

Opener

- What would you do if cell phones suddenly disappeared?
- Would you be happier, healthier, more anxious, lonelier, more productive?
- Ask students to write down three positive and three negative things that would result. Randomly pick three people to respond with one point each.

5 minutes

Question everything?

- Socrates: the first philosopher.
- His mission: to find out and critically evaluate the assumptions that his fellow citizens made about how best to live.
- His method: challenging others to examine their assumptions. Often resulting in skeptical conclusions: the only thing he knew was how little he knew.
- His fate: eventually he pissed off enough people that they killed him for corrupting the youth.

15 minutes

What do we know and how do we know it?

Skepticism: a general attitude of questioning things instead of taking them for granted as true. What are its uses and limits?

Example: have cell phones destroyed a generation?

Skimming task.

- Read through cell phone article to find out:
 - Three effects that author claims cell phone use has had on the youngest generation.
 - What are the cut off dates of this generation?
 - What sources of evidence does the author use to base her conclusions on?
- How might we go about evaluating claims like this for scientific adequacy?

We need to answer two questions:

- Does the evidence support the claims made?
- Is the evidence itself reliable?

20 minutes

What is science anyway?

Science as organized skepticism.

Constraints on skepticism:

- Rejection of global skepticism
- Many eyes make all bugs shallow

- Hypothetico-deductive method
 - make claims explicit and testable
 - test them
 - put forward theories last
 - theories subject to revision based on new data, new theories, new ideas
 - aims towards integration of knowledge
- Naturalistic explanations only.

10 minutes

Philosophical questions about science

Brainstorming activity: come up with 2 of each kind of philosophical question

Questions should be:

- general
- about basic assumptions
- not the kind of questions that science answers
- the sort of questions inquisitive kids ask

Metaphysical questions: questions about reality, what exists, its basic nature and behavior

Epistemological questions: questions about knowledge, its possibility, its forms and their limitations

Axiological questions: questions of value, what matters, right and wrong, good and evil, justice, fairness, beauty

15 minutes

Conclusions

Why doesn't skepticism have to entail relativism?