

Philosophy for Children: Lesson Plans

Created by Philosophy 592 (Pre-College Philosophy) Class Members

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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Edited and Compiled by Dr. Michael Burroughs

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Lesson Plan I

Lesson plan authors:

Andrew Chirdon, Philosophy and Political Science Major, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Josh Jones, Philosophy and History Major, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Discussion theme:

Philosophy

Discussion topic:

What is philosophy? What is the purpose of philosophy?

Discussion duration:

50 Minutes

Materials needed:

Whiteboard, dry erase marker, pencils, pens, and paper/notecards.

1. Goals/Objectives

1a) Skill set

Students will develop the capability to provide reasons supporting their opinions. Students may have opinions coming into the lesson, but will be able to add reasons to those opinions at the end of the lesson

1b) Conceptual understanding

Students should be able to distinguish between a scientific discussion (one whose merits can be decided based on empirical data), an uncritical discussion (one which is merely exchanging opinions) and a philosophical discussion (one characterized by reasons supporting opinions and one that may not have a definite answer)

2. Lesson Plan Narrative

2a) This lesson plan provides students with a basic understanding of philosophy as a methodology – i.e. how do you do philosophy? The hope is that such an approach will lead to a basic, and mostly uncontroversial, definition of philosophy: it is a broad branch of study that, ultimately, seeks truth. Thus, the activities are designed so that students employ a philosophical mindset to analyze

a given problem or question.

2b) The primary activity has students distinguish philosophical thought from other modes of thought. For instance, students should note two or more of the following: philosophical inquiry, scientific inquiry, folklore and common wisdom explanations, and indifference. When students have a firm grasp of the distinguishing features of a few of these modes of thought, the instructor should provide a challenge question that forces them to think philosophically. We recommend that you ask them to define a color, such as red. *What is the color red? How do you describe the color red? What is it exactly?*

2c) The secondary activity aims at explaining the purpose of philosophy. This part of the lesson begins by asking students a simple question: Will you tell us one thing that you once believed but later rejected when you thought deeply about it? (We recommend splitting them into small groups for this.) Students can write these thoughts down on a sheet of paper, or notecard, that the group will later present. After 5 or ten minutes, students should gather into a large group to present their paper.

2d) Finally, end with a closing statement that summarizes a popular explanation of the purpose of philosophy. If time remains, take student questions regarding your closing statement.

2e) In summary, the structure of the lesson is the following: start with the introductory bike example (see below). Spend 10 minutes on this. Next, devote 20 minutes to the primary activity. We recommend spending no more than 10 of these minutes differentiating between the modes of thought, because students usually respond very well to the color question. With the remaining 20 minutes, complete the secondary activity. The closing statement can be brief, so spend a majority of the time in small groups. Give yourself, perhaps, 5 minutes of the 20 to deliver your closing statement.

3. Introduction

Bike Example - What should be done?

3a. Present a thought experiment where the facilitator is on a mode of transportation (it can and should be as imaginative as possible) and must hit either 5 young schoolchildren or 1 elderly person. The students should be asked “Which one would you choose?” and they will provide initial responses. These responses should be followed up with “Why?” so that they can begin to provide reasons for their opinions.

4. Main Activity

4a. (20 Minutes): This activity is designed such that students differentiate philosophical thinking from other modes of thinking. The first 10 minutes can be spent distinguishing these modes of thought.

First, ask for students to list different academic disciplines, examples include:

- Biology
- Physics
- Chemistry
- Engineering
- Literature
- Foreign Language
- Philosophy

4b. Next, Have students categorize (if they can) these disciplines into their major camps. For example, scientific thought, philosophical thought, poetic/emotional thought, common wisdom, and indifference.

4c. Ask students the purpose and benefits of these different ways of thinking. Start turning the conversation toward the differences between philosophical thought and other modes of thought.

4d. The second 10 minutes should be spent having students consciously use a philosophical way of thinking to answer the question: What is the color red? Things to keep in mind during this discussion:

- Can you successfully explain the color red to a blind person?
- What qualities make up the color red?
- Are any of these qualities necessary for the color red, or is red enough on its own?
- We call red a “primary” color - what does that word (“primary”) mean?
- What do you associate red with?
- Why is a color so hard to describe?
-

5. Concluding Activity

5a. Now you can facilitate a “silent activity” - one in which the students do not speak. Pass out notecards to the students and have them write a question, their thoughts or concerns, or have them draw a picture to express themselves. After this, the students pass the cards to the left and the other students respond to the original questions, thoughts, concerns or drawings on the other side of card.

5b. We have talked about philosophy. What is philosophy? Why have we bothered with any of this? What use is philosophy? You might not recognize this yet, but since you were babies, adults, television, friends, etc., have been filling your minds with facts and opinions. But do you believe any of these facts and opinions? *What is the truth?* What ought I accept as true based on the best of my reasoning? Philosophy helps you dissect your world, separating fact from fiction. Philosophy helps you know where to place your faith. In a world that increasingly makes less and less sense as you grow older, this is a rare and valuable gift. Our goal was to introduce you to philosophical thinking by means of popular topics.

Our hope is that you continue to pursue philosophy for your own sakes.

5c. I assume most of you have seen *The Fellowship of the Ring*, so I hope this quote grounds our message in an understandable way:

Bilbo: [voice] “It's a dangerous business, going out your door. You step onto the road, and if you don't keep your feet, there's no telling where you might be swept off to.”

Life is tricky, and it gets trickier. If you do not watch what you put in your mind, you might be swept off to all kinds of crazy conclusions. Philosophy is a tool to create wisdom.

6. Suggestions for Related Activities

6a. Due to this lesson's broadness, the whole field of philosophy is available as a follow up activity. Whatever you choose, make sure students understand the following is another opportunity to employ philosophical thinking. We believe any of the following are rich philosophical topics, however, this is far from an exhaustive list: Justice, friendship, leadership, prejudice, ethics, time travel, and wisdom. You can format these topics around the standard question of *What is (X)?*

6b. An example lesson is *What is Leadership?* Ask students to differentiate between different forms of leadership. What makes some forms of leadership better than others? What are qualities of a good leader? What are qualities of a bad leader? Are there certain qualities that are necessary to all forms of leadership? Or, can leadership styles radically vary?

6c. A good activity to aid in a lesson on leadership is the following:

The Blind Men:

6c1. Choose two volunteers. One will close their eyes and the other will lead them by the wrist to an object (hidden by the teacher) in the room. The rest of the class will watch silently, asked to take mental notes regarding the efficiency of this form of leadership, the style of this form of leadership, etc.

6c2. Choose two volunteers. One will close their eyes and the other will lead them with verbal cues (absolutely no physical guidance) to an object (hidden by the teacher) in the room. The rest of the class will watch silently, again, taking mental notes on this demonstration of leadership, ideally making comparisons between part A and B.

6c2. Choose one volunteer. The volunteer will close his/her eyes and the rest of the class will participate in this part of the activity with verbal cues (absolutely no physical guidance), leading the blind student to an object (hidden by the teacher) in the room. Students may call out randomly and without limit. This is meant to be an intentionally confusing experience for the blind student. While giving directions, the class should make mental notes regarding this form of leadership, comparing it with parts A and B.

6d. General Discussion/ Reaction to the Activity.

6d1. Some suggestions for questions to ask the group:

What did you think of the first activity? Do you think it was good model for leadership?

How did the first activity compare to the second activity? In what ways was it different? In what ways was it similar?

Do you think the third activity was an example of good leadership? If not, what qualities made it an example of bad leadership? If so, what qualities made it an example of good leadership?

6d2. The reaction/discussion should center on comparing the different aspects of leadership demonstrated by the activities. Students should discuss commonalities and differences between the activities. How was the preliminary definition of leadership (offered by either students or facilitator) confirmed or rejected by the activities?

Lesson Plan II

Lesson plan authors:

Andrew Chirdon, Philosophy and Political Science Major, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Josh Jones, Philosophy and History Major, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Discussion theme:

Leadership

Discussion topic:

Distinguish the many types of leadership then link these distinctions to a more general conception of leadership. Discussion should focus on different forms and qualities of leadership.

Discussion duration:

50 Minutes

Materials needed:

Two or more volunteers, an object that can be hidden, a whiteboard (or other writing surface), and a dry erase marker.

1. Goals/Objectives

(Optional) Students will create a definition based on personal experience that defines a familiar concept – e.g. leadership.

Students will dissect a definition into its various aspects, extracting the principles fundamental to the concept. Students will then articulate and defend/support these observations with reasoned argument.

Students will be able to identify and talk about the many aspects of leadership – i.e., must leaders guide action directly, what are the differences between leading by example and quiet leadership, what are the differences between voluntary and involuntary leadership, etc.?

2. Lesson Plan Narrative

Our goal is for students to begin understanding the concept of leadership. A basic definition of leadership is someone who directly or indirectly guides others through a task

or challenge. There are different forms of leadership, each suited for different situations. Students will attempt to draw out these distinctions through discussion. The lesson begins with a brief overview of the lesson – i.e., today we will discuss X. Next, there will be a three-part activity, each part tailored to highlight a specific part of leadership. Then there will be a period for students to express their reactions. The second activity will compare and contrast different “real world” leaders, such as parents, teachers, or the President of the USA. Then there will be a discussion in which students can draw from either of the activities as we discuss leadership in general. Finally, conclude with a recap of all that was discussed. A good measure to apply will be whether or not students can articulate and defend their personal or class definition of leadership.

3. Introduction

If using this lesson as part of a philosophy unit, take two minutes to review any critical concept covered in the last session. This will serve as a nice warm up for the coming discussion. Next, introduce the topic for the day (leadership). Perhaps give your rough, personal definition of leadership while taking student comments or questions regarding the topic. Give three to five minutes for this warm up period.

4. Main Activity

The Blind Men:

A. Choose two volunteers. One will close his/her eyes and the other will lead him/her by the wrist to an object (hidden by the teacher) in the room. The rest of the class will watch silently, asked to take mental notes regarding the efficiency of this form of leadership, the style of this form of leadership, etc.

B. Choose two volunteers. One will close his/her eyes and the other will lead him/her with verbal cues (absolutely no physical guidance) to an object (hidden by the teacher) in the room. The rest of the class will watch silently, again, taking mental notes on this demonstration of leadership, ideally making comparisons between part A and B.

C. Choose one volunteer. The volunteer will close his/her eyes and the rest of the class will participate in this part of the activity with verbal cues (absolutely no physical guidance), leading the blind student to an object (hidden by the teacher) in the room. Students may call out randomly and without limit. This is meant to be an intentionally confusing experience for the blind student. While giving directions, the class should make mental notes regarding this form of leadership, comparing it with parts A and B.

D. General Discussion/ Reaction to the Activity.

D1) Some suggestions for questions to ask the group:

- What did you think of the first activity? Do you think it was a good model for leadership?

- How did the first activity compare to the second activity? In what ways was it different? In what ways similar?
- Do you think the third activity was an example of good leadership? If not, what qualities made it an example of bad leadership? If so, what qualities made it an example of good leadership?

D2) The reaction/discussion should center on comparing the different aspects of leadership demonstrated by the activities. Students should discuss commonalities and differences between the activities. How was the preliminary definition of leadership (offered by either students or facilitator) confirmed or rejected by the activities?

5. Concluding Activity

Compare and Contrast:

- Ask students to think of all the ways their parents are leaders.
- Ask students to think of all the ways teachers are leaders.
- Ask students to think of all the ways the President of the USA (or another prominent figure) is a leader.
- Ask students to compare and contrast A, B, and C.

6. Suggestions for Related Activities

A lesson on teamwork or being a member of a community (or, community in general) are good follow up topics. Students, in this lesson, will again try to explore these concepts, analyzing their various elements. This will offer them an interesting point of comparison after talking about how to be a good leader, because leaders are obviously related concepts: Leaders lead teams/communities. This is a rich topic. For instance, what was just recommended is open to question. Are leaders a necessary condition for something to be called a community? If there are no leaders – communal or otherwise – can a group of people be thought to be a community or is this a state of anarchy? Students can be challenged with many questions regarding this topic.

Lesson Plan III

Lesson Plan Authors:

Joanna Steele, Philosophy Major, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Christopher Lambert, Philosophy and History Major, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Discussion Theme:

Ethics

Discussion Topic:

What makes an action right or wrong?

Discussion Duration:

45 minutes

Materials needed:

Chalk/Blackboard
Two sheets of notebook paper per group

1. Goals/Objectives (1-2)

- **Skill objective:** Students will learn how to respond to specific points raised by others using logical reasoning.
- **Philosophical objective:** Students will learn the distinction between deontological and consequentialist ethical theories as demonstrated by the Train Problem.

2. Lesson Plan Narrative

The main focus of this lesson is to encourage students to engage in a discussion focusing on what they believe makes an action right or wrong. The first discussion in small groups is designed to encourage students to identify what leads them to classify an action as right or wrong. Once students have stated their ideas about what is right and wrong, begin

engaging the children with the ethical dilemmas below. The main activity involves a series of thought experiments that forces the children to choose between protecting the life of an innocent man made of brick or the lives of five innocent bystanders. The purpose of this activity is to encourage the students to either 1) use their earlier definitions of right and wrong to defend their choices in the given scenarios or 2) discover issues with the ethical principles they stated in the initial discussion of the class. Make sure to take time between each of the brick man scenarios to ask the students to explain why they made their decisions. Use this time to encourage student to engage each other through their responses. At the end of this discussion, students would have ideally discussed multiple ethical principles that are based in deontology, virtue ethics, or consequentialism.

3. Introduction

- **What do we mean by ethics?**
 - Divide the class into groups with 7-10 students each, then have them discuss what they think makes something right or wrong.
 - Students may argue that society determines what is right or wrong.
 - Students may argue that God determines what is right or wrong.
 - Students may argue that what's right or wrong depends on who benefits from their actions.
 - Students may argue that the civil law determines what is right or wrong
 - Follow up:
 - What determines what is right or wrong in their school?
 - What determines what is right or wrong in their home?
 - Do they determine what is right or wrong in their classroom/home/society?

4. Main Activity

- **Trolley Problem Dilemma**
 - Draw on the board a picture of a train with a track that splits in two
 - On one track, draw five people. Explain that these five people are innocent bystanders
 - On the second track, draw one person who is an innocent bystander
 - Beside the two tracks, draw one person beside a switch
 - There is a train on the first track that will hit the five bystanders.

Large Man-Trolley Problem Dilemma 2- approximately 15 minutes
Conclusion of Ethics: approximately 7 minutes

5. Conclusion

- Get the class to explain where they think ethics are derived from (i.e. deontology, virtue ethics, consequentialism, etc).
- Have them write on the back of their index card what influenced their group's decisions about each scenario: social expectations, personal beliefs, theological beliefs, etc.

6. Suggestion for related activities

There are several thought experiments that you can use to discuss ethics. You can expand the discussion to include the scenario of a zombie apocalypse. Set up the scenario that a plague has hit the students' school, and the only way to stop the plague is to steal 5 magical necklaces from the tombs of five ancient kings. This will allow students the opportunity to discuss whether we have an ethical obligation toward those who have passed away.

You may also use a more hands on activity. Pair students into groups of two. Let them know that they have the ability to either cooperate with each other or defect. They cannot inform each other of their respective decisions. Explain that if both students cooperate, they will each get two pieces of candy or stickers. If one person says they will cooperate, but the other defects, then the one who defected will get 3 pieces of candy or stickers. If both defect, then neither participant will receive anything. Once you have explained these rules, have the pairs write their decisions on a piece of paper and hand it to you. Once both students have submitted their answers, reveal what they each decided and ask them why they made their decision. This activity will allow them to discuss the merits of and issues with ethical theories such as virtue ethics and consequentialism.

Lesson Plan IV

Lesson Plan Authors:

Joanna Steele, Philosophy Major, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Christopher Lambert, Philosophy and History Major, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Discussion Theme:

Justice

Discussion Topics:

What role does economic equality play in justice?

Discussion Duration:

45 minutes

Materials needed:

- Handmade cards (for the purposes of this lesson, a set of cards constitutes one crown card, with the rest numbered 1-5. Please create as many sets as you need for your class size.)
- Candy (If allowed. Ascertain food allergies before proceeding)
- Stickers

1. Goals/Objectives (1-2)

- Students will learn how to respond to specific points raised by others using logical reasoning.
- Students will explore the role of economic factors in a just society, and whether complete economic equality is a requirement of justice.

2. Lesson Plan Narrative

The main focus of this lesson is to discuss what makes something just, and how socioeconomic status affects justice. The first activity, the “hand-thumb game,” is meant

to help students think about what justice requires, and whether consistency is a requirement of justice. Compared to the other parts of the lesson, this should be relatively brief. The two main activities involve a set of homemade cards that are meant to mimic societies where the nobility control the entirety of the means of production, represented by stickers, and in contrast with that, societies that have undergone a socialist revolution. The two iterations of this game are separated by discussion in order to develop preliminary conceptions of justice, and then move into a comparison. The choice of these two extremes should enable the students to discuss not only the models represented in broad terms, preventing political labels that could hamper discussion, but also discuss middle grounds between the two extremes as a compromise. Ideally, at the end, the students will have some conception of property rights, and any duties that come as a requirement of justice when one holds property. At the end of the lesson, candy or some other reward is given to the class in proportion to how many stickers each individual has. This leads to a concluding discussion on the fairness of this distribution.

3. Introduction

- **Hand-thumb game (3 minutes game, 5-7 minutes discussion)**
 - Each student is to hold their right hand palm up to their neighbor. With their left hand, they must make a thumbs down into the middle of their neighbor's hand.
 - On three, go, etc., students must try to catch their neighbor's thumb as well as try to keep their own thumb from being captured. This will occur simultaneously.
 - **Round 1-** Whoever can catch their neighbor's thumb gets a sticker
 - **Round 2-** Whoever loses gets a sticker
 - **Questions for discussion:**
 - Is it necessary for the rules to be known beforehand for something to be fair or just?
 - Do the participants have to be a part of making the rules for things to be just?
 - Do you have to have specific qualifications to make just rules?
 - How do you know a rule is just?
 - Does natural talent (or lack thereof) give some individuals the right to have more of a resource than others?

4. Main Activity

- **Royal House Sticker Game**
 - Make cards: one with a **crown** and others numbered 1-5

- Make cards so that there is one crown for every sixth student in the class
- Give **six** (can adjust to the size of the class) stickers to the student with the crown card and tell them to distribute as they see fit
 - Emphasize that they can keep them all for themselves, tear the stickers into pieces, keep all of them, or give one to their best friends, etc.
- **Questions: Was how we distributed the stickers just?**
 - Answer: “No”
 - Why?
 - Is it fair that it comes from an outside authority rather than the people?
 - Answer: “Yes”
 - Did the way that the royals distribute the stickers affect the way you viewed this?
 - If yes, would your opinion have changed if you didn’t know how the stickers would be distributed
- **Redistributive Sticker Game**
 - Use cards made in the “Royal House” game
 - Redistribute the cards randomly. People who got crowns the first time are not guaranteed them this time.
 - This is especially helpful because it brings into the discussion the nature of randomness in birth, the duty of descendants to pay for the wrongs of ancestors, etc.
 - The people with cards numbered “1” get to take up to **two** stickers from the people with crowns.
 - The stealing part was the thing that got the entire class the most engaged for us. People are concerned when they feel wronged, and they will gladly explain why they feel that way.
 - **Questions for discussion:**
 - Was it fair for the people with the **1s** to be able to steal the crowns from the royals?
 - Comparing this to real life, do underprivileged people have a right to be taken care of by those who are more fortunate?

5. Concluding Activity

- **Ask people to count their stickers**
 - Give the individual(s) with the highest sticker amount three pieces of candy

- Give the individuals with a middle amount of stickers two pieces of candy
- Give the lowest 1/3rd of sticker holders one piece of candy
- **Have a brief discussion on distribution of candy**
 - Tie in themes that arose through the previous discussion and conclude with something similar to what the general consensus of the class is, being sure to mention the dissenting voices.

6. Suggestions for Related Activities

The topic of justice can very easily be related to discussions of ethics, and even freedom. If you want to focus on economic issues in terms of freedom, this can very easily be related to Isaiah Berlin's conception of positive and negative freedom, and using Gerald Cohen's example of a woman unable to travel on a train because she didn't have the money to do so would be an effective thought experiment to demonstrate this point. If you use Cohen's thought experiment, relate questions of justice to one's possession or lack of possession of wealth. This would bring in further discussions of freedom: how can taking money from the more wealthy to give money to the poor by force be consistent with freedom?

Relating this to an ethical issue, you could bring in a discussion of consequentialism: are things that hurt one party but overwhelmingly help another morally permissible? If not, are there duties on the part of those with money to give to the poor? All of these are ethical questions that could be drawn from the discussion today, and probably used in place of the topic of justice if need be.

Lesson Plan V

Lesson Plan Authors:

Rachel Stone, Undergraduate, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Christy Lambden, Undergraduate, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Discussion Theme:

Freedom and Social Contract Theory

Discussion Topic:

Who can restrict your freedom?

Discussion Duration:

47 minutes

Materials Needed:

4 x Posters, 4 x Markers, Paper and Pen, sheets with brief explanations of Locke's political philosophy to pass out to the groups or individuals in the class

1. Goals / Objectives

To give students a better understanding of the implications (possible benefits or drawbacks) of freedom through a discussion of John Locke's conception of freedom and the social contract.

Students will learn how to clearly organize and present a philosophical argument. Students will also explore the relationship between theoretical discussion and the practical world.

2. Lesson Plan Narrative

To start the lesson have the students write for 5 minutes about a time that they were told what to do. Encourage the students to describe their reactions to being told what to do. When the students have finished allow them to discuss their experiences with a partner before encouraging some to share with the group. Split the class up into 4 groups, each group will look at John Locke's conception of freedom and the state of nature. Each group will create a visual representation of Locke's philosophy on a poster board. When they are done, each group should share with the class a concise argument on their philosopher's view and explain their subsequent visual representation. Have a class discussion on Locke's philosophy. Move into a discussion about the government

restricting citizens' freedom, and whether the government should ever be able to restrict its people's freedom and why.

3. Introduction

In addition to introducing the subject, this initial activity should cause the students to reflect upon who restricts their freedom and should show them that there are many different authorities that they listen to. The class should think about the benefits to society and individuals of giving up freedom. Is it always a bad thing? Why or why not? Encourage the class to consider that society/the government may curtail individual freedom in some cases to promote the greater freedom of a society. This will help them consider whether or not valuing the individual over the group or the group over the individual is just. The introductory activity should take 5-7 minutes. The steps outlined below should help to achieve these goals.

1. Introduce the discussion topic by asking the class to share examples of a time their freedom was restricted.

These examples may touch on their relationship to:

- rules of an institution
- religion
- parental guidance
- teachers
- peers

If they don't talk about all the different ways/people who can restrict their freedom, provide examples for the class.

2. Ask the students to turn to their neighbor and discuss a time that their freedom was restricted by one of these authorities. Ask them to talk about why they listened to the authority and did not go against them.

3. Ask for a couple of volunteers to share their stories with the class. Discuss the stories with the class and try to finish this activity on a discussion of whether giving up individual freedom is useful for society.

4. Main Activity

The main activity should introduce the class to some of the philosophical ideas of John Locke. It should also give them the ability to construct and represent a philosophical argument. Overall the activity should introduce the idea that in certain circumstances it is beneficial for our freedom to be curtailed. It is not necessary for students to agree with this but they should understand that some people believe that it is. Help to provide examples in our society when it might be beneficial (i.e., we can't just steal something from another person even if we want it). The Main Activity should run for a total of 30 minutes. The steps below should help take the discussion in this direction.

1. Split the class into small groups of 4

1a. Give each group a paragraph describing Locke's conception of freedom as taken from the state of nature. This should include Locke's definition of a social contract.

1b. From the paragraphs, each group should then discuss what the theory is talking about to make sure all understand. The teacher(s) should circulate to the groups to answer any questions they may have. This should take 6 minutes.

Important things for them to understand include:

- A social contract is the forfeiting of some freedom for the benefit of inclusion in the group.
- Locke thinks in the state of nature, man is free; but man needs to interact with other people to fulfill all of his needs for survival. Therefore, man needs rules to govern these interactions so as to prohibit injustice in these interactions.

2. Each student should create a visual representation of Locke's philosophical conception of freedom. After 4 minutes, ask the students to share their visual representation in their small groups for 2 minutes.

3. After each group has finished ask them to present their arguments and visual representations to the whole class. Make sure the class is in a circle for the presentations.

4. Have a discussion after each presentation about the ramifications of Locke's conception of freedom. Provide the students with examples of the government restricting a freedom and ask them to explain how they think Locke would view this situation. Ask them how they individually view it.

5. Concluding Activity

Hold a conversation about whether or not some rights are more valuable than others, creating a hierarchy of rights. This may also lead to a discussion about whose/which rights are more valuable. In both conversations, the class can discuss how this is determined. It may be useful to provide examples of when two individual freedoms conflict (i.e., stealing vs. right to property; censorship vs. right to expression, etc). This should take 7-10 minutes. The steps below should help to achieve these goals:

1. Move the discussion on to discuss their opinions on whether it is OK for the government to interfere with an individual's freedom. Use examples, such as a time of war.

1a. Discuss the right to privacy and whether an individual's right to privacy can ever be violated for the good of society.

2. Discuss what happens when two individual freedoms conflict.

6. Suggestions for related activities.

Playing a game such as “Simon-says” would be a good follow up activity. The game would allow for further philosophical discussion about the social contract, and authority. The game may also highlight key ideas around the definition of freedom such as positive and negative conceptions of freedom (i.e., freedom to do something, or freedom from something). Variations on the game could yield different outcomes. The person who is “Simon” could be the teacher (dictatorship), an elected student (democracy), or a selected student who picks three partners (aristocracy). These variations could yield interesting discussions about different forms of government and which form yields the most freedom for the whole. The game should last for 5 minutes, with a discussion afterwards ranging in time from 5 -15 minutes depending on the depth and substance of the discussion. The conversation can touch on the right to authority and reasons for following authority. It may also involve social contract theory as students have to comply with what Simon says in order to continue participating in the game, just as citizens must comply with the rules of society in order to reap the benefits of citizenship and avoid punishment in that society.

Lesson Plan VI

Lesson Plan Authors:

Rachel Stone, Undergraduate, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Christy Lambden, Undergraduate, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Discussion Theme:

Justice

Discussion Topic:

What is political justice?

Discussion Duration:

45-50 minutes

Materials Needed:

A pack of playing cards, a stand in object that can be passed out to the class that symbolizes a reward (ex. fake money).

1. Goals and Objectives

Explore justice in different societal organizations

Explore justice as possibly equalizing society, bettering society, or for purposes of personal retribution

Students will learn how to explore definitions, define concepts, and draw distinctions between concepts

2. Lesson Plan narrative

The purpose of this lesson is to explore different conceptions of justice. Using three games and a rewards system, the lesson will demonstrate different conceptions of justice by having students actively participate in different justice systems. To start, introduce the topic and ask the students to try and define justice including key parts of justice (e.g., fairness, equality etc.) After introducing the topic, move in to the main activity and use the games to demonstrate different conceptions of justice and discuss which conception is best. To complete the lesson give a practical example (World War I) of justice in action and what they believe the right way to act would be and whether this was in fact what actually occurred.

3. Introduction Activity

This activity aims to bring out previously formed conceptions of justice that can be brought to the discussion for examination. In creating a kind of working definition of justice for the class so that a common understanding can be used in our discussion, the class will also familiarize themselves with the idea of necessary and sufficient parts of a definition (that which must be a part of the definition and that which is the totality of the definition). The last question, 1d, will bring in value theory as things can be valued in two ways (just for the sake of the thing or for the consequences of the thing). This should take between 10 and 15 minutes.

1. Introduce the discussion topic, justice in a society

2. Ask the students to share parts of justice, or what it means to be just; write these answers on the board

Possible examples may be fairness, equality, consequences, or rights

3. After taking 2 minutes to list these parts, ask students to look at the list and see if any are synonyms for justice, if any can be eliminated, or if any are a part of justice but, not justice itself.

4. Ask the class to think about the purpose of acting justly.

Is it because of its consequences or for itself?

Possible consequences include personal satisfaction or personal vengeance, more harm, balance, fairness, or maintaining order in society

4. Main activity

The discussions and activities should make the students think about different conceptions of justice and their own conceptions of justice. This should also show that not everyone agrees and therefore differences in opinion can broaden their minds and help them look at things in a new way. Each of the different ‘games’ should demonstrate different conceptions of justice. A discussion about which conception of justice is most like the one present in our society would be useful to challenge the students on what they believe is the right conception of justice. This should take between 20 and 25 minutes. The steps below should help to achieve these goals.

1a. Pass out cards to each member of the class randomly. Tell the class that those with face cards are royalty while all others are second-class citizens.

1b. Reward the people that have face cards.

1c. Ask the class whether or not they think this is just and why or why not.

2a. Play the “thumb game”

Thumb game: Have everyone stand in a circle. Have them hold out their right palm and make a thumbs down sign with their left hand. Have everyone place their thumbs in the palm of the hand of the person next to them so that all are connected. On the count of 3, students should try to pull their thumb upwards without getting their thumb caught by their left neighbor's hand, while trying to catch the thumb of their right neighbor (demonstrating and having a practice round is helpful).

2b. Reward the winners of the game.

2c. Ask the class whether or not they think this is just and why or why not.

3a. Play the thumb game a second time.

3b. Give everyone a reward, regardless of whether they won or lost.

3c. Ask the class whether or not they think this is just and why or why not. Challenge the class to think about the concept of 'earning' a reward. Does this fit in with that concept? Should we hold this concept to be true?

4. After reflecting on the games, move into a discussion about which they believe is most just. Also engage in a discussion about which one is most similar to society.

Possible follow up questions include:

Do people randomly get rewards or disadvantages?

Do winners always get rewards?

Does everyone get rewards?

5. As a final discussion point on the games, discuss the merits of punishing losers and the possible effects that this might have (i.e., revenge). Also discuss how our own personal thoughts might play into justice? Should we all be in control of the justice system or should there be an impartial 'judge'?

5. Concluding Activity

This activity should ground the conversation about justice in history and in the practical world. It might be interesting to note and to challenge students on whether their conceptions of justice change once they are given a practical example. This should take between 10 and 15 minutes. The steps below should help achieve these goals.

1. Describe to the students the situation at the end of the First World War after the Allies had won. The Allies, as the victors had the ability to force the losers, the Axis powers, to pay reparations. To what extent should they make them pay:

-Pay for the damages that their own country suffered and nothing more.

-Pay for the damages incurred by their own country and also the damages suffered by the Allies.

-Pay for the damages incurred by their own country and also the damages suffered by the Allies and also extra as a way to monetarily compensate for the lives lost.

2. Enter into a discussion with the class about which option they believe to be the most just. Which do they think the Allied powers chose to do?

3. Tell them what was written in the War Guilt Clause in the Treaty of Versailles: 3rd option - they forced the Axis powers to pay \$4.8 billion in 1920 - in today's money, it would be \$86 billion. Write this number, fully written out, on the board so the class can see the number and all of its zeros. Do they think that this was a just outcome? Why or why not?

6. Suggestion for Related activities

Asking about different cultures may be an interesting topic to explore at this point. You can discuss how and why different conceptions of justice exist. To aid this, you could prepare a comparison of different laws between states in the US with the death penalty, or you could compare laws on an international level.

Lesson Plan VII

Lesson plan authors:

- Kelsey Kaul, Philosophy Major, Chemistry Minor, UNC – Chapel Hill
- Heather Van Wallendael, Philosophy/English Major, Creative Writing Minor, UNC – Chapel Hill
- Deep Patel, Philosophy Major, UNC – Chapel Hill
- “Friendship,” *Little Big Minds*, Marietta McCarty

Discussion Theme:

Friendship

Discussion Topic:

Identifying the qualities/aspects of a good friend(ship)

Discussion Duration:

45 Minutes

Materials Needed:

Index cards, white board, several different colored dry erase markers

1. Goals/Objectives

- A. Students will learn to identify necessary and sufficient conditions.
- B. Students will identify and defend the qualities/aspects of a good friend(ship).
 - a. Students will explore which qualities/aspects of a good friend(ship) are the most important and which qualities/aspects are the least important.

2. Lesson Plan Narrative

This discussion plan will focus on identifying the qualities of a good/positive friendship. To begin considering the topic, students will start with a drawing activity. They will

What Might be Brought Up:

- *Friendship involves: mutual support, fun, care, similar/different interests, growth, respect.
- *Friendship might not necessarily involve people.
- *Friendship might require active engagement or being physically close to someone.

Questions/Distinctions:

- *Do these qualities have to be apparent all the time? (E.g. do I have to be helping my friend or vice versa all the time?)
- * Are different traits more or less important for the different kinds of friends, or during different times in our lives?

visually represent friendship and share their thoughts in a small group with classmates. This will lead into the main activity in which students will help compile a list on the board of qualities they believe to be important or often present in good/positive friendships. Students will work for the remainder of the lesson to identify *necessary* characteristics (qualities that must be present in a relationship for it to be a good friendship) and *sufficient* characteristics (qualities that once identified are enough on their own to label the friendship as a good friendship without knowing anything else). Students might also identify traits on the list that are interrelated or dependent on one another. One discussion skill that could be particularly important in this discussion is the use of counterexamples (examples or stories that present an opposing viewpoint).

3. Introduction – 10 minutes

- I. Offer this potential definition of friendship to give some foundation for the discussion: “a friend is a person attached to some other by feelings of affection.”
- II. Pass out one index card to each student. Instruct the students to draw, without ever using people (including stick figures, faces, and the like), a creative representation of a good friendship. Give the students about 5-6 minutes for this step.
- III. Have the students then discuss their drawings in small groups, with each student explaining why his/her drawing is truly an accurate representation of a good friendship.

4. Main Activity – 30 minutes

- I. Tell the students that you’re all going to compile a list of qualities/aspects of friendship that make it a good friendship. Tell the students the goal is to answer the question: “What makes a friendship a *good* friendship?”
- II. Have the students add things to the list that come from their drawings. Ask them: In your drawings representing good friendships, what about those representations made them good friendships? What positive traits of friendship do they exemplify?
- III. After discussing their drawings, ask if the students would like to add anything else to the list.
- IV. After the list is completed, tell the class that they will now consider a number of different questions about the list that will help us to understand the details of good friendships.
 - a. Be sure to give the students about 10 seconds to think of their answers in silence before asking for hands.

- b. Be prepared to acknowledge that several traits on the board are related. It might be helpful to use different colored markers to connect different traits as related to one another. For example, students might identify “trust” as the underlying reason for “feels safe to be around.”
 - c. If students disagree, be sure to ask them to respond specifically to one another, giving exact reasons in support of their argument.
- V. Question #1: Which of these might be the most important to a good friendship? Why?
- a. This should focus the discussion on what is *necessary* for a good friendship and what is *sufficient* for a good friendship.
 - b. Do not focus for too long on this question, as the next two questions will clarify the content.
- VI. Question #2: Which would be the most detrimental if it were absent? Why?
- a. This discussion should continue the focus noted under question 1.
 - b. It will definitely identify traits students find to be *necessary* as the questions ask them to identify what *must* be present to have a good friendship.
 - c. If students seem to agree about a certain trait being *necessary*, turn the discussion to whether or not the trait is a *sufficient* condition. Tell the class that Bill and Bob (or any names you like) are two people that exhibit whichever trait your class has identified as necessary with one another. Ask the class if they can assume that Bill and Bob are good friends. This would be a good time to ask for counterexamples—stories about Bob and Bill in which they do exhibit the trait but are not good friends (perhaps they are actually just coworkers or distant relatives).
 - d. Note, you may not identify any singularly sufficient conditions over the course of the discussion, but this is fine!
- VII. Question #3: If you could have a friend that had all of these traits except for one, which that friend had almost no amount of, which trait would you want it to be?
- a. This question gets at the *least* important trait. It may be argued that the traits that seem least important may not be *necessary* (and certainly not *sufficient*) traits for a good friendship; thus, it continues the focus of questions 1 and 2, but from the negative.
 - b. This could reveal that the created list has only vitally important and/or interconnected traits, so it may be hard (or impossible) to positively answer this question. The distinctions raised will be beneficial nonetheless.
- VIII. Alternative/supplemental questions about the list. The three questions above should provide for a full discussion, but if you have more time (or

want to extend the discussion into another class period) feel free to consider any of the following questions:

- A. Why do we maintain friendships that aren't perfect? Is there something good in having imperfect friends, or would you rather have friends that were indeed perfect?
 - This question can lead to a discussion of *meaningfulness* as found through friendships that have room for *growing* experiences. That is, imperfections could be said to pose challenges to interpersonal relationships, such that overcoming those challenges provides a unique appreciation for each other and for the relationship.
- B. Can non-human beings/things *really* be friends to us? Can they be friends to each other?
 - Refer to the phrase “a dog is a man’s best friend.” What does the phrase really mean? In what ways do dogs make for better or worse friends than people? Be sure the students relate their answers back to the created list.
- C. Consider expressions that seem metaphorical, like “my shadow is my only friend when I feel lonely,” and “ice cream is my best friend; she always understands my needs.” What is really being expressed here? What traits (on the board) are being referenced?
 - This is peculiar subject matter, but the students could give some surprising (or at least very interesting) answers.
- D. Are there different kinds of friends?
 - This could focus on the differences between friends who are family, family friends, facebook/internet friends, school friends, neighbor friends, etc. Answers will likely vary. It would be best to follow up by discussing which traits/qualities from the list are more important for the various kinds of friends identified (perhaps “having fun” is more important for school friends while “commitment to working through problems” is more important for sibling friends.
- E. Sometimes we consider friends who are able to *sacrifice* to be good friends; how important is the ability to sacrifice for a good friend(ship)? What is reasonable to expect of a friend?
 - The notion of sacrifice brings out a tension in the value of having a friend willing to sacrifice and being a friend for whom others constantly need to sacrifice.

5. Concluding Activity – 5 minutes

- I. Ask the students to review the list of traits written on the board and identify one trait they believe is a strength and one that is a weakness for them. Have them write down their answers, but tell them that this can be as personal/private as the students want.
- II. Star the characteristics the students identified as necessary and circle any they thought were sufficient. Ask if any of your students identified a sufficient condition as a strength? As a weakness? Ask if any student identified a necessary condition as a strength? As a weakness? It is not necessary to have your students share their thoughts aloud, but writing them down would be beneficial (you could even assign a more thorough journal entry answering/reflecting on these and similar questions).
- III. Ask the students to think more later on about the things they do well, and the things they can improve upon, noting that everyone (including you, the teacher/facilitator) has both strengths and weaknesses.

6. Suggestions for Related Activities

- A. Competition: Have students (who desire to do so) enter their creative drawings (see “3. Introduction”, above) for a competition. The students who enter can have 30 seconds to explain their drawing, giving reasons why their drawing (especially in light of the *necessary/sufficient* conditions identified above) is an accurate representation of a good friendship. The students may then vote once on any one of the drawings that is not their own. The winner could get a small prize, the respect of their peers, etc. This activity would do well to get the students to solidify their understanding of *necessary/sufficient* conditions, as well as their ability to articulate their understanding. If you’re inclined to use this activity, it would be good to tell the students before they draw to give them a greater incentive to invest in their creative work.
- B. Skits: Have the students split up into groups of 3-4, and have them take one of two possible routes (though pursuing both is possible with enough time, preferably starting with route 1, followed by route 2):
 - 1- Give each group a pre-written example of an interaction between a group of friends that deals with a quality of friendship (consider: “trust”, “fun”, “honesty”, “respect”, and “supporting/helping each other”). The skit should demonstrate either a good friendship because it exhibits a particular trait, or a lacking friendship because a particular trait is not realized.
 - 2- Give each group about 5 minutes to write a short skit on their own. Assign each group one of two types of friendship: good or lacking. Roughly half of the skits should exemplify a good friendship, and the other half should exemplify a lacking friendship (the good/lacking is assigned because students seem to enjoy showing bad traits disproportionately more than good ones). The students will then act them out for the class.

After each skit, ask the class if the skit showed a good or lacking friendship, specifically asking them to identify the traits/qualities involved. You should also ask questions related to *necessary/sufficient* conditions, such as: Can we say X is definitely a good/lacking friend because X does/doesn't do P? What would allow us to answer in a definite way? What if X did/didn't do P all the time? What if this was the first time?

Lesson Plan VIII

Lesson plan authors:

- Kelsey Kaul, Philosophy Major, Chemistry Minor, UNC – Chapel Hill
- Heather Van Wallendael, Philosophy/English Major, Creative Writing Minor, UNC – Chapel Hill
- Deep Patel, Philosophy Major, UNC – Chapel Hill

Discussion theme:

Prejudice

Discussion topic:

Moral Permissibility of Stereotypes

Discussion duration:

45-60 minutes

Materials needed:

Plenty of paper, several sets of 5 different colored pencils or markers, timer

1. Goals/Objectives

- A. Define a “stereotype.”
- B. Determine if there are ever situations in which stereotypes are morally permissible.
- C. Distinguish between moral permissibility and moral necessity.

2. Lesson Plan Narrative

This lesson will focus on defining the word “stereotype” and classifying it morally. Students will begin in small groups creating a single sentence definition for “stereotype.” They will go on to use this definition in discussing an example of stereotyping. The example deals with a storeowner discriminating against children who come to his store.

This lesson uses a silent discussion technique designed to help students respond to one another’s arguments. Students will work in groups, passing paper around on which they can write their comments in response to specific questions you will raise. Ideally, by the end of the discussion, students will have identified morally relevant concerns when determining the moral permissibility of an action. Students should be able to support an

opinion at the end of the discussion concerning whether or not a stereotype can ever be morally justified or permissible.

3. Introduction – 5 minutes

- I. Tell your students to take twenty seconds to think about how they define a stereotype (stay quiet for 20 seconds). Work in your small groups to come up with a basic definition. Have your students write this definition down.
- II. After three minutes in the small group discussion, write each group's definition on the board and discuss/narrow down until a common definition is determined.

4. Main Activity – 30-45 minutes

For this discussion, you will use the silent discussion technique. Each group should have about five people in it. After reading the example as a class, pose the first question (Roman Numeral I below). Students have one minute to respond to the question(s) on their paper. Then they must pass it to the student on their left. (Feel free to change the order or direction of passing for different questions, so students can respond to different classmates). For each pass, students get one minute to respond. Students will pass the paper four times or until it returns to the original person. Then everyone gets about 30 seconds to read what happened on their page. Be sure to encourage students to respond directly to the statement(s) that has/have just been made during the writing periods.

Example

Mr. Moore owns a convenience store near a school. He sells lots of candy and school supplies to middle school students. He has also had a lot of his merchandise stolen. Mr. Moore decided to implement a new policy requiring all students to leave their bags at the front with him when shopping in his store. If a student comes in wearing a large sweatshirt, Mr. Moore asks the student to leave it up front too. He does not ask women with large purses or men with briefcases to leave their bags at the front. When asked why, he tells the students that 90% of the people he has caught stealing have been students from the school, and he is just trying to protect himself.

- I. Begin the discussion by asking the following question and completing the silent discussion: *Is this an example of stereotyping?*
 - a. One potential response: Yes, because stereotypes assume something about a person based on their membership in some group/demographic.
 - b. Another potential response: No, because Mr. Moore is making a judgment based on facts.
 - c. Encourage your students to go beyond simply describing the scenario. Feel free to begin questioning if Mr. Moore's actions are morally permissible.
 - d. If you need to, point out that Mr. Moore pre-judges every child who enters his store, assuming they are more of a threat to him than any adult.

- II. Once your students have discussed the nature of a stereotype as a form of pre-judgment, move on to the next question (again using the silent discussion technique): *Is Mr. Moore's policy wrong?*
- a. Here it will be important to make a distinction between actions that are *morally permissible* and *morally necessary*. If a student feels that Mr. Moore is allowed to do what he is doing even if it is not the only policy or the best policy for him to pursue, they are identifying his actions as *morally permissible* (allowed but not required by moral rules). If a student argues that Mr. Moore's actions are wrong, they are dealing with *moral necessity* (required or forbidden by moral code).
 - b. Students might point out that Mr. Moore is acting to protect himself, that the stereotype has been supported by facts, and/or that the policy does not really harm anyone. Any of these concerns would work well to further the discussion. Use any or all of the following questions to focus on concerns your students bring up as time allows.
- III. How accurate is the stereotype? Does the accuracy have anything to do with it being bad?
- a. Be sure to point out here that many students that go into the store will not steal from Mr. Moore, but he is treating them as if they will. What if only one student out of one hundred would not steal from him if given the opportunity? Would he still be treating that one student unfairly?
- IV. To what extent does the fact that Mr. Moore is protecting himself justify his actions?
- a. This question focuses on people's rights. Specifically Mr. Moore's right to protect his store and the students' right to be treated fairly.
- V. Mr. Moore's policy does no real harm to anyone. It is not difficult to leave one's belongings at the front of the store; however, the policy is certainly discriminatory. Is discrimination inherently wrong?
- a. Be aware that some students might claim that Mr. Moore is harming the students in some way. This is fine, but be sure they are being very specific in explaining how Mr. Moore's policy could qualify as "harm."

If you have time, or for an alternative discussion, consider the following examples. Note that many of the questions and discussion topics from above could be used with these examples as well.

Alternate Example 1 (To be performed as a skit by three students)

Ms. Brown: Good morning class. I'm so excited to be starting a new year with such a bright new group of students. This year we are going to be doing a lot of work with partners. You and your partner will be assigned a country and each quarter you will present on your country and what was going on with it during the century we have been covering.

Kristen: Do we get to choose our partners?
 Ms. Brown: I've decided to have you work with assigned partners for the first half of the year. Kristen, you'll be partners with Greg.
 Greg: Hi, I'm Greg.
 Kristen: (shakes his hand) Kristen. Nice to meet you.
 Greg: You too. Do you like history?
 Kristen: It's my favorite subject. Do you?
 Greg: It's all right.
 Kristen: What do you like?
 Greg: Basketball. I'm on the team. I love sports.
 Kristen: Oh. Could you excuse me? (Goes to Ms. Brown)
 Kristen: Ms. Brown, could I please change partners?
 Ms. Brown: Why?
 Kristen: Well, I care a lot about my grades and I just don't think we'll work well together. He's an athlete and, so, I'm worried he won't put much effort into schoolwork.

VI. Consider using the following questions:

- a. Is this an example of stereotyping?
- b. Is it wrong?
- c. How accurate is the stereotype? Does the accuracy have anything to do with it being bad?
- d. Is Kristen hurting Greg? She didn't say anything to him specifically.
- e. Why is it bad to assume things about people?
- f. What should Ms. Brown do and why?

Alternate Example 2

Paul is looking for one more member for the school's quiz bowl team. He needs someone very smart who remembers lots of information. At the *end* of the day, in the halls, he sees a boy with glasses and a violin case walk by. He stops him and asks if he would like to join the quiz bowl team. This boy is the first person Paul has stopped and asked today.

VII. Consider using the following questions to prompt this discussion:

- a. Is this an example of stereotyping?
- b. Did Paul assume something about the boy because he had glasses?
- c. Does the fact that this is a positive stereotype change anything from the previous example?
- d. Can we say this sort of assumption is okay? (Morally Permissible)

As your students discuss, encourage them to respond directly to points other students have made. If they seem to have trouble, take time to list supporting points for two opposing arguments on the board. Ask students which argument they think is stronger. Then have them support their answers, responding directly to the person who last spoke and explaining why they agree or disagree with that person's statements.

If your students are having trouble responding directly to one another, it might be helpful for you to pose specific response questions. If a student points out that Mr. Moore is

acting based on facts, you might then ask the class if they think the rightness or wrongness of stereotypes is contingent upon their accuracy.

5. Concluding Activity – 6 minutes

- I. To conclude, ask students to raise a hand if they believe stereotyping is always wrong. Have this group write down at least one reason that they think this is true.
- II. Ask the other students who think stereotypes will sometimes be morally permissible to come up with either a second example of a time when stereotyping is not bad or a criterion for determining if stereotyping might be permissible.
- III. After they have developed their responses, partner students as evenly as possible with students of the opposite group. Give them about three minutes to discuss their answers with one another.

6. Suggestions for Related Activities

Because your discussion on stereotypes has focused on questions of moral permissibility and moral necessity, it works as a great lead-in to discussing more traditional ethical issues. The Trolley Problem is a particularly fruitful topic of discussion.

To introduce the Trolley Problem, present the following scenario: “A trolley (a small train) is quickly moving down the tracks. It has no one on board, and will continue to run until stopped. A little ways down the track, six people are tied to the tracks (and can’t get out); five of them are on one track, and the last is on a neighboring track. The trolley is headed towards the five people, and you are far away, but a lever that you are standing next to will switch its path towards the one person if you pull it. Essentially, you are faced with the dilemma of pulling the lever, resulting in someone’s death, or doing nothing and letting five people die. What *should* you do?” **Note that the question isn’t about what the students *would* do, but about what they *should* do.**

A second scenario that might pull at different moral intuitions is the following: “A trolley (a small train) is quickly moving down the tracks. It has no one on board, and will continue to run until stopped. A little ways down the track, five people are tied to the single track. You’re standing on a bridge directly over the track, next to a very large man (the man simply looks like the average person, only three times larger). The man steps up and leans over the edge of the railing, peering below. If the man fell, his large body would stop the trolley before it ran over the five people. *Should* you push the man over?

Be sure to relate this topic to your previous distinctions concerning moral permissibility and necessity. If a student suggests that you should pull the lever or push the large man onto the tracks, it is helpful to clarify whether they think it is morally necessary that you

act or simply morally permissible to do so. If you want to pursue this topic, the following websites may be particularly helpful:

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/doing-allowing/>

[http://people.brandeis.edu/~teuber/Trolley Problem-PHIL 1A.pdf](http://people.brandeis.edu/~teuber/Trolley_Problem-PHIL_1A.pdf)

Lesson Plan IX

Lesson plan authors:

Andrew Cooter, Philosophy Major, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Olivia Branscum, Philosophy Major, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
David A. White, Ph.D., *Philosophy for Kids: 40 Fun Questions That Help You Wonder...About Everything!*
Jamel Ostwald, Argument Mapping 2: Claims and Reasons:
<http://www.jostwald.com/ArgumentMapping/ArgMap2-Claims.pdf>

Discussion theme:

Freedom

Discussion topic:

Can you freely choose the way in which you relate to the world?

Discussion duration:

45-60 minutes

Materials needed:

Poster board for groups; markers.

1. Goals/Objectives

1. Students will learn how to provide reasons to support a claim
2. Students will develop a distinction between true and strong reasons.
3. Students will identify some of the practical limitations of free will.

2. Lesson Plan Narrative

In this lesson, students will begin by playing a game in which they must decide whether or not they can freely choose to do certain actions. During this time, the students will move back and forth across the classroom, depending on whether they agree or disagree. Beyond this, each scenario will be followed by a brief discussion in which each side of the room will be able to provide reasons for why they chose their respective side. We find this activity works well as it requires physical movement from the students so they do not get restless, and they also must pick one side of an argument prior to engaging in discussion. This allows for better-formulated opinions and better contributions from the students. After this initial activity, the facilitator will introduce the students to arguments

and how to provide reasons for claims. The students will be presented with sample arguments, with claims, and reasons supporting them. After this, they will work in groups to provide their own reasons for each side of one of the claims from the initial activity (for and against) and present them to the class. To conclude, the facilitator will use the previous activity to introduce to the students the distinction between strong and true reasons, and which aspect is more important for supporting claims.

3. Introduction (15-20 minutes)

To begin the session, explain to the students that they will be read a series of statements and will be asked if they agree or disagree with the statements. Designate one side of the room as the “agree” side and the other as “disagree” and explain to the students that they are to move to a particular side as a response to each statement. If a student is unsure, she may remain in the middle of the room, but this response is discouraged if possible. Once the students understand the sides of the room, begin to read off scenarios. Remember to emphasize the “freely choose” part of the statement. The following statements should be plenty for a single class period:

I can freely choose to...

1. Be a good friend
2. Do my best in school
3. Be the richest person in the world
4. Be the greatest athlete ever
5. Cheat on a test

Read each statement one at a time, and after the students have moved about the room, wait for them to settle and then begin to open the floor to discussion. Start with one side of the room and ask one or more students to provide reasons for their decision. To prompt the best discussion, move back and forth between sides, asking students from one side to respond to the reasons given by the other. If there are undecided students in the middle of the room, include them in the discussion as well, as they can often offer valuable points for both sides.

Each scenario and the discussion that follows should last approximately 5 minutes, though fruitful discussion should not be scrapped for the sake of time. The first four scenarios provide valuable distinctions, and the fifth is optional based on time constraints. It is also important to remember during this activity that the question being asked is whether they can *freely* choose to do something, not if they are *free* to choose. This is an important distinction that will most likely come up during the discussion.

The 2nd scenario is vague in the eyes of many students, and it is helpful to determine what is meant by doing one’s best in school. Before going into this discussion, first let the students decide if they agree or disagree. After they provide reasons for their opinions, the nature of the scenario will likely come up during the progression of the discussion. If it does not, be mindful of this and work with the students to hash out the distinctions being presented on what it means to do one’s best in school, and in what capacity.

For the 3rd and 4th scenarios, students will often change sides of the room, and it should be noted which ones do so, as they will often discover distinctions between the two scenarios which on the surface appear quite similar. Use these distinctions to prompt a further discussion, and look to uncover why students disagree on the nature of the two scenarios. For example, both wealth and athleticism can depend heavily on one's upbringing or talents, but often to different degrees. The students may be hesitant to discuss the limitations of hard work. If this occurs, there's no need to be overly harsh – just remind them of clearer situations in which hard work might not be sufficient, such as a blind person becoming the greatest basketball player in the world. In addition, you may need to be sensitive of the students' individual situations during this discussion, as economic class and disability will almost certainly come up. Try to stay away from discussing any one student's personal life, unless she is using an anecdote to illustrate another point.

4. Main Activity (20-25 minutes)

Once the students have had plenty of time to discuss the scenarios in the initial activity, use the remaining time for the main activity.

1. Begin by presenting the students with the following claims:
 - a. Socrates is mortal
 - b. John is a good quarterback
 - c. Professor Ostwald's class is too easy
 - d. Dinosaurs are popular

2. Using these scenarios, present the students with good and bad reasons that support the claims. (It is not always necessary to use all four claims, but we find it useful to prepare them in case students want to discuss reason-giving in more detail.)

3. Before using the words "good" or "bad," write out the following reasons to support the claims.
 - a. Socrates is mortal
 - i. Good – Socrates is a man
 - ii. Bad – Humans are mortal
 - b. John is a good quarterback
 - i. Good – John threw for 39 touchdowns last season
 - ii. Bad – John is my friend
 - c. Professor Ostwald's class is too easy
 - i. Good – One of my friends says his class is too easy
 - ii. Bad – Professor Ostwald is nice
 - d. Dinosaurs are popular
 - i. Good – Dinosaur toys are a perennial favorite with children
 - ii. Bad – Dinosaurs are cooler than mammals.

4. Having written the reasons on the board, ask the students if they can determine what makes a reason good or bad.
 - a. Use this time to open up a brief discussion on why these reasons are good and bad, and how they go about supporting the claim at hand. If they do not support it, discuss why this is the case.
 - b. Be sure to discuss with the students that reasons should not be a restatement of the claim, but a statement or idea that strengthens one's acceptance or denial of the claim.
5. Once the students have come to an understanding of how to provide reasons to support a claim, break the class up into 2 groups of equal size and provide each group with a poster board and markers.
 - a. Having distributed materials, it often works best to have each group assign one person to be the scribe.
6. Once in groups, assign each group a claim for which they are to give supporting reasons.
 - a. For assigning claims, use either question 3 ("Can you freely choose to be the richest person in the world?") or question 4 ("Can you freely choose to be the greatest athlete ever?") above.
7. Allow the groups roughly 10 minutes to work on their posters, though this may not take up the entire time.
8. Once the groups are done working, allow them to select one person to present the posters to the class before reconvening.
9. Allow the first group to present their reasons to the class.
10. After having presented, ask the rest of the class, primarily the other group, if they feel the reasons given support the claim, and further, if they think they are actually reasons.
 - a. During this discussion, it may be difficult for the students to identify on their own the strengths and weaknesses of each reason. Given this, it is helpful to guide the discussion when need be.
11. Repeat steps 9 and 10 with the second group.
12. If possible, hang the posters in the classroom for the remainder of the day or session for the students to continue to observe.

The following link provides additional help for this activity as well as a useful chart for the students:

<http://www.jostwald.com/ArgumentMapping/ArgMap2-Claims.pdf>

5. Concluding Activity (10-15 minutes)

To conclude the session, discuss the difference between strong and true reasons. Generally, the students will provide reasons that not everyone will agree with, and furthermore, may not necessarily be true. When this occurs, many students will want to dismiss these reasons given their falsity, and this is the perfect opportunity to begin a discussion about whether or not the truth-value of a reason is of concern when attempting to support an argument. Begin by simply asking the students if reasons need to be true in order to support a claim, and if so, why they believe this to be the case. From here, the discussion should move to whether or not false reasons can still make a claim stronger, which may come naturally from the students, but be prepared if it does not. Here, explain to them that we are not concerned with the truth of the claim or the argument, but if the argument is strong and if the claim is strengthened by the reasons, no matter how false they may be. Once this discussion has moved on for some time, the students should begin to see the distinction between reasons being strong and reasons being true, and which one is of more concern, which in this case is the former.

6. Suggestions for Related Activities

Arguments – Validity and Soundness

A potential follow-up activity for another session is to introduce the students to basic arguments and logic. In doing so, present the students with basic arguments for them to analyze (see below). After they have looked at and discussed the arguments, ask them if the statements provided support the conclusion. At first this may be more difficult for them to grasp, but it should become more natural to them as time progresses. Having looked at example arguments, introduce the students to the concepts of soundness and validity. An argument is **valid** if there is no way for the conclusion to be false with the premises true. An argument is **sound** if it is valid AND the premises are all actually true. It would be best to begin with validity, and if the students seem comfortable with this concept, move on to soundness. Here, it would be useful to draw on the previous session's discussion about strong vs. true reasons. This will allow the class to gain a better understanding of why truth is not always relevant for supporting a claim, and will strengthen their concept of validity.

Example Arguments:

1. All dogs are filled with jellybeans
2. Anything filled with jellybeans is an alien
- C. All dogs are aliens.

This is an example of an argument that is **valid**, but not **sound**. Here we are not concerned with whether the statements are actually true, and given 1 and 2, C follows logically.

1. All US presidents live in the White House
2. Barack Obama is the president
- C. Barack Obama lives in the White House

This is an example of an argument that is both **valid** and **sound**. 1 and 2 are both actually true, as is C, and it follows from 1 and 2.

1. All crows are black
2. My microwave is black
- C. My microwave is a crow

This is an example of an argument that is neither **valid** nor **sound**. Though it could be the case that all crows are black and my microwave is black, my microwave is not a crow.

Lesson Plan X

Lesson plan authors:

Andrew Cooter, Philosophy Major, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Olivia Branscum, Philosophy Major, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Discussion theme:

Leadership

Discussion topic:

What makes a good leader?

Discussion duration:

45-60 minutes

Materials needed:

Several boxes of toothpicks; one bag of miniature marshmallows per group of 4-6 students; printed directions for each group (see instructions below); a bucket or hat for selecting leaders; slips of paper for selecting leaders; writing utensils and paper for each student.

1. Goals/Objectives

1. Students will learn to provide reasons and justifications in support of their opinions.
2. Students will identify some conditions under which leadership is appropriate.
3. Students will identify some characteristics of what it means to be a 'good' or a 'bad' leader.

2. Lesson Plan Narrative

In this lesson, students will attempt the 'marshmallow tower' engineering challenge under different leadership-related restrictions. This provides a way for students to engage hands-on with the discussion's themes and ensures that they will have some recent experience with the topic of the lesson. We also find that activating a mild emotional investment in the topic (here, by constructing a competition around it) encourages independent thinking and the formulation of well-thought-out responses. After working through the marshmallow challenge, the groups should prepare to think and talk about the

characteristics of good and bad leaders and good and bad leadership situations. The facilitator will then initiate a discussion about leadership-worthy circumstances and positive or negative qualities of leadership. This discussion should not focus on the successes or struggles of a particular student leader, but rather strive to identify some of the conditions under which a leadership model is and is not appropriate as well as some important features of good and bad leadership. Throughout the lesson, it may be important to remind the class of the possible distinction between effective leadership and enjoying a game. Ideally, the discussion should start with the efficiency of different leadership styles, move to a discussion of situations that call for leadership, and eventually transition into a conversation about the characteristic features of good and bad leaders. To conclude, the facilitator will help the class critically apply their insights from the first two activities to real-life leaders.

3. Introduction (15-20 minutes)

Marshmallow Tower Activity (see instructions below)

To begin the exercise, facilitators should divide the class into balanced groups of 4-6. At least one group should be assigned each of the following limitations: working without a leader, electing a leader, or obeying a leader randomly selected by drawing names out of a hat. After receiving their leadership assignments, the groups should attempt to build the tallest freestanding structure they can, using only the marshmallows and toothpicks provided. Each group's leader will be in charge of selecting the team's plan of action, delegating tasks, and distributing the supplies.

1. However you wish, divide students into groups of 4-6.
2. Randomly assign leadership styles to each team.
 - a. If the team has no leader, no leader will be selected.
 - b. If the team is allowed to select its own leader, have them elect one leader.
 - c. If the team has a mandated leader, put enough slips of paper into a hat for the entire team. Mark one slip of paper with a circle, X, or other symbol. The student who draws the marked slip of paper will be the leader for the marshmallow challenge.
1. Pass out instructions to each group (sample instructions may be found below).
2. Read through the instructions with the groups, preferably aloud.
3. Pass out supplies (1 bag of mini marshmallows per group; a box or small pile of toothpicks per group).

4. If possible, start a timer for the activity (we recommend 10 or 15 minutes) or write the starting time on the board.
5. During the allotted time, students will work in their groups – upholding the leadership requirements described above – to build the tallest possible freestanding tower using only marshmallows and toothpicks.
 - a. Ensure that the groups adhere to their restrictions (see above).
 - b. Do not allow the groups to cheat!
6. Inform the students when they have five minutes left to complete their towers. Announce every remaining minute thereafter, and let them know when 30 seconds remain.
7. Using a ruler, measure the height of each tower.
 - a. The groups do not have to let go of their towers until you come around to measure them.
 - b. If possible, a partner teacher or assistant should make sure that students do not continue to work on their towers after time is called.
 - c. Measure each tower after allowing it to stand unsupported for no less than five seconds.
8. Tally scores.
 - a. Write scores on the board.
 - b. Next to each score, record the leadership style to which the group was assigned.

4. Main Activity (approx. 20 minutes)

Reflection and Discussion

After completing the marshmallow tower game, groups should reflect on their experience in writing, paying special attention to the leadership styles, characteristics of leaders, and efficiency or success of each situation. Be sure to ask the groups to give reasons for their comments and opinions, and encourage students to build off of one another by responding directly to claims made by their peers. It can also be helpful to restate more subtle comments to better ensure the rest of the class's comprehension.

1. Take a few minutes for each group member to write down one thing they liked about their leadership style and one thing they disliked (2-3 minutes). Here and throughout the exercise, focus on responses dealing with characteristics of good leaders and situations in which leadership is beneficial.

2. Ask the groups to present on their experiences. The groups may select a spokesperson or work more informally at the teacher's discretion.
3. Once each group has presented, ask the class to comment on whether or not they felt that leadership styles impacted the outcome of the contest.
4. If they do not supply this point on their own, ask students which style they believe to be the most efficient.
 - a. Watch out for students equating 'fun' with 'effective' here. Make sure they consider what works best as well as what they enjoyed.
5. Ask students why their given leadership style was suited (or not suited) to this particular project.
 - a. When is it best to have one designated leader?
 - b. Does it ever work to have no leader at all?
 - c. How about no *designated* leader?
 - d. What do different leadership-receptive situations have in common with each other?
 - e. Students may be a bit confused at first, but try to explain every question as clearly as possible. Examples always help. If the class seems lost, supply a contrasting set of examples – e.g., putting together a puzzle versus designing/engineering a structure.
6. Encourage students to consider the characteristics of individual leaders as well as leadership styles.
 - a. Does electing a leader ensure that the best candidate always gets the job?
 - b. Does an autocratic system guarantee a bad leader?
 - c. What makes a leader – her/his actions, or her/his being designated as such?
 - d. Again, examples are key. The students may want to talk about their group leaders in the marshmallow activity – this is fine, as long as they are able to stay on topic. If the discussion wanders, feel free to move on to another question or activity.
7. Throughout the discussion, write important points on the board. This will provide a visual road map for students, and helps the class to conceptualize the progress they've made during the discussion. If you can, group 'important points' thematically, and draw conclusions about them if any arise.

- a. What counts as ‘important’ is at your discretion, but in general they are comments that reveal an insight, provide clear and valid reasons, and/or directly respond to another student’s idea.
8. If the discussion runs out, ask students to provide one example of a good leader and one example of a bad leader.
 - a. Write down specific ‘good’ and ‘bad’ characteristics of each example.

5. Concluding Activity (approx. 10 minutes)

Examples and Conclusion

To conclude, ask students which marshmallow tower leadership style they think would work best for governing an entire city, state, or nation. Draw in specific examples brought up during the discussion if it’s relevant. If the discussion didn’t move in the direction of examples, ask the class to provide examples of leaders before introducing the final question.

Summarize the key points of the discussion, touching on the goals if possible. For example, you might say, “Today we talked about the qualities of good and bad leaders, such as _____. We also discussed situations that call for a leadership role, like _____.” Remind students of the importance of giving reasons for their comments about leadership. Give examples of qualities rather than individual people.

6. Suggestions for Related Activities

If your class seems interested in the civic applications of leadership, you may want to try the following exercise. Split the class into groups of about 5, and supply each group with a piece of butcher paper or poster board. Depending on the class’s interests and grade level, you may want to ask them to draw their ideal society or assign methods of governance (for example, democracy, republic, autocracy, oligarchy, theocracy, etc.) for them to depict. The class can either draw such a society – possibly including branches or roles of government, rights or lack thereof, etc. – or make lists of those characteristics. After this, the class should be in a good position to engage in a straightforward discussion about related topics such as freedom and responsibility. Prepare some concrete questions ahead of time to spark discussion in the direction of your choice (e.g., Who is free in this society? Who ought to be free in this society? In society in general?; or, How is responsibility allocated in this society? Who is responsible for which aspects of civic life? What about private life?). If you like and have time, you might want to play a discussion game like the four corners activity: ask students questions about each drawing (questions should be directly relevant to the philosophical topic you wish to introduce, but can vary otherwise), and instruct them to go to a specific corner or area of the room depending on their personal response to each question. You may want to designate all

four corners as part of the exercise, and ask students whether they agree, disagree, sometimes agree/disagree, or don't know. Then ask the students in each area to explain the reasoning behind their decision. (In our experience, it works best to eliminate the 'don't know' option, since it gives students an easy out for difficult questions. However, this may lead to a fruitful discussion if your class is sufficiently advanced or comfortable with the topic.)

Marshmallow Tower Activity Instructions

1. Each team will be given one bag of mini marshmallows and some toothpicks.
2. Using nothing but the given supplies, the teams should build the tallest tower possible within the time limit.
3. But there's a catch – your tower has to stand alone for five seconds before it's measured. This means no helping hands or external support of any kind!
4. You will have about 15 minutes to build your towers.
5. Remember the leadership rules for your group. Leaders designate what plan the group will follow, who is allowed to do what, and who is allowed to touch which materials. Don't forget about your leader!

Lesson Plan XI

Lesson plan authors:

Peter Warrington, Biology and Philosophy Major. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Baker Rennekar, Economics and Philosophy Major. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Discussion theme:

Epistemology
Critical Reasoning

Discussion topic:

How do you know what you know?
What counts as a valid reason?

Discussion duration:

45-60 minutes

Materials needed:

Projector
Note cards
Pencils
Computer
YouTube access - or download video

1. Goals/Objectives

Have students understand the importance of solid reasons and justification for belief.

Demonstrate that our knowledge may be limited in important ways.

2. Lesson Plan Narrative

This lesson introduces children to philosophical thinking and the importance of having good reasons through a discussion on epistemology. The activities are designed to make students question what they take as truths and challenge the validity of sensory observations. The lesson has three components which can be easily modified for various time constraints. The first activity, “What's your reason?” makes students practice justifying their statements and critiquing others. Moreover, it illustrates potential errors in what we hold to be true. The second game, “Selective Attention Test,” further stresses the fallibility of our senses and encourages thinking about the emphasis we place on knowledge supported by our senses. Finally, the lesson concludes with a thought experiment on the limits of empirical information and how we understand reality. The activity is designed to build up the seriousness of philosophical questioning.

Important concepts and distinctions:

Epistemology: The theory of knowledge. Philosophers and students doing epistemology need to justify how they “know” certain things and if “knowledge” is even possible.

A priori and a posteriori: These two terms are used to classify different types of knowledge. A priori knowledge can be gained with no external experience, such as mathematical truth. A posteriori knowledge is the opposite; it comes from our experiences. The teacher might find it helpful to encourage students to think about what they can only know with or without experience.

3. Activity I

What's Your Reason? (10-20 minutes)

1. Divide class into groups of four or five
 - a. Give each group two note cards and a pencil.
2. Instruct the groups to write a “truth” on one side of a note card. This should be something they hold to be true at all times. For example, “The sun is bright,” or “The sky is blue.”
 - a. On the back of the note card they should write at least three reasons why this is true. For example, “I can see it,” or “Science has proven it.”
3. Each group should then write one “falsehood” on the other note card. This should be something they think is never true. For example, “People can teleport,” or “Grass is pink with polka dots.”

4. Have each group present at least one of their note cards and encourage a group discussion around the validity of their reasons as to why it is true or false. If extra time is available, groups can present their other note card.

Important concepts and questions:

1. After each group presents their truth or falsehood, propose ways in which their reasons may be invalid. For example, if the truth is, “The sky is blue,” then maybe ask, “What about at night?”

2. Be creative with your critiques. The point is to emphasize the limits of our knowledge. Make students question how they arrived at certain positions and acknowledge the assumptions they make along the way. An easy response to ask is, “What if...?” In one session, as his example of a falsehood, a student said he did not have a cat in his mouth. The response we had, admittedly silly, was to ask how he *knows* this.

3. Make sure to point out that many things we hold to be true could be false, and vice versa.

4. Activity 2

Selective Attention Test (10 minutes)

1. Play the first 36 seconds of this video to the class:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJG698U2Mvo>

- a. Ask students to count the passes in silence and not to mention anything to neighbors. Instructions are also given in the video.

2. Ask the class how many passes the white clothed players made?
 - a. The actual number of passes is 15.

3. Ask students if they noticed something unusual in the video.
 - a. If someone did see something odd ask them to explain what was odd (note: there is a gorilla that walks through the passers). Suggest that since not everyone saw this, that our senses may also be highly limited in scope. Students might point out that they were simply tricked and the teacher should point out that they may be tricked all the time. How can they tell when they are or are not?

4. Play the rest of the video.

Important concepts and questions:

1. How can we trust our senses? Students might respond by saying they “feel” like their senses cannot be wrong; they do not betray them so they should not distrust them. The teacher should respond that this is simply ignoring the question and should bring up common instances where our senses are deceived. For example, optical illusions fool our senses, or the sense-based belief that the sun revolves around the earth.
2. Do we place too much emphasis on our senses, such as problems in eyewitness accounts? Often people who see something dramatic are unable to accurately portray the event to authorities. Does this mean eyewitness accounts should not be used?
3. Lead with this question for the next activity: How do we know we are not being tricked right now? How do we know this room is the way we see it, and not perhaps just part of a set of a movie (like *The Truman Show*)?

5. Activity 3

Descartes’ Dream (10-25 minutes)

1. Propose Descartes’ scenario to class.
 - a. Imagine yourself sound asleep. Imagine that you have been asleep for a long time and are dreaming more vividly than ever before. You can feel everything intensely. You see, hear, and smell everything. It is such a life-like dream. Everything in your dream feels completely real to your senses.
 - b. If you are dreaming so vividly that even “dream pinches” and “dream buckets of water” feel real, how could you know you are dreaming before you wake up? How can you tell when you are awake and when you are dreaming?
 - c. If the world of your dream is imaginary, then what you see is not real and what you feel is not reality. Is there anything that you can still know as true, even if you cannot trust your physical senses?
 - d. What if one had never been awake? For example, he/she were born comatose but able to dream, and miraculously, able to think lucidly. How could they know the world of their dreams is not real?
2. Allow class to consider this and then encourage a discussion.
3. What about the knowledge that you, the dreamer, exists? Even if the dream is showing you unreal things, the fact that there is a person having this experience means that at least the mind exists!

Some important concepts and distinctions:

1. Step 1 is aimed at trying to convey how difficult it can be to trust reality. If you cannot trust your physical senses, it is difficult to know anything. It might be interesting to hear a couple of suggestions and to have the class discuss how they might still ultimately rely on physical senses.

2. Step 1 is likely to yield responses that involve doing impossible things in order to tell that the world in which they are in is fake. For example, “I would know it is not real because I can fly.” This sort of suggestion involves the belief that they indeed know real facts about the world in their memory with which they can compare the current world. Step 1d. is directed specifically at this point by eliminating the possibility of memory. Yet it may also be interesting to question to what extent peoples’ memories are reliable in knowing truths about the world in less outlandish situations. Perhaps point out that people’s memories are often mistaken or discuss how people’s biases can affect the way they remember things drastically. It might be that people’s memories are, themselves, false versions of reality.

3. During step 3, consider mentioning Descartes’ infamous phrase: “I think, therefore I am” (or *cogito ergo sum*), which many of the students have likely heard before. This may be a useful way of showing how they have already been performing *real philosophy*. Descartes is expressing the fact that the action of *thinking* (thinking about truth, thinking about anything, etc.) necessarily implies a subject; there must be a thinker having the thoughts. Thus, even if the thinker is completely unsure of every other empirical fact, by having a thought, the fact that he/she exists is secure.

5. Ideally, this session would center on the step 2 discussion and have step 3 be a concluding remark for the students to consider (unless, of course, it is brought up organically in conversation). By stressing their input as the center of discussion, hopefully, the dynamic can be established where the students understand philosophy as an activity being performed instead of specific knowledge to be remembered.

6. Suggestions for Related Activities

A potential follow up lesson would be a discussion on beliefs and what justification is sufficient for our beliefs. A suggested activity for this discussion is to have the students imagine they have had a traumatic experience which influences their actions later in life. For example, you were bitten by a collie dog and have an aversion to these dogs, despite the majority of them being nice dogs. Would this be a reasonable belief? Then have them

imagine there is a scientific study, which says pit bulls are dangerous dogs, and therefore you avoid them. Is this a reasonable belief? Further beliefs could be added, and students could practice analyzing the sources of justification for various beliefs. This activity will help transition students towards justifying their thoughts and opinions, which is essential to ethical and moral philosophy.

Lesson Plan XII

Lesson plan authors:

Peter Warrington, Biology and Philosophy Major, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Baker Rennekar, Economics and Philosophy Major, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Discussion theme:

Ethics

Discussion topic:

Sacrificing personal benefits for the benefit of a community.
Where does justice come from?

Discussion duration:

45-60 minutes

Materials needed:

Candy
Printed rules sheet

1. Goals/Objectives

Students will realize the difference between what is good for them and what is good for a community.

Students will learn to distinguish the difference between intuition and philosophical justification.

Have class understand the distinction between an *end* and a *means to an end*.

2. Lesson Plan Narrative

This lesson introduces students to ethical discussions and dilemmas. It uses two well-known scenarios, the Prisoner's Dilemma and Plato's Ring of Gyges. The first game is active and involves everyone in the class. It is followed by a discussion on the choices students made and the ethical dimensions associated with these choices; for example, the value of community, personal gains at the cost of another, and honesty. The second activity presents a hypothetical scenario where the teacher asks students what they would do if they could become invisible. The following discussion will be about the nature of justice and goodness, specifically considering if the reason people aren't bad is because they are afraid of being caught. Both activities stress a deeper understanding of community and our obligations. Note: the order of these two games could be switched depending on class time and personal goals.

Important concepts and distinctions:

Contractualism: This theory argues that being part of society implies that individuals have moral/political obligations to the community. Citizens must act in ways agreeable to their peers, and they must consider their actions from the perspectives of others. This concept roughly approximates to the Golden Rule: do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Economic Rationality: Economists and some philosophers consider actions which maximize one's own self-interest to be the only rational choices. In the case of the Prisoner's Dilemma game below, receiving the most candy is considered in one's self-interest. Thus, the rational action for someone to take in the game is that which maximizes his/her chances to obtain candy.

"Ends" and "means to ends": In philosophy, there is an important distinction between something that is a "means to an end" and an "end." Something is a means if you use it to gain something else (your end); for example, money is a means to buy objects. An end is something you want for itself, like happiness.

3. Introduction / Main Activity

The Prisoner's Dilemma (25-35 minutes)

Background:

This activity will try to mirror the famous economic thought experiment 'The Prisoner's Dilemma.'

Suppose there were two people in prison being prosecuted for a crime committed together. The police interviewed the prisoners separately and asked them to snitch on each other. Each prisoner has two options -- betraying the other prisoner (defecting) or staying silent (cooperating). If one of them betrays while the other one stays silent, the betrayer goes free while the other person serves three years in prison. If neither of them betrays, then they both serve one year in prison on a lesser charge. But, if they both betray, then they both serve two years in prison (slightly reduced sentences for helping police).

The dilemma arises because it is in each individual's best interest to defect. Regardless of what the other person does, you will minimize your prison sentence if you defect. This results in an equilibrium where both people betray each other. However, it would be better for them collectively if they both co-operated as this leads to the shortest amount of combined prison time.

	Prisoner B Cooperates	Prisoner B Defects
Prisoner A Cooperates	Each serve 1 year	Prisoner A: 3 years Prisoner B: goes free
Prisoner A Defects	Prisoner A: goes free Prisoner B: 3 years	Each serves 2 years

This thought experiment presents a number of important philosophical and social issues: primarily, the conflict between self-interest and community interest. Often times what is best for an individual is collectively harmful (for example, group assignments). If a student believes his peers will work hard on an assignment it would be in his best interest to slack off (according to the conception of self-interest we are working with here). However, if his peers did the same calculation and slacked off then the assignment wouldn't get finished, nor would it be very good. Secondly, it brings up the nature of obligations towards individuals and communities. To what extent are we obligated to treat others fairly by cooperating and what circumstances influence this decision (such as our relationship with them)?

In the game below, we modified the payoffs by giving candy, instead of prison time. The logic works the same except now you want more candy, rather than less prison time.

Activity:

1. Introduce the game by asking if the students prefer more candy to less. Expect a unanimous "yes."

2. Draw the payoff table on a board and hand out sheets with rules, and table, on them.

Rules:

- a) Class will be broken down into random pairs of two. (Make groups right before they come forward to avoid collusion)
- b) Ask a pair of students to come to the front of class and stand back to back and not consult each other. Then on the count of three have them raise their thumbs up or down. Thumbs up means cooperate, thumbs down means defect.
- c) If both students put their thumbs up then they each get two pieces of candy.
- d) If both students but their thumbs down then they each get one piece of candy.
- e) If one student puts their thumbs down, while the other puts his/hers up, then the one who put his/her thumb down gets three pieces of candy while the other gets none.

	Student B Cooperates	Student B Defects
Student A Cooperates	Each get 2 pieces of candy	Student A: none Student B: 3 pieces
Student A Defects	Student A: 3 pieces Student B: none	Each get 1 piece of candy

3. Once every pair has done this ask the students why they chose to cooperate or defect.

- a) If they chose to cooperate ask them why they chose this if they wanted to get the most candy.
 - i) Most likely an explanation of why this is true will be needed. Show the class why defecting is the rational decision to get the most candy for yourself.

4. Ask the class if they felt obligated to cooperate for some moral reason, and, if so, why?

5. Pose the question, “Does doing the right thing tend to go against your self-interest?”

6. Ask the students what obligations they have toward communities and whether cooperating was the right choice because it led to maximum community benefits.

- a). Does this change if you have or have not made an explicit deal or commitment with the community?

Important Concepts and distinctions:

1. Moral laws - An interesting point that may come up is the idea of an inflexible moral commandment. It might simply be wrong to cheat someone, not because they aren't getting candy but instead because it is not morally permissible to cheat someone.
2. Does the other person's history matter? - Ask students: if they played again with the same partner and if in the previous iteration they were cheated would this mean they have a reason to change their choice? What if the first time they simply suspected their partner would not cooperate, is this a strong enough justification to make their choice?
3. Is this like the real world? - It might be interesting to ask the students if they think this sort of trade off is like real situations (i.e., helping or mooching off of their families) or if it is unlike the real world. Does practicing morality in everyday life tend to involve making choices against your own narrow self-interest?
4. The mathematics - Remember in 3a why this is true: consider your partner's choice fixed; if he/she has defected, you can get 1 instead of 0 by defecting; if he/she has cooperated, you can get 3 instead of 2 by defecting.

5. Concluding Activity

Ring of Gyges: (15-25 minutes)

1. Bring students into a circle and introduce the Ring of Gyges.
 - a. Suppose there was a ring that you could wear and which made you invisible. While you're invisible no one notices your absence or senses if you're around them. You are free to do as you wish; what would you do?
2. Ask the students, "Would you act differently if you were invisible, and if so what would you do?"
 - a) Expect answers to be activities often frowned upon in society.
 - b) Don't spend too much time with students describing what they would do; this should just be for fun.
 - c) Try to direct the conversation towards *why* students would act differently.
3. If it doesn't come up naturally, mention one reason people might act differently is because when we are visible we can be caught.
4. Ask the question, "Does this mean that the only reason people are good is because they are afraid of getting caught for acting bad?"
 - a. Allow for discussion in response to this question.

5. Ask the students if people are only good because they think they are getting the benefits of having a good reputation in society. Would someone be good if they were wearing the ring?
6. Finally, have the students give their opinions and reasoning on what “goodness” is and what it means to be a good person.
 - a. Does this fit with the previous discussion on why people are good?

Important concepts and distinctions:

1. Is submitting to your desires while invisible itself an injustice (what about when you’re not invisible)? - Plato thought so and argued that a truly rational and developed person will maintain his/her composure even if he/she could do anything with no consequences.
2. Is being good an end or a means to an end? - In other words, should you, or are you, good because being good is “good?” Or, alternatively, are you good because being good allows you to be happy and gain recognition.
3. This Wikipedia article gives a good explanation of the fable:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ring_of_Gyges

6. Suggestions for Related Activities

A potential follow up activity would be a discussion of Aristotle’s and Mill’s description of the good. Aristotle thought the good was being the best you could be at what you pursued. For example, a student is good if the student dedicates herself to her studies to be the best possible student. Mill thought the good is that which maximizes happiness, or utility. The good action is one that brings the community the most amount of happiness. Note, this doesn’t necessarily mean doing what makes you personally happy right now because certain things might make others unhappy or might have long-term side effects. All of these things have to be considered in determining the good action.

Some suggested activities would be to have students read stories which emphasize one of these two theories. Have the students talk about the story and whether they think it is a good idea. Introduce the second theory as a potential alternative and ask if this is preferable. Lastly, ask the students to come up with their own description of goodness and have a discussion on how it is similar and different from other theories.

Lesson Plan XIII

Lesson plan authors:

Sarah Urdzik, Mathematics & Classics major, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Donovan Dorrance, Philosophy major, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Margaret Owens, Linguistics & Philosophy major, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Discussion theme:

Freedom

Discussion topic:

Balancing freedom with other ideals in a society, pros and cons of anarchy, government

Discussion duration:

~45 minutes

Materials needed:

1 large sheet of paper for each group of 3-4 students, instruction sheets for each group, pens/markers

1. Goals/Objectives:

To develop the skill of responding to others' ideas

To think about the value of freedom, and what purposes restrictions on freedom serve

2. Lesson Plan Narrative

Through questions on freedom, this lesson is designed to give students practice in participating in a philosophical discussion, both in small and large group settings. Students will work in small groups to design "free societies," based on their prior knowledge and intuitions about freedom. The questions about freedom that come up during this activity will be addressed while students present their societies to the class. The facilitator will track important questions and points on the board.

3. Introduction

To introduce the idea of freedom, students are asked to design free societies. Each group of 3-4 students is given an instruction sheet and a large sheet of paper on which they can

describe their society. Instructions are below. As the facilitator moves from group to group, (s)he should have students note important questions that arise as they discuss how a society might be free. Some examples include:

- What makes designing a society particularly challenging?
- What does it mean for a society to be free?

Feel free to print this section out for students:

Design a society!

Your goals:

- 1. Make the society as free as possible.**
- 2. Write at least ten guidelines for your society that best promote freedom. These can be laws, procedures, agreements between citizens, etc.**
- 3. Be sure to address:**
 - a. Money- Does your society have a currency? How is it used and managed?**
 - b. Food- Who produces food? What happens if there is not enough food?**
 - c. Families- Do parents have any control over their children?**
 - d. Government- Is there a government? If so, how does it work? Who runs the government?**
 - e. Work- Who works? Do people have jobs, or do they make a living without jobs?**
 - f. School- Is school required? If not, do students decide whether they want to go to school?**
 - g. Young children- How are babies treated in this society? Can they be as free as adults? How old must people be before they can choose what to eat? What to wear? Where to live? Where to work?**
 - h. Justice- what happens if someone doesn't follow the guidelines?**

Your society's name: _____

4. Main Activity

The main activity of the lesson comes during the presentation of societies. Each group presents their description of a free society and any important questions or problems they thought of while they created their society. The facilitator will ask the class to respond to these points and give the class opportunities to ask the presenting group questions about their society, especially as these questions regard freedom.

Some examples of questions the facilitator may ask:

- A says that a free society wouldn't be a society at all. Rather, it would just be a group of people. Can a completely free society exist?

- B says that people should be able to self-govern as soon as they are able to talk. Should people be free at this age? Can people be free at this age? Is there anything good about letting children this young self-govern?

5. Concluding Activity

Poll the class (show of hands): Ask how many students would want to live in the society they created. For those who say “yes,” ask them why. For those saying “no,” ask them what they would change. If the class is split, have students who say no respond to an argument made by a student who said yes (and vice versa--have each “side” respond to each other). If the class is unanimous, be sure to still encourage the students to respond to one another.

Points to consider:

How important is freedom in designing a society?

What is more valuable than freedom? Is freedom of the most value?

6. Suggestions for Related Activities

Hand out a worksheet with a few laws or regulations on it. These laws should be either protections of freedom or restrictions on freedom. Ask students to respond to these laws in writing. Are they good? If so, what makes them good? If not, why? An example follows.

Instructions:

We are free to do a lot of things in America, but our freedoms are also limited in many ways. For each law below, decide whether you think it is good or bad. Provide detailed reasons for your opinion.

- **Freedom of Speech**

- **Age restrictions on: driving, drinking, voting, working, etc.**

- **Freedom to live / Freedom to not be killed**

Lesson Plan XIV

Lesson plan authors:

Sarah Urdzik, Mathematics & Classics major, University of North Carolina- Chapel Hill
Donovan Dorrance, Philosophy major, University of North Carolina- Chapel Hill
Margaret Owens, Linguistics & Philosophy major, University of North Carolina- Chapel Hill

-referencing Plutarch (*Life of Theseus*, where the Ship of Theseus paradox is discussed)
and Thomas Hobbes (elaborated on the Ship of Theseus paradox)

Discussion theme:

Identity

Discussion topic:

The Problem of Change and Identity: What does it mean for an object to be “the same” if it changes over time? If an object’s parts are entirely replaced over time, in what way is it (the object) “the same”?

Discussion duration:

~45 minutes

Materials needed:

Whiteboard and dry-erase markers (or chalkboard and chalk).

1. Goals/Objectives

a. Students will learn to reason through their opinions and create rational arguments; they will learn to respectfully and constructively respond to each other’s arguments.

b. Students will learn about the basic principles of identity, i.e. what is the essence of an object’s existence, what makes you, *you*. The issue of temporal qualities (qualities that can change over time, like the color of an object) vs. permanent or definitive qualities (qualities that do not change over time, like someone’s DNA) should arise.

2. Lesson Plan Narrative

This lesson asks students to reflect on the identity of persons and objects. An introductory activity elicits questions of personal identity, while the main activity, “The Ship,” deals with questions of the identity of objects. The question of whether something can be

defined by impermanent qualities (and if so, how) should arise. To conclude, the facilitator will have students compare issues of identity that have been discussed during the class. How are objects and people alike? Can they be defined by the same or similar characteristics? Throughout the activity, the facilitator will track important distinctions and points on the board. Finally, a concluding discussion will sum up the discussion through comparing and contrasting objects and persons.

3. Introduction

1. Pass out a notecard to each student. Instruct each student to answer these questions:

- What makes you, *you*?
- How do you define yourself?
- What makes you different than everyone else?

Have them write down at least six qualities. Give them 5 minutes to do so.

Next, have each student cross out things that weren't true of him/herself 5 years ago.

Next, have each student cross out things that they can imagine being different 5 years later.

Next, have each student cross out things that they can imagine being different 50 years later.

2. Ask the students: How many people crossed out at least one thing? It is clear that some things change about you over time, and some things might stay the same. Here's the question: Were you still *you* five years ago? Will you still be *you* in 50 years?

Let's say they answer "yes"... then raise an objection:

Well what about you has to stay the same from one point in your life to another?

(If your class has experience with philosophical thinking, you might consider allowing them a minute to think in silence.)

4. Main Activity

The Ship of Theseus Activity

- a. Have a simple ship drawn on the board (a hull, mast and sail will suffice)
- b. Ask students to name the ship.
- c. Tell a story about the ship so as to replace each part of the boat. For example:
 - i) A storm comes, the sail is torn, and has to be replaced. Have a student draw an entirely new sail for the ship.
 - ii) Over time, mites eat at the mast, and it is rotted out. Have a different student draw an entirely new mast for the ship.
 - iii) One foggy night, the ship crashes into a rock, and there is a big hole in the hull. Have a different student draw an entirely new hull for the ship.
 - iv) The end result should be a boat with all parts completely replaced.

First Question:

Is this ship still the same ship (insert ship's name here)?

Second Question:

If it is not the same ship: Say that the ship is replaced board by board, for one reason or another. At what point is the ship no longer (insert ship's name here)?

If it is the same ship: What makes it the same ship? What properties or characteristics of the ship will last even when all parts of the ship are replaced?

Third Question:

Imagine the old, damaged pieces of the ship are reassembled in a museum. Which ship is (insert ship's name here)? Can both ships be (insert ship's name here)?

Consider these points during discussion:

- The students might try to escape the paradox by saying that their redrawing of the ship looks different (in style or in color) and is therefore no longer the same ship. While this point doesn't in any way dismiss the questions of identity that this discussion arises, it may discourage some students from the primary focus of the discussion. Encourage the students to ignore any differences created in the redrawing of the ship and instead focus on the more important identity questions like temporal and permanent qualities.

- A student might say: "Of course the ship is not the same. It has changed a lot (parts replaced), so it is not the same ship. When someone grows up, he is not the same person as he was when he was a kid; He's different." What the ship exercise brings into question is the word "same". It's easy to also see how a 10-year-old *is still the same* person 50 years later. In order for someone/something to change a lot, there has to be *one person* or *one thing* undergoing the change.

- Help the students keep in mind that the point of the lesson is to understand the meaning of identity, and how we can understand a variety of objects and people to be the same over time or different and whether those changes necessitate a change in identity or simply a change in certain qualities.

5. Concluding Activity

Help the students combine their ideas from the introductory activity and the main activity. How are objects and people alike? Can they be defined by the same or similar characteristics? Can both objects and people have temporal parts (parts that change over time, without changing the identity) and permanent parts (parts that do not change over time, and will change the identity if they are changed)? Track ideas on the board. Maybe make a Venn Diagram of sorts comparing objects and people and the principles of identity that the students have discovered.

6. Suggestions for Related Activities

Have students break up into groups of ~4 students to explore issues of human identity. Each group will receive a sheet of paper with a thought experiment on it. Have them decide whether the people before and after the experience described are the same person.

Example scenarios:

- Phineas was in a bad accident. Part of his brain was injured, causing his personality to be completely different. He was able to live in the same society, but his relationships with his friends were completely different. Is Phineas still Phineas?

- A woman woke up one day with no memories. All her other bodily functions were unchanged, but she could not remember anything that happened before the day she woke up with no memories.

- A child is suddenly in a vegetative state. Is he still the same person?

- In the future, people teleport onto other planets by a complicated process. First, their bodies are broken up into thousands of pieces. Next, those pieces that made up that person's body are recreated in another place, and reassembled to form the original person's body, personality, memories and everything. Is the person before teleportation the same as the person after teleportation?

Lesson Plan XV

Lesson Plan Authors:

Tim Longest, Philosophy Major, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Mary Reed, Philosophy Minor, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Discussion Theme:

Personal Freedoms

Discussion Topic:

On prejudice

Discussion Duration:

45-50 minutes

Materials Needed:

Worksheet
Optional: Green Eggs and Ham book by Dr. Seuss

1. Goals/Objectives

Students will develop a basic understanding of the difference between justified and unjustified prejudgments/prejudice.

Students will learn critical reasoning and how to argue in support of their beliefs.

2. Lesson Plan Narrative

This lesson will examine the differences between justified prejudgments and unjustified prejudgments, or prejudices. By prejudgment we mean the judgment made when assessing what decision to make in a particular situation (e.g., the assessment that a tiger is harmful).

3. Introduction

1. Ask students if they're familiar with the Dr. Seuss book *Green Eggs and Ham*.
2. Summarize the plot/key points of the book.
3. Introduce the idea of prejudgments and ask for examples.

4. Main Activity

1. Print out four worksheets detailing situations that could be seen as justified or unjustified prejudgments.
 - 1a. Ex: Girls should be picked last for sports teams because they're slower than boys. Teachers are trustworthy. Don't go anywhere with a stranger. Anyone walking with a dog is blind, etc.
 - 1b. Leave a blank space beside each "prejudgment" and instructions to fill in "justified" or "unjustified."
 - 1c. Leave space after each situation and ask that the class come up with supporting reasons for their classification.
2. Split the class up into four groups.
3. Have each group complete the assigned worksheet together.
4. Return from groups.
5. Have each group present one of the situations and explain their reasoning.
 - 5a. Discuss with the class whether they agree with the assessment or not.
 - 5b. Make sure students provide reasons for why they believe what they do and encourage them to evaluate each other's reasons.

5. Concluding Activity

1. Summarize the main points of the discussion (2-3 minutes)
 - 1a. Write them on the board while discussing them.
2. Ask students to identify the difference between justified and unjustified prejudgments.
3. Leave them with a thought about how prejudices can hurt people and how they can respond to them.

6. Suggestions for Related Activities

Exploration of excerpts from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail" comparing historical oppressions and everyday prejudices, showing harm in prejudice.

Lesson Plan XVI

Lesson Plan Authors:

Tim Longest, Philosophy Major, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Mary Reed, Philosophy Minor, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Discussion Theme:

Personal Freedoms

Discussion Topic:

Do we have the freedom to change our lives and ourselves or is everything predetermined?

Discussion Duration:

45-50 minutes

Materials Needed:

Video clip (*Wreck It Ralph*) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-Op7Jcg1dU>

1. Goals/Objectives

Students will develop a basic understanding of determinism and free will.

Students will learn critical reasoning and how to argue in support of their beliefs.

2. Lesson Plan Narrative

This lesson is concerned with the distinction, sometimes considered a paradox, between the idea of free-will, our capacity to choose who we are and what we do, and determinism, or the idea that everything we are and do is determined by a causal chain of events that led up to it. This lesson will begin with the students viewing a video clip of *Wreck It Ralph*. This video will serve as a launching pad to begin the discussion of personal choices. Hopefully this discussion will turn to determinism, which works as a perfect segue into the next activity. The main activity for this lesson deals with determinism versus free will. This activity asks students to each contribute one action to a causal chain. This activity allows students to explore the difference in independent actions and those determined by previous actions. The students will be able to explore their ideas and learn how to argue their opinions against contradicting beliefs. As a closing activity, the students will be asked to go out into the world and do something they believe is an act of free will (hug someone, high five a stranger, etc.). This closing activity will allow the discussion to continue outside of class.

3. Introduction

1. Show Wreck It Ralph Clip.
2. Ask the class to take a minute and think about Ralph's personal dilemma.
3. Raise the question "Do you think Ralph has the ability to change?"
4. Facilitate discussion about Ralph.
5. Expand discussion to the student's own ability to make life changes.
6. Add other factors: age, socioeconomic status, handicaps, etc.

4. Main Activity

1. Make sure students are seated in a circle (if not already)
2. Explain main activity
 - 2a. The first student will state a simple activity (Ex: I drank milk, I went outside, I woke up, etc.)
 - 2b. The next student will build off the original activity (Ex: ...and then I went to school, ... and then I brushed my teeth, etc.)
 - 2c. This pattern will continue around the circle until all the students have contributed an activity to the chain.
3. Demonstrate activity between facilitators.
4. Do activity.
5. Discuss if each action was done of free will or if it was predetermined by the activity that came before it.
 - 5a. Attempt to draw out the clash between claims of personal choice about identity (or free will) and the chain of cause and effect.

5. Concluding Activity

1. Summarize the main points of the discussion (2-3 minutes).
 - 1a. Write them on the board while discussing them.
2. Ask students to continue the discussion outside of the classroom.
3. Leave them with an activity to do later that day.

3a. Ask them to do something of their own free will (hug someone, high five a stranger, compliment someone you don't normally talk to, etc.) start your own change of events.

6. Suggestions for Related Activities

Compare the clip from *Wreck-It Ralph* with a clip from the Disney movie *Brave*, which is concerned with the question of personal freedom versus “fate.”