About the Program

SFU Philosophers’ Café is your chance to discuss philosophical issues with members of your community. Join the conversations throughout Metro Vancouver.

All Cafés are free and open to the public. No need to register. You don’t need formal training or experience, just a willingness to listen and exchange ideas.

Follow us on Facebook @philosopherscafeSFU
Check our website for Pop-Up Cafés
Sign up for our email list sfu.ca/philosopherscafe

SFU Philosophers’ Café | 778-782-5042 | cafes@sfu.ca

Celebrating 20 years of thoughtful conversation
Moderator:

What are the pros and cons of urban densification?

How do we encourage constructive, engaged community members?

What do immigrants contribute to Canada?

End all war?

Are there any good wars? What would it take to have a world where there are no more wars?

What is your idea of community? What are the characteristics that define a community and what are the requirements for membership?

What does it mean to plan ahead? What are the constraints?

A good death: what does this mean to you?

Can you plan ahead? What are the constraints?

How do we encourage constructive, engaged citizenship?

How can we foster a sense of community?

How do we renew our energy during our holidays?

How do we stay connected with our loved ones?

How is social media changing human behaviour?

What defines “art”? When someone refers to themselves as an “artist,” what do they claim to be?

How does that illuminate various perspectives in our society?

What do you hope attendees leave with?

Years ago, Brian Fraser created a personal vision statement as to how he wanted to approach life: participate in provocative conversations that generate flourishing communities. He now uses this same approach when moderating Philosophers’ Cafés.

How did you get involved in Philosophers’ Café?

I’d been to several Cafés before I started moderating. Randall MacKinnon, who moderates the West Vancouver Memorial Library Cafés, asked me if I wanted to do a Café on conversations and I said yes. I work as a minister half-time for Brentwood Presbyterian Church and I have a consulting company called JazzThink that focuses on how you think about the conversations you have—which connects with Philosophers’ Café.

To be honest, more questions—but questions that may be more clearly defined. [They’ve] spent an hour and a half listening and throwing out suggestions, contending for a particular position or finding out how critical [they] are of someone else’s positions. And hopefully, that’s helped clarify another level of understanding and curiosity...providing that safe space for those differences and mixtures to be explored is really important. I think there are fewer and fewer spaces for the kind of respectful dialogue that the Philosophers’ Café is committed to fostering and provoking. There are fewer places where that can happen.

What topics do you like to discuss?

We tend to focus on topics that have to do with issues around the meaning of life. How your basic core values affect your participation in various social issues. We tend to bring it back to core values like, what are the variety of world views, the variety of philosophies, what is the wisdom that you love and how does that illuminate various perspectives in our society?

What do you hope attendees leave with?

To be honest, more questions—but questions that may be more clearly defined. [They’ve] spent an hour and a half listening and throwing out suggestions, contending for a particular position or finding out how critical [they] are of someone else’s positions. And hopefully, that’s helped clarify another level of understanding and curiosity...providing that safe space for those differences and mixtures to be explored is really important. I think there are fewer and fewer spaces for the kind of respectful dialogue that the Philosophers’ Café is committed to fostering and provoking. There are fewer places where that can happen.

What topics do you like to discuss?

We tend to focus on topics that have to do with issues around the meaning of life. How your basic core values affect your participation in various social issues. We tend to bring it back to core values like, what are the variety of world views, the variety of philosophies, what is the wisdom that you love and how does that illuminate various perspectives in our society?

What do you hope attendees leave with?

To be honest, more questions—but questions that may be more clearly defined. [They’ve] spent an hour and a half listening and throwing out suggestions, contending for a particular position or finding out how critical [they] are of someone else’s positions. And hopefully, that’s helped clarify another level of understanding and curiosity...providing that safe space for those differences and mixtures to be explored is really important. I think there are fewer and fewer spaces for the kind of respectful dialogue that the Philosophers’ Café is committed to fostering and provoking. There are fewer places where that can happen.

What topics do you like to discuss?

We tend to focus on topics that have to do with issues around the meaning of life. How your basic core values affect your participation in various social issues. We tend to bring it back to core values like, what are the variety of world views, the variety of philosophies, what is the wisdom that you love and how does that illuminate various perspectives in our society?

What do you hope attendees leave with?

To be honest, more questions—but questions that may be more clearly defined. [They’ve] spent an hour and a half listening and throwing out suggestions, contending for a particular position or finding out how critical [they] are of someone else’s positions. And hopefully, that’s helped clarify another level of understanding and curiosity...providing that safe space for those differences and mixtures to be explored is really important. I think there are fewer and fewer spaces for the kind of respectful dialogue that the Philosophers’ Café is committed to fostering and provoking. There are fewer places where that can happen.
Antinomianism: is it acceptable to do what is a reality to be experienced?

Going beyond the robot: can we overcome our tendency to go on autopilot in order to experience human mind?

Do you experience anything you define as “magic” or “philosophy,” “essence” or “spirit” ever exist? Does it have implications for social action?

Is shame an effective parenting method? How does living in Vancouver affect your artistic choice, what system would you choose? What is your ideal school?

Should we value animals based on their utility to us? What's on your bucket list? What experiences or achievements do you hope to have during your lifetime?

Is the mystery of life a problem to be solved or something we should pursue as a life goal or does it just happen? What are the key forces that we need to shape a happy life?

Are you free to choose your future? What is the role of personal responsibility in freedom and do we really have a choice?

Is it true that all human action is motivated by self-interest? Some economic theorists and many people assume that humans are essentially selfish, is this view of human nature correct?

Is the quest for happiness legitimate? Is it fitting or peculiar to offer university courses to prison inmates? Is there an incongruity between incarceration and education, or does it make sense to bring university courses into a prison setting?

Research suggests that constant exposure to digital media changes how our brains process information. Does it matter if we lose our capacity for long-form prose?

Is it possible that all human action is motivated by self-interest? Some economic theorists and many people assume that humans are essentially selfish, is this view of human nature correct?

What differences do you feel are better?