

# Developing Philosophy Curricula With an Eye Towards Personal Growth

A Research Project by Hillel Ehrenreich (COL 2020)

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Funded by the College Alumni Society

## Project Aim

- The aim of this project was to study one or more schools of philosophy that concern themselves with “the good life” and to create a high school mini-course out of what I learned.



## Course Description

### Epicureanism and the Good Life – Mini Course

- **Theoretical Underpinning**
  - When engaging high school students in the study of philosophy, we can focus not only on fostering certain *academic* benefits – such as sharpening students’ critical thinking and argumentation skills – but also on the potential *personal* benefits that the study of philosophy can bring – such as fostering insight into how we can live more peaceful, happy, and flourishing lives.
- **Execution**
  - I studied Epicurean philosophy under the supervision of Dr. Susan Meyer. I then created a 6-part, high school level mini-course on Epicurean philosophy with a focus on the philosophy’s practical teachings for living a good life.

- **Purpose:** This course has two purposes. 1. To introduce students to the study of ancient philosophy and provide them with a basic academic understanding of the central principles of Epicureanism. 2. To potentially enhance the lives of students by providing them the opportunity to engage with the practical wisdom contained in Epicurean teachings.
- **Learning Objectives:**
  - To become familiar with philosophical thinking
  - To understand the basic framework of Hellenistic Ethics
  - To be able to make sense of and articulate the Epicurean view of the “good life”
  - To increase self-awareness of personal values and direction in life
  - To determine which, if any, teachings and practices of Epicureanism can serve to improve student’s own well-being.
- **Audience:** This course has been designed for 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade high school students who have some interest in learning about the academic and practical aspects of Epicureanism. The course assumes no prior experience with philosophy

## Link to Course

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MV7DUHuCHFMgYpKXVY0tTZYiFMxT4tV5/view?usp=sharing>

## Course Outline

- **Lesson 1 – Introductions to General and Ancient Philosophy:** Considers how the ancient conception of philosophy differs from the modern conception.
- **Lesson 2 – Epicureanism in Context:** Explores how Epicureanism relates to the broader tradition of Hellenistic Philosophy.
- **Lesson 3 – Varied Approaches to the Good Life:** Survey of how a number of Greek schools answer the question “what is happiness?”
- **Lesson 4 – The Pleasure Thesis:** Delves into the Epicurean conception of Eudaimonia
- **Lesson 5 – How to Attain Eudaimonia:** Explores the strategies and advice offered by Epicureanism for attaining Eudaimonia
- **Lesson 6 – Evaluating the Epicurean Approach to the Good Life:** A Class Discussion on the Epicurean approach to the good life.