

The main aim of the course will not be for you to learn what other people have thought about these questions — though you will do that too. The main aim of the course will be for you to develop your own views on these questions. You will be evaluated mainly on the basis of your ability to defend those views by argument.

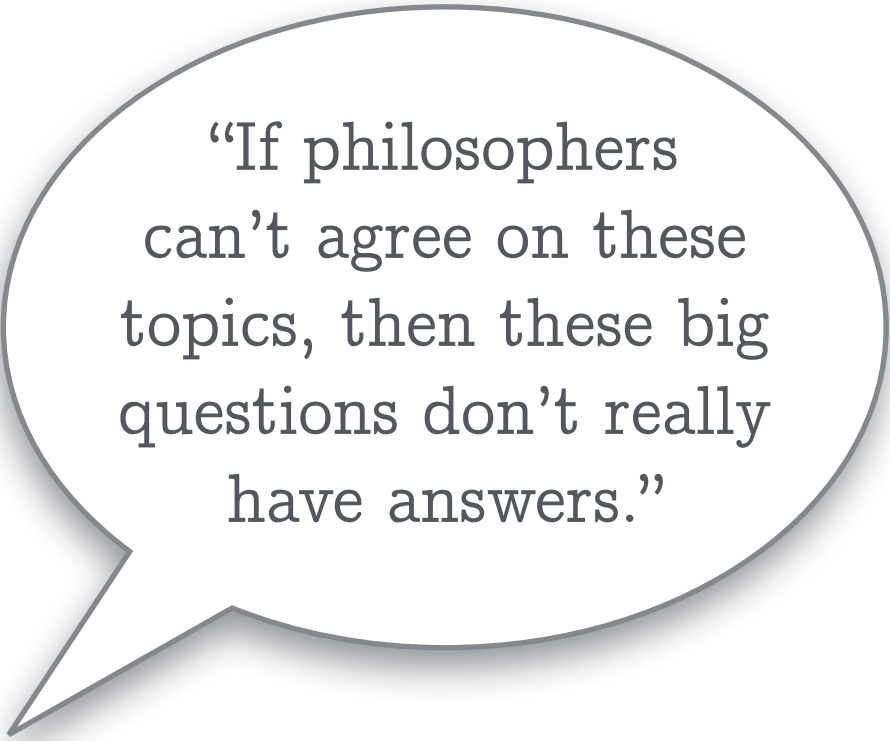
This makes philosophy different than lots of other classes you will take. Your physics professor does not ask you to come up with your own take on gravity; she'll ask you to learn and apply the theory of gravity on which physicists have agreed.

The Catholic Church has always had an optimistic view of questions like these. It has always held that these basic questions are both of great importance, and answerable by the use of human reason.

That is why (in case you were wondering) Notre Dame requires every student to
take courses in Philosophy.

Why is philosophy like this? A short answer: philosophers don't agree.

This sometimes drives students crazy. I'll give the best arguments on both sides of an issue, and students will want to be told which argument is the winner. I won't do this — and this can lead to one of two frustrated responses.

A large, light gray speech bubble with a dark gray outline and a drop shadow. It has a tail pointing towards the bottom left corner. Inside the bubble is a quote in a dark gray, monospaced font.

“If philosophers
can’t agree on these
topics, then these big
questions don’t really
have answers.”


Here is the first frustrated response:




Do you
have free
will?



**Is there a
God?**



**What are
you?**



**What
should you
believe?**

A large, solid orange circle is centered on a white background. Inside the circle, the text "What is real?" is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The text is arranged in two lines: "What is" on the top line and "real?" on the bottom line, both centered horizontally.

**What is
real?**

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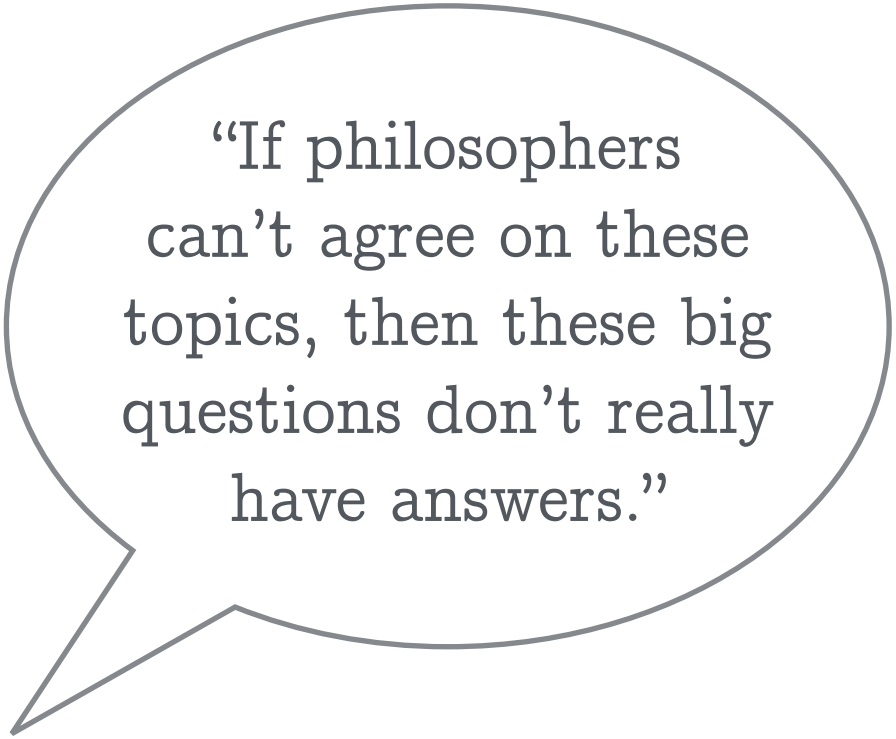
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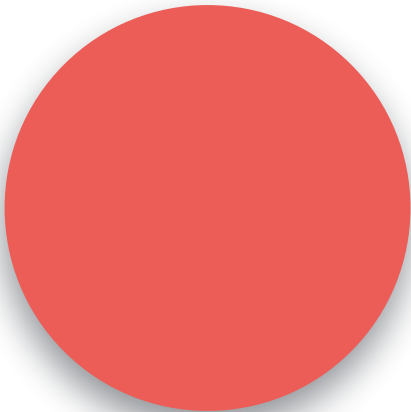
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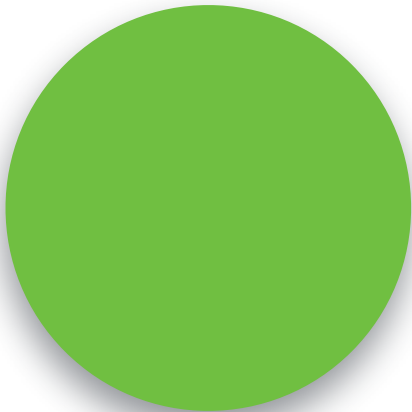
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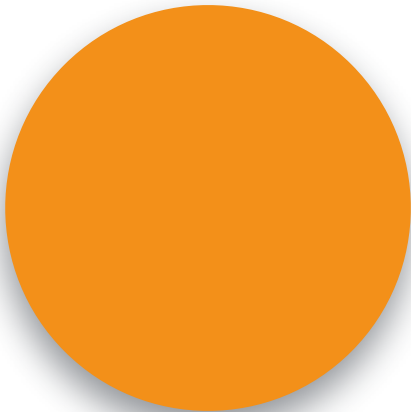
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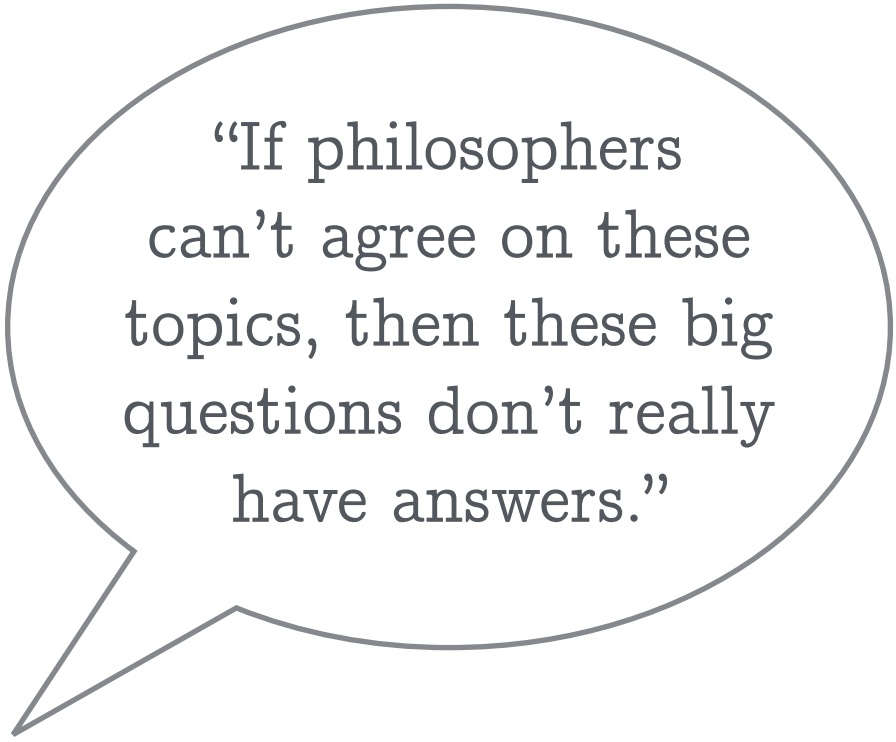










A speech bubble with a grey outline and a tail pointing towards the bottom-left corner. Inside the bubble is a quote in a typewriter-style font.

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