, the need for some general philosophical knowledge concerning the nature of arguments, acquaintance with some valid argument forms, and familiarity with some of the ways in which arguments can go wrong.” Philosophy is necessary for both our intellectual, as well as personal, growth. We therefore do our students a disservice by not making it an integral part of their high school education.

So, if we accept that philosophy belongs in high schools, what is the best way to offer it? I support electives as part of a high school philosophy curriculum; however, relying exclusively on electives is insufficient. First, if philosophy is truly an essential component of secondary education, we must strive to introduce every student to its methods and content. Second, offering philosophy only as an elective creates the false impression that it is just one more isolated field of study that, while occasionally overlapping with other subjects, has little relevance to the rest of a student’s education. Third, electives can sometimes be perceived as lacking rigor and legitimacy to students, parents, and college admission boards, thereby leading students to opt out because they appear to conflict with the goal of building a competitive transcript for the college admission process. While an advanced
placement course may avoid this problem, some instructors may chaff at the risk of being straitjacketed by the need to “teach to the test.”

Furthermore, relying only on electives potentially loses the opportunity for us as teachers to encourage students to bring up philosophical questions about the scope and limit of the subjects that they are being taught. As a 2007 UNESCO report suggests, introducing philosophy into a physics course could allow students to consider the differences between “the practice of science . . . [and] finished science.” This in turn “may move students to take a reflective look at the somewhat naïve notion that science presents the naked and unvarnished truth.” Similarly, in a mathematics course, an instructor may raise the issue of why mathematics seems to provide certainty and whether we can have certainty in other branches of human knowledge. An exclusively elective approach to teaching introductory philosophy or ethics may not provide the chance to raise such questions across the curriculum, thereby missing the opportunity to enable students to understand better the methods, limits, and assumptions of their individual subjects.

Lastly, unlike an electives-only approach, integrating philosophy across the curriculum forces instructors and students alike to consider how their entire curriculum fits together. Often students are inadvertently, and perhaps occasionally intentionally, encouraged to see subjects in distinct compartments. I, for example, have frequently taught students who see each of their core subjects as unrelated to the others. Students might see the connection between math and science, but many seem to think that the concerns of English are entirely distinct from history and science. Philosophy can help break down some of these artificial divisions. For example, when my colleague and I worked together to bring logic into our geometry and history courses, we were obliged to adopt a common vocabulary to teach the principles of deduction and induction. Out of our efforts, I saw how our students began to understand that, although the content of geometry and history differ significantly, thinking well is at the heart of any academic study and crosses all disciplinary boundaries.

Another way that philosophy breaks down the sometimes artificial divisions among subjects is by showing that the “big questions” are present in all courses. For example, using my integrative model, I taught Plato in several different disciplines. At first students chaffed: “Plato again!” they protested. In the end, though, many students came to realize that Plato is not just an author in a philosophy or math or history class, belonging to only one small area of the curriculum. Rather, they began to recognize that Plato wrote about the entire human experience, and they soon realized that Plato’s dialogues can be read as literary masterpieces, as exercises in logic, as theories on mathematics, education, and politics, or as exhortations to living well. Students saw that
Plato’s writings about truth, reality, politics, and beauty do not belong in any one specific subject, which in turn helped to undermine their disciplinary parochialism.

So far, I have explained the benefits of offering philosophy in high schools, and I have pointed out some possible problems of relying exclusively on an elective model. In the next section, I provide an overview of my integrative and collaborative model.

3. An Integrative and Collaborative Model

In the 1994–1995 academic year, my high school hired a graduate student to teach a philosophy elective and offer units on philosophy in each of the core subjects. From 1996 to 2000, I took over this project, continuing to teach an introduction to philosophy elective and extending the philosophical component of our general curriculum. Throughout this time, I worked with my colleagues to integrate philosophy into the subjects at every level. This not only involved my teaching individual classes or units within a course to show students where philosophical questions might arise, but it also meant collaborating with my colleagues to plan how they could bring more philosophy into their own classrooms in subsequent units in their courses. Although the program was reduced in scope after 2000, both our philosophy elective and this integrative model, particularly in our math, history, and physics programs, have remained an ongoing part of the curriculum.

My integration of philosophy across the curriculum was initially done mostly ad hoc, without much attention given to philosophy’s wider impact on our students’ education as a whole. After several years of this ad hoc approach, I was given the chance to review the place of philosophy in our curriculum, and I took this opportunity to think about what a more systematic and integrated approach to incorporating philosophy might look like. For both theoretical and practical reasons, I concluded that a good starting point would be to make a concerted effort to teach some logic across the curriculum. If we seek to integrate philosophy across the curriculum in order to teach students how to question assumptions, draw logical inferences, and raise questions about values, then philosophy should first enter high school curricula precisely where students are taught to think logically. Additionally, whether students decide to continue to study philosophy, knowing some of the basics of reasoning well is fundamental to all academic subjects and to their maturation into reasonable adults.

Thus, the geometry teachers and I coordinated our efforts to bring logic more systematically into the curriculum. One colleague and I introduced categorical logic and Venn diagrams into her course, as well as including a unit on the relationship between math and philosophy in
ancient Greece. This dovetailed well with our ancient history course, which also covered some of the Pre-Socratics and Plato. Later, her successor and I replaced categorical logic with propositional logic. He taught his students the difference between deduction and induction, truth tables, and a little natural deduction. In conjunction with his efforts, in my history class, I also emphasized how to distinguish deduction from induction, and I introduced my students to common inductive argument forms and the informal fallacies. Consequently, by the end of sophomore year, nearly every student at our school was getting used to arguing more logically, by learning to identify types of arguments and fallacies. This better prepared them to grapple with philosophical questions in other courses.

With some logic having been taught first, the next step involved integrating philosophy throughout the curriculum, as had been the case between 1996 and 2000. As of 2012, our school has not fully moved on to this second step. Thus, while logic has a place in our geometry and history classes, so far additional philosophical components to our curriculum have remained mostly in our history department, with some integration into our physics classes. Nevertheless, even this more modest approach has had some good results, encouraging students to seek out more philosophy, both by taking electives in our school and by going on to take college level philosophy and logic courses. Therefore, in the next section, I provide a sample lesson plan for each subject that I have used at my own high school. These lessons can be used to complement an existing elective program, or they can be used without one, in a more modular fashion, for instructors who wish to raise philosophical questions within their own disciplines.

4. Philosophy in the Five Core Subjects: Some Sample Lessons

My integrative approach provides three possible ways to introduce philosophy into the five core subjects. First, instructors could explore the methodological assumptions that a subject presupposes. Students in a physics class, for instance, might discuss whether the scientific method really helps us get closer to the truth about the nature of reality. Second, instructors could consider philosophical questions that arise within the content of a subject. Thus, in a history course, students might investigate arguments about the legitimate basis of political power. Third, students could consider why a subject should be studied at all, and how a particular subject contributes meaningfully, or not, to their lives.

In this section, I provide sample lesson plans that I implemented at my school. Each begins with philosophical questions that instructors
might emphasize as they teach the content and method described for each day. They also include some recommended readings that could either be assigned to students or serve as background information for the instructor. The tables provide an overview of the topics covered along with possible homework assignments. Each sample unit also ends with some suggestions for additional lessons. Nevertheless, these units are not intended to be exhaustive; rather, they are meant to suggest what a curriculum could look like based on the kinds of lessons I have used.

(a) Mathematics

When we integrated logic into our math classes, students could see a clear benefit from studying logic, as it developed reasoning skills that would be used later in the course. It also helped them to understand that much of the mathematics they were studying were forms of valid deductive arguments, which in turn gave them a better sense of how mathematical reasoning works. Thus, one unit that we always covered involved teaching some of the basics of deductive reasoning in our geometry classes.

Sample Unit on Deduction and Math

Philosophical Questions for the Unit
1. What distinguishes deduction from induction?
2. What is meant by the terms, “validity,” “soundness,” and “distribution”?
3. Explain how we can test for validity using rules and Venn diagrams.
4. What is existential import, and why is it important for understanding the difference between traditional and modern logic?

Reading for the Unit
1. Patrick Hurley’s *A Concise Introduction to Logic.*

Lesson Plan

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<tr>
<td>Topics</td>
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<tr>
<td>• deductive and inductive inferences</td>
<td>• the traditional square of opposition</td>
<td>• testing for validity using Venn diagrams</td>
<td>• the modern square of opposition</td>
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<td>• common deductive argument forms</td>
<td>• distribution of terms in categorical</td>
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<td>• existential import</td>
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<td>• validity</td>
<td>statements</td>
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<td>• necessary and sufficient conditions</td>
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Homework

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<th>Day One</th>
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<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
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<td>• Hurley, 1.3 and 1.4</td>
<td>• Hurley 4.1 and 4.6</td>
<td>• Hurley 4.6</td>
<td>• Hurley 4.3</td>
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Teaching Notes on the Sample Unit

Instructors could also use this unit to raise additional philosophical issues about knowledge, learning, and the value of mathematics in their
students’ education. These issues include the following: Why do you think the word, “mathematics,” derives from the Greek word “manthanein” (“to learn”), and what does this tell us about the value that the Greeks saw in math?; Is math the paradigmatic case of learning? Why might someone think that it is?; Is deductive reasoning simply a form of question begging? Many of these questions simply emerged out of my efforts to show the connection between math and logic and naturally led my students into more global discussions about their education and math’s place in it.

I focused on differences between the traditional and modern squares of opposition to give students a concrete example of an instance in which logicians made assumptions, which, when challenged, changed the way they thought about how to interpret “All S are P” and “No S are P.” This is useful to show students that logical and, by extension mathematical, concepts are debated and do not appear as manna from heaven as most students at this level tend to believe.

In addition, during the 2010–2011 academic year, we swapped out categorical logic for propositional logic. This new unit lasted about two weeks and covered truth tables and natural deduction.

**Suggestions for Additional Lessons**

One need not just teach basic deductive reasoning in a math class. Working in collaboration with my math department colleagues, we also constructed a unit that dealt with philosophical questions that arise within the context of the geometry class. For example, we traced the development of mathematical and logical thinking in ancient Greece from Thales to Euclid. This lesson was used in part to explore the difference between simply measuring geometrical figures and providing proofs about them. The lesson also included an extended discussion of Plato’s Allegory of the Cave, as a way of getting students to think about what it means to say that “numbers are real” and what it means to say anything is real. In our pre-calculus course, we also created a unit dealing with Leibniz and the labyrinth of the continuum, whereas in our calculus course, we taught Cantor and the subsequent debate over the philosophical foundations of mathematics in the works of Russell, Hilbert, Brouwer and Godel.

(b) Science

As with math, logical and philosophical concerns can be introduced into science courses to help students understand the kinds of reasoning skills they are being taught. Philosophy can also encourage students to think more critically about the value and meaning of scientific knowledge. For example, many students assume that science is valuable because they see it as purely factual and as one of the best routes to lucrative
careers. Philosophy can be used to question such assumptions by giving students the tools to think more rigorously about the scientific method. To illustrate how an instructor can do this, consider a sample unit on the work of Kuhn and the notion of scientific progress.

**Sample Unit on Scientific Progress**

**Philosophical Questions for the Unit**
1. What do we mean by “scientific knowledge” and “scientific progress”? 2. Does science continuously lead us toward more accurate explanations of reality? Or does it give us useful ways of seeing the world without necessarily implying that our theories are getting closer to the truth about nature? 3. Why should we study science? What exactly are we learning about when we study science?

**Readings for the Unit**
1. Karl Popper’s “Science as Falsification” in *Conjectures and Refutations*. 2. Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.8

**Lesson Plan**

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<th>Day One</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topics</strong></td>
<td>• Popper on Falsification</td>
<td>• Kuhn on scientific revolutions</td>
<td>• Comparing Popper and Kuhn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Homework</strong></td>
<td>Popper’s “Science as Falsification” from <em>Conjectures and Refutations</em></td>
<td>Kuhn’s <em>The Structure of Scientific Revolutions</em></td>
<td>Student group discussion: does science progress? If so, how?</td>
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**Teaching Notes on the Sample Unit**

I have taught selections from Popper and Kuhn both at my high school and in the Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth (CTY) summer program.9 In both cases, the students handled the readings well; however, instructors need not assign these readings to their students. I have also presented the lesson in a combination lecture/discussion format. For this, I find that students gain a better understanding of what “theory-laden perceptions” means if they first explore psychological studies that illustrate how our biases can help determine what we pick out and what we overlook. Drawing on the board and discussing Wittgenstein’s duck/rabbit also helps with this.

As in math classes, a benefit of this unit is that it raises questions about what students are actually doing when they do science. This allows students to consider the value of science by enabling them to think about how scientific theories get developed and what their limitations might be. Raising such questions can be useful in combating the simplistic and misleading view that science is purely factual while other subjects, particularly humanities like English, are purely matters of opinion.
Suggestions for Additional Lessons

Instructors could also explain the hypothetico-deductive method in connection with what students are learning about deduction in math classes and induction in history classes. Such overlap may seem repetitious, but it actually reinforces difficult concepts and allows students to see the presence of logic across the curriculum. Instructors should also consider using Popper’s “Science as Falsification” to explore the difference between scientific and pseudo-scientific theories.

Instructors might teach a lesson on the relationship between philosophy and science with respect to particular scientific theories. Over the last four years, the physics teacher and I have offered a unit on atomism, tracing it from Democritus to the modern period. In this unit, we encouraged students to think about how Democritus and Lucretius came to their conclusions about the existence of atoms, and how their approach differed from a modern, experimental approach. We also talked about whether knowing “the nature of things” really does bring peace of mind, as the Epicureans insisted. This led to a discussion about physicist Richard Feynman, who, when stricken with cancer, found comfort in understanding how it worked.

Instructors could also have students consider naturalism as an assumption about how we ought to investigate the material world. Teachers could use the Pre-Socratics to do this. For the non-specialist, Jonathan Barnes offers an accessible account of the movement in ancient Greece from mythological to philosophical explanations of nature. For example, Barnes characterizes the Pre-Socratics as providing accounts of nature that tried to explain it systematically, economically, and without appeal to gods. Students could read some of the Pre-Socratic fragments on nature and discuss ways in which their science class agrees and disagrees with this approach to explaining the natural world.

(c) History

History affords opportunities not only to teach about inductive inferences and informal fallacies, but also to raise axiological questions. In the former case, logic can be introduced both as its own set of lessons and within the context of some topics in the course. As Leonardo Bruni once argued, “the careful study of the past enlarges our foresight in contemporary affairs and affords to citizens and to monarchs lessons of incitement or warning in the ordering of public policy. From history, also, we draw our store of examples of moral precepts.” Incorporating philosophy into history courses will enable students to articulate axiological principles that they can then apply not only to their role as citizens but to their private lives as well.

Consider a sample unit on social contract theory.
Sample Unit on Social Contract Theory

Philosophical Questions for the Unit
1. How does each thinker use the state of nature as a starting point for considering the aim of government? Is this a legitimate starting point? What does it tell us about each thinker’s view of human nature and natural law?
2. What makes a government a legitimate authority over its citizens?
3. What is classical liberalism? Do Hobbes and Rousseau adhere to liberalism?
4. What is private property? How does something become “yours”? Do we have a right to property? Is ownership always a good thing?

Readings for the Unit
2. John Locke’s *Second Treatise on Government* and *Letter on Toleration*
3. Rousseau’s *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* and *The Social Contract*.14

Lesson Plan

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<tr>
<th>Days One and Two</th>
<th>Days Two and Three</th>
<th>Day Four</th>
<th>Days Five and Six</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topics</strong></td>
<td>• Hobbes’s <em>Leviathan</em> on the state of nature, laws of nature, the convenant, and the aim of government</td>
<td>• Locke’s <em>Second Treatise on Government</em> on the state of nature, natural law, property, consent, and the aim of government</td>
<td>• Locke, <em>Letter on Toleration</em> on the relationship between church and state</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Homework</strong></td>
<td>Hobbes’s <em>Leviathan</em></td>
<td>Isaac Kramnick’s <em>The Enlightenment Reader</em></td>
<td>Isaac Kramnick’s <em>The Enlightenment Reader</em></td>
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Teaching Notes on the Sample Unit
As noted in section one, students in high school are figuring out their own core values and political philosophy can help with this process. Offering students a forum in a history class to discuss the justification of political power, the ends of government, and the nature of rights allows them to think better about political debates currently going on around them. Indeed, while teaching these units, I frequently attempt to draw connections to current debates in United States politics. I find, however, that it helps to review informal fallacies, especially ad hominem and appeal to the people, before engaging in these topics, as they have a potential to become heated and personal. By staying as objective as possible and modeling rational thinking, I have rarely had a serious issue addressing controversial topics.
Suggestions for Additional Lessons

In my European history course, I often have as part of my course a unit on logic. I teach students how to distinguish deduction from induction, how to find arguments in a text, and how to distinguish different forms of inductive arguments. Furthermore, the informal fallacies are easily incorporated into a history course, especially one that makes extensive use of primary sources. Throughout the academic year, I present the “Informal Fallacy of the Day” at the beginning of class and then discuss it while working through a political speech, sermon, or essay. For example, false cause fallacies can be discussed when reading sources that rely on superstitious beliefs, such as those involving witchcraft, whereas appeals to the people, appeals to emotion, and slippery slope fallacies abound in political speeches. Students should be asked to consider why such fallacies are so prevalent and so effective at moving public opinion. I also find that some facility with logic helps focus later ethical and political discussions in the course.

Instructors can incorporate ethical and political topics in a wide variety of contexts in a history course. Discussing historical debates can help students understand the link between the content of an argument and its logical forms. Thus, they may realize that an argument is valid or strong, but find it fallacious or filled with loaded language. Students can also be shown the differences between rhetorical and logical uses of language and how the two often work together to persuade. For example, I have raised philosophical questions while considering how the African slave trade was partly justified by appealing to Aristotle’s notion of natural slaves. Students then analyzed and criticized arguments on both sides of the issue, with an eye to identifying fallacious reasoning.

Lastly, students can discuss “the good life” in light of history. In my own classes, readings from Plato’s Apology, Augustine’s Confessions, Boethius’s Consolation of Philosophy, and More’s Utopia have stimulated students to discuss whether the best life involves the pursuit of money, fame, power, virtue, or God. Discussing such philosophical issues somewhere in the curriculum is vital, as these are questions that high school students are wrestling with as they decide where to go to college and what to do with their lives. Many of them have rarely critically considered such “big questions” in a classroom setting, and philosophy should be used to fill in this gap in their education.

(d) English

English classes for the most part focus on closely reading and analyzing literary texts; yet, writing literary criticism involves critical thinking and understanding how to make arguments, with which philosophy can assist. Logic in part teaches how to organize arguments and think
systematically, both of which are essential to good writing. As English deals with rhetorical techniques, instructors should also consider covering the informal fallacies when students analyze texts. These are all topics I have introduced into my own English courses through the years.

I have also worked with English teachers to bring philosophical questions into their own courses. Consider one such unit.

**Sample Unit on Wiesel’s Night and The Problem of Evil**

**Philosophical Questions for the Unit**
1. What is the problem of evil? What is a theodicy?
2. Is the “free-will defense” a plausible theodicy?
3. After the Holocaust, can we still consider God a moral being?

**Readings for the Unit**
2. Augustine’s *Confessions*, Book VII, sections 3–5, 10–16.15

**Lesson Plan**

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<tr>
<td><strong>Topics</strong></td>
<td>• Wiesel as the Job of Auschwitz</td>
<td>• The problem of evil</td>
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<td>• moral evils, natural evils, and the idea of a theodicy</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Homework</strong></td>
<td>Since Wiesel invites the reader to compare herself to Job, begin by reading selections from Job</td>
<td>Two texts to consider are Dostoyevsky’s “Rebellion” chapter in the <em>Brothers Karamavoz</em> or Camus’s <em>The Plague</em></td>
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**Teaching Notes on the Sample Unit**

I do not mean to suggest that literary texts all have implicit philosophical arguments that we can extract and analyze. I do, however, think that some literary texts are quite useful in raising philosophical questions, whether they be about the justice of God as in the current unit or ethical questions from other texts. For example, when reading *Huckleberry Finn*, an instructor can raise ethical questions about Huck’s choices in first befriending Jim and then later in going along with Tom Sawyer who uses Jim in a protracted ruse. Drawing out the ethical concerns raised by a text can also help students connect it to their own lives and allow them to address values that they themselves might be wrestling with outside of class.

**Suggestions for Additional Lessons**

English courses are ideally suited to raising value questions. For example, students might first explore how the use of images and rhetoric in literature can often be more moving and memorable than logical argumentation. Then, one could perhaps read Plato’s cave or Plato’s
criticisms of art in the Republic, and consider whether one should investigate moral issues via literature and poetry or if such works are suspect because they employ representations and do not make arguments. Such a discussion could lead to wider discussions of how television, magazines, film, and the internet all make use of images to win our assent without, and sometimes in spite of, our reason.

Another topic that could be raised in English courses concerns the question of what constitutes a work of art. Often times, it is assumed that students see why a particular work of literature or poetry qualifies as art, but this assumption should be explicitly explored in class, making use of philosophical discussions on what constitutes an artwork. For example, one could ask why it is that literary scholars see Beowulf as art, but not the graphic novel or film, 300. How does Harry Potter or The Lord of the Rings compare to Homer’s Odyssey or Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels? Such aesthetic questions need not have specific units designed for them in an English course’s syllabus, but could grow organically during discussions of texts.

(e) Foreign Language Courses

As with the other subjects, the goal of introducing philosophy into a foreign language class is to encourage students to think about how they are reasoning and what unquestioned assumptions they are making when they are learning a new language. Therefore, language teachers could incorporate some of the problems considered by philosophers of language. Consider one such unit on naming and referring.

Sample Unit on Naming and Referring

Philosophical Questions for the Unit
1. Is speaking a different language really just a matter of switching names?
2. Does the underlying thought of those names remain the same no matter the language?
3. Do we even learn language by learning what things are called?
4. If switching from one language to another is not about switching names, then what are we doing when we translate?
5. What are we referring to when we speak of non-existent entities? Why is this a problem?

Readings for the Unit
1. Augustine’s Confessions.
2. Robert Martin’s There Are Two Errors in The The Title of This Book.
## Lesson Plan

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<th>Day One</th>
<th>Day Two</th>
<th>Day Three</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topics</strong></td>
<td>• Learning language is learning names (Naive mentalism)</td>
<td>• Can we say “it is warm in here” and think “it is cold in here”? Does this challenge naive mentalism?</td>
<td>• What are we referring to when we talk about “the present king of France” or “Santa Claus”?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Homework</strong></td>
<td>Augustine’s <em>Confessions</em></td>
<td>Selections from Martin’s <em>There are Two Errors in The The Title of This Book.</em></td>
<td>Also from Martin’s book.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Teaching Notes on the Sample Unit

An instructor might find this unit to be a tricky series of discussions because it leads to some complicated issues in philosophy of language, not the least of which is whether Augustine even really holds a naive mentalism. If this is a concern, instructors could eliminate the first day and also combine days two and three, making them the first day’s lesson. Regardless of some of the philosophical subtleties here, this unit often elicits good discussions about how we learn languages and may help language teachers show students that learning another language is not simply like cracking a code or reassembling a scrambled message—an ongoing concern of my colleagues.

## Suggestions for Additional Lessons

Instructors could also address philosophical questions regarding meaning. For example, Martin’s *There are Two Errors in The The Title of This Book* provides many one to two page explorations in the philosophy of language. Indeed, instructors could spend about ten minutes at the end of class incorporating selections from this text throughout their course. I find that chapter one, “Differences That Make No Difference,” works well at raising the issue of meaning with adolescents. One could also get into the question of what constitutes nonsense. For example, one could show that breaking the rules of grammar is not the only way one speaks nonsense, as in cases where one commits a category mistake error, such as asking for the color of the number 3. Hurley’s *A Concise Introduction to Logic*, chapter two, is also helpful for teaching the difference between verbal and factual disputes and sense and reference.

### 5. Challenges for Implementation

Introducing philosophy into high schools requires funding, time, and staff. Consequently, it may seem easier to add an elective rather than asking teachers and administrators to rethink their entire curriculum. With an elective, training likely involves only one teacher, whereas with an integrative approach, some training seems necessary for each faculty member using it. Funding would not only be necessary for
training, but also for strategic planning involving curriculum redesign. Additionally, Advanced Placement exams and benchmark tests, such as New York’s Regents or Massachusetts’s MCAS, already place time and content constraints on core subjects. Thus, teachers may already believe that they do not have the time to devote units to raising philosophical issues when they have so much else that they need to cover. Even core subject teachers who are sympathetic to my approach may find it difficult to implement. Finally, even without budget and time constraints, core subject teachers may have little interest in learning how to add philosophy to their courses. Nevertheless, although it may seem that adopting an integrative approach is more challenging than other options for incorporating philosophy into high schools, these problems may not be as daunting as they first appear.

First, an elective approach may only require one trained teacher, but many schools may lack the right type of faculty to teach it. Such schools would have to hire or train someone to teach the elective. Yet, there is no reason that this newly hired or trained person could not work with colleagues to integrate philosophy units into their subjects as well. One could even argue that this would make better use of the philosophy teacher’s skills. If my arguments about the advantages of an integrative approach are correct, then it follows that this philosophy teacher would be working to benefit the entire student body by introducing philosophy into the whole curriculum. Funding would be needed to train or hire a philosophy teacher, but this person could then have it as part of her job to incorporate philosophy into other classes in addition to teaching an elective.

Once a school employs someone to teach philosophy, it could rely on her for training other faculty. She could, in effect, become the school’s philosopher-in-residence, who would offer electives as well as work with core subject teachers to integrate philosophy into their courses. These teachers would not be overburdened with additional training and would be able to oversee how philosophy units are added to their subjects to ensure that they would agree with the goals of their already established syllabi. By working with individual teachers on developing philosophy lessons, the philosopher-in-residence would decide how to teach philosophy most effectively given the subject teacher’s own pedagogical goals and time limitations. Subject teachers would determine how much time could be devoted to philosophy without sacrificing necessary parts of their subject needed for benchmark tests.

Second, even if schools do not use a philosopher-in-residence, they could still train teachers in several cost effective ways. For example, they could train their existing teachers through outreach programs led by philosophy departments and staffed with professors or graduate students. They might also use training programs and grants from foun-
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dations. For example, the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC) at Montclair State University works with teachers and institutions to bring philosophy into class at all pre-college levels, from kindergarten through high school. The Squire Family Foundation is “working with philosophers and educators to ensure that all students in American secondary schools have an opportunity to study philosophy.” And the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) offers summer philosophy seminars with the intent of supporting high school teachers who wish to bring more philosophy into their classrooms.

Moreover, public school teachers need to do a certain amount of professional development each year in order to maintain their certification. Some of this time could be spent studying philosophy, especially at university departments that are already committed to outreach programs. If teachers can maintain their certification by such training, then they may not be overburdened with additional responsibilities. In fact, participation in programs such as those offered by the NEH can earn professional development points. Schools might also devote some of their professional development budgets to training. Once teachers have become comfortable with the approach, they could pass on their expertise to additional faculty members in a “train-the-trainer” model. Therefore, even if more than one teacher needs training, there are a number of cost effective options available.

Lastly, increasing the recognition of the value of philosophy in high schools could address, at least in part, the problems of time constraints and faculty buy-in. To do this, the philosophy profession needs to argue vigorously that the benefits of philosophy instruction outweigh the costs. A first step involves promoting the practical benefits of philosophy. If philosophy helps students improve their reasoning skills, then it should be possible to make the case that philosophy would foster greater academic success, not only in specific courses, but also on benchmark and standardized testing. This would justify devoting valuable class time to philosophy, especially if it can be shown that students with some exposure to philosophy outperform those without it. Furthermore, there have also been a number of recent stories in the press about schools teaching philosophy at the pre-college level, and it seems that the value of philosophy is becoming more widely recognized. Continuing to raise awareness can help to legitimize the role of philosophy in high schools and increase support among faculty.

Having now suggested some ways for overcoming the challenges to implementing the integrative approach, what is the next step? Ideally, my call for thoroughly integrating philosophy at the secondary level would involve an aggressive rethinking of curricula nationwide. Such comprehensive curricular changes may be far off. A radical overhaul of existing high school programs is, however, unnecessary for begin-
ning to implement my model in the near future. In the final section, I offer some suggestions for more modest and immediate steps toward integration with the hope that these will plant the seeds for more comprehensive reforms down the road.

6. Moving Forward

Even if integrating philosophy across the curriculum is still in the future for many high schools, this approach can still be instituted on a more modest scale as a first step toward wider implementation. There are a number of immediate steps that can be taken, and these can be used alone or in combination, depending on the interest and needs of individual schools.

At its simplest, a more modest approach could involve encouraging schools with existing philosophy electives to consider adding some of the above lessons to their other classes. Depending on its culture and mission, a school may find it easier to institute the units on logic into its math and history courses or it may find it easier to raise philosophical questions in the context of studying literature or historical events. In the case of my own school, my math colleague and I found that working together to teach some of the basics of logic benefited our students’ reasoning skills throughout their courses and even motivated some of them to look for ways to study philosophy more deeply. It also encouraged several of our other colleagues to add more philosophy into their own courses.

In considering possibilities for getting the integrative model off the ground, I would add that even teachers without formal training in philosophy can help their students to think more logically about their assumptions and the “big questions.” To paraphrase Daniel Fouts at the Second Biennial Philosophy Learning and Teaching Organization (PLATO) Conference, it is more important, especially at the high school level, for teachers to cultivate a “philosophical mindset” in their students than it is to instruct them in academic philosophy.26 I would argue that my integrative approach is one way to foster such a mindset because it encourages teachers to look for the philosophical issues in their classes and then raise them with their students. For some teachers, this may indeed entail teaching informal fallacies or deductive reasoning, but for others, its may mean asking students why a poem should be considered a work of art or whether Huck Finn is a role model.

While we in the philosophy profession should not be satisfied if this is all this method ever achieves, we should also recognize that such modest, initial stirrings can lead, over time, to a greater demand for philosophy in secondary education. Whereas my approach might be more difficult to institute as a curriculum-wide overhaul, it can also
be easier to employ in a modular fashion for teachers seeking ways to add philosophy to their existing courses. For instance, math teachers interested in teaching deduction or raising questions about the nature of numbers might use my lesson plans as a starting point for designing their own philosophical units. Since I have successfully used all of the sample units I presented above, I urge interested teachers to use these lesson plans as a starting point for thinking about how to bring more philosophy into their own courses. Moreover, creating an online repository for such resources that could be added to as teachers develop new lesson plans is another concrete step that could immediately be taken to move toward more widespread implementation of this approach.

In addition to sharing lesson plans and resources online, efforts to bring together and organize high school philosophy teachers can provide a valuable service in helping make implementation possible. Jopling has explained how the Ontario school system created a robust and flourishing philosophy program, holding conferences on teaching philosophy in high schools and creating a website to organize all high school level philosophy in the province.\(^{27}\) Recently, PLATO has started taking similar steps in the United States. Although none of these programs are presently able to institute nationwide curricula reform designed to thoroughly integrate philosophy into high school programs, nevertheless they are a viable starting point to foster educators’ attitudes about the benefits of philosophy for high school students.

For schools that want to deepen the integration of philosophy, they could also employ philosophers-in-residence, who would offer philosophy electives as well as integrate philosophy into the core subjects. This avoids the problem of overburdening core subject teachers with additional training while allowing them to oversee the philosophy units added to their subjects to ensure that these new lessons would fit in with the goals of their already established curriculum. Working with individual teachers on developing lessons, the philosopher-in-residence would decide how to teach philosophy most effectively given the subject teacher’s own pedagogical goals and time limitations. Employing philosophers-in-residence would also enable a school to use both integrative and elective approaches to philosophy instruction, thereby potentially gaining the benefits of both methods.

Furthermore, organizations that have been active in promoting the teaching of philosophy at the pre-college level could be helpful in advocating the philosopher-in-residence model, and it would be worthwhile exploring whether they might be able to devote resources to help schools establish such programs as well. This could be done as a one-year fellowship that would move from school to school, with interested schools applying to host each year. If organized at the level of a post-doctoral fellowship, the cost could be kept reasonable. The
program could be structured so that the sponsoring organization or another program, such as an outreach program, would follow up with selected schools to act as an ongoing resource and encourage the school to continue its philosophy program after the fellowship term ends. Schools applying to host the fellowship could even be asked as part of the application process to put together a longer-term plan for maintaining their programs, to ensure that resources would be used as effectively as possible.28

Regardless of any immediate steps that are taken, the philosophy profession must continue to take a leadership role in reshaping attitudes about philosophy’s role in high schools. Organizations like PLATO and the Squire Foundation, and programs like those offered at Montclair State University and the NEH, are already working to bring philosophy into high school classrooms. Offering electives is an important component in this process, but we need to go beyond just offering electives to consider how we can integrate philosophy seamlessly throughout secondary education. My integrative approach offers one successful model for bringing philosophy to all of our high school students.

It is my hope that the integrative curriculum that I have outlined here will encourage other teachers to bring more philosophy into their classrooms. Philosophy teaches students how to think logically, formulate questions insightfully, and examine assumptions critically. It also encourages them to think through their values and commitments precisely at a time in their lives when such questions are starting to naturally arise. Continuing to look for ways to integrate philosophy thoroughly into their secondary education is the best way for us to serve our students’ intellectual and personal growth.29

Notes

1. UNESCO 2011: 40.
3. Although the methods for teaching philosophy in primary schools may differ from those used in high schools, David Hesse has similarly suggested the long-range practical benefits of philosophical education. Citing three recent studies, Hesse argues that “collaboratively exploring philosophical concepts and issues in the classroom is a highly effective way to improve students’ cognitive abilities (reasoning and judgment, IQ, success on achievement exams, emotional intelligence, interactive behavior, and quality of classroom discussion).” Although Hesse deals with work done in the United Kingdom with primary school–aged children, he concludes that “[these results] would seem to beckon for a rethinking of the role philosophy might play in education, from elementary school through the university.” Hesse 2010: 7.
6. Chapters 1.3 and 1.4 cover the differences between deduction and induction. Chapters 4.1 through 4.6 cover the square of opposition from both the modern and the traditional viewpoint. Chapter 1.2 introduces necessary and sufficient conditions. As logic should come up in most of the core subjects, I suggest the school agree on a logic text to use or at least have a storehouse of problem sets that can be worked through for practice. I have used Hurley’s text for such purposes, but others will do too. There is also an open source logic text by SUNY Albany professor P. D. Magnus available online that schools could use. See http://www.fecundity.com/logic/.

7. Time constraints usually make it impossible to do both. If there is time, one could spend one day on the modern square and one day on necessary and sufficient conditions.


9. The CTY logic course has students from age twelve to age sixteen.


11. I have not attempted this lesson in our science curriculum, although I have taught Thales in both our geometry and ancient history courses, with the naturalistic approach in mind.


13. Book one, chapters 13–14, is the relevant section. This work is available online at http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/3207.


16. I have taught excerpts from *The Brothers Karamazov* and *The Plague* in my own English courses, but not as part of the overall English curriculum.


18. I have used this unit in our Latin class. I have also used elements of this unit in my CTY logic course.

19. For this lesson, students should read book 1, section 8.

20. Readings are short and presented in a clear and simple way. For this unit, chapter 12, section 3, “Meaning?” works well.

21. The PLATO website lists a number of institutes and outreach programs that have been involved in the advancement of precollege philosophy. See http://plato-philosophy.org/organizations/centers-institutes/.

22. Montclair State University’s Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children, for example, offers a summer seminar for teachers working with primary school-aged students. See http://www.montclair.edu/cehs/academics/institutes-and-centers/iapc/summer/.

24. Recently, the College of William and Mary reported that philosophy majors score higher than nearly any other major on the GRE tests (http://www.wm.edu/as/news/phil_gre_scores.php). The pre-college philosophy movement could benefit from further studies investigating whether students who are exposed to philosophy at the high school level score higher on tests like the SATs, or whether they are more successful in college, as anecdotal evidence suggests.


28. I am indebted to Eryn MacDonald for helping me work through the ways in which a philosopher-in-residence program could be established and funded.

29. A version of this paper was presented at the American Association of Philosophy Teachers 19th International Workshop-Conference in Austin, Texas, July 2012, and at the Second Biennial PLATO Conference in New Orleans, February 2013. I wish to thank Dr. Wanda Teays, Dr. Kathleen Kelly, Jessica Davis, and Eryn MacDonald for their invaluable criticisms and feedback on this paper.

Bibliography


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