

A Discourse on Social Action

Description • Modality

This course begins 24 January 2010, 20 June 2010, and 26 September 2010

Course Content

Participants in A Discourse on Social Action explore a few fundamental concepts that help create a discourse on social action such as the purpose of existence, human nature, and the relationship between the individual and social institutions. They are asked to reflect on the historical moment through which humanity is passing, and on the nature of a twofold moral purpose – to transform both oneself and society – that is to give direction to our endeavors. The text examines two essential forces that should continually operate in our lives, attraction to beauty and thirst for knowledge, and proposes that moral purpose can only be pursued through a life of service to humanity. It ends by exploring yet another idea that is crucial to social action: true service requires a humble and sincere posture of learning.

The course also emphasizes the importance of language as a tool that permits reflecting on experience in an orderly manner, and seeks to strengthen powers of written and spoken expression in order that aims and goals may be more precisely articulated and the nature of action and learning more clearly described.

To whom is this course directed?

Many young people going through higher education are preparing themselves to engage in society and apply certain spiritual principles to societal change. A Discourse on Social Action is directed primarily to youth in the early years of university who have a desire to work with others to contribute to effective social action. This course creates a space within which students are invited to think about the purpose of their learning and action, and to advance in their understanding and application of some of the capabilities required to engage meaningfully in activities dedicated to social transformation.

Course Modality

The online study of A Discourse on Social Action has been designed to encourage the approximation of the elements of reflection, discussion, and thought about the application of concepts in action that characterize the in-person study of these materials.

Below you will find questions about certain aspects of the course modality – the study group, the course tutor, the program coordination and administration, as well as about aspects of a typical week, including the work load and the structure of the course site.

How does the Internet-based study of A Discourse on Social Action work?

The organizational structure of the Internet-based course presently has the following components:

Study Group of Ten to Fifteen Participants Connected Online

Participants in one online group may be located anywhere in the world. Interactions amongst students and between students and the tutor occur entirely online.

Tutor

The tutor is connected to the program coordination and administration as well as to a group of students. This tutor reads the "Words and Concepts" exercises, monitors - and at times enters - the online Discussion Forum, and responds to the group's assignments each week, giving collective and individual feedback.

Tutors also receive guidance regularly from the program coordination, including highlights from responses of students in other groups in different parts of the world.

Program Coordination and Administration

There is an overall Coordinator of the program, who collaborates with the tutors, with an Information Officer - who sends and receives electronic correspondence about the program up to the point of a potential student submitting an application - and a Course Registrar who receives applications, communicates admissions decisions, and with whom accepted students correspond regarding details of registration and course functioning.

How long is the course?

The online study of A Discourse on Social Action lasts 12 weeks. Occasionally other study formats may be offered.

How is the course organized?

The course site permits reading the text and responding to the questions directly online. A weekly outline directs students to weekly readings, and to the assignments they are asked to submit to the tutor as well as those that are shared with the study group through a Discussion Forum.

Tutor responses to individual exercises appear in a text box below the exercise, and group responses from the tutor, along with any correspondence from the program coordination and administration, appear on the site in an area called "From your tutor".

An area called "Student <> Tutor Dialogue" permits tutors and students to correspond about any aspect of the study of the course, including content and technical questions.

How does a typical week work?

From Sunday to Wednesday, students are asked to read and respond, online, to "Words and Concepts" exercises and Reflection Questions.

Wednesday, the ability to enter responses closes, and students turn their attention to the submission of concise thoughts to one or more Discussion Questions, shared with the whole group through the Discussion Forum.

From Thursday to Saturday, students read the Discussion Question submissions of others in their group, and, by Saturday, submit a response to the Discussion Forum.

The tutor reads and responds to Wednesday-submitted exercises by Sunday of the upcoming week, and normally sends a group response on the lesson as a whole before Monday of the following week.

How much work is required of each course participant?

Participants spend an average of approximately 10-15 hours per week on course reading and written assignments.

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