

Course ID: CMEC21

Philosophical counseling: Plato and Prozac

Course director: Lou Marinoff

Teaching faculty: Anders Lindseth, Antti Mattila

Educational Objectives: Introduction to and methods in philosophical counselling

Course description: The first part of the course consists of an introductory lecture by Lou Marinoff on philosophy and philosophical counselling. The lecture traces the role of philosophy as “therapy” in the ancient world, to the rise of philosophy and science alike during the Enlightenment, to the decline of philosophy in the twentieth century, to the renaissance of philosophical practice in the twenty-first. Philosophy is not a substitute for psychiatry or for psychology. However, philosophy is an appropriate modality in cases where human problems are not grounded, or not grounded solely, in somatic diseases or affective disorders, but rather in noetic discomforts stemming not from circumstances themselves, but from views taken of them. Hence Plato and Prozac can be complementary in treating the whole patient.

The second part of the course will present case studies and methods in philosophical counselling, with the aim of distinguishing noetic problems from somatic diseases and affective disorders. Evaluation of case studies raises important questions about methodology in philosophical counselling, an issue on which there is divergent opinion and little consensus. This is deemed to be a good thing for philosophical practice, which is not rooted in the scientific method, but which offers humanistic, hermeneutic and maieutic perspectives on human problems. In the proper context, such perspectives are quite compatible with rigorous medical science.

1. Summaries of case studies, with methodological commentary, by each presenter (45 min)
2. Questions and answers from the audience (15 min)
3. Demonstration of philosophical counselling with a volunteer subject (30 min)
4. Commentaries by the other two presenters (30 min)
5. Questions and answers from the audience (20 min)

Target audience: Psychiatrists at trainee or specialist levels.

Course level: Basic.