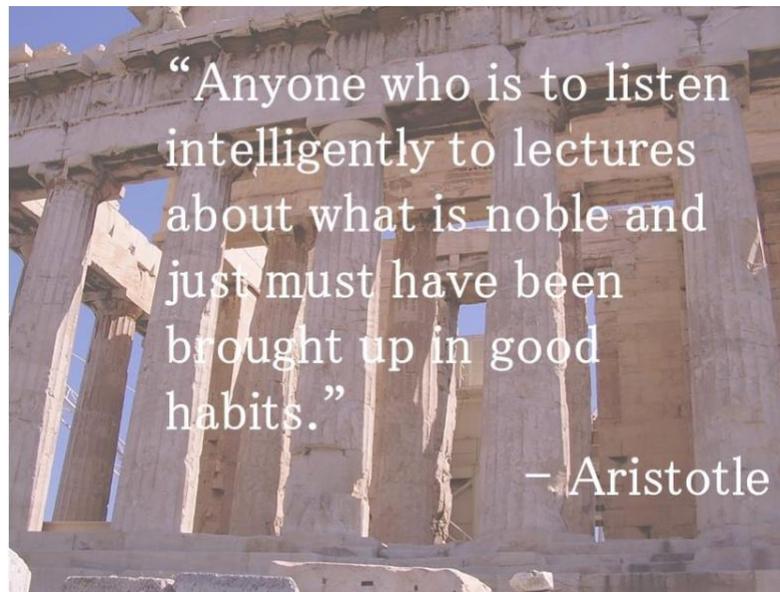


The Good Citizen – Human Nature and Public Life



Why?

Philosophical thought has a lot to contribute to the idea that being a good citizen is a fundamental part of what it is to be a good human being, period. The project consists in a one day-long event, hosted by the Philosophy Department at the University of Pittsburgh, open to high school students in the Greater Pittsburgh Area who will vote for the first time in the 2020 Presidential elections. The attendees (about 20-25) will participate in various activities aimed at encouraging reflection on the significance of political engagement and participation in democracy.** The event will also include a short essay competition: the best essay will be awarded a monetary prize and published on the Department's website.

When?

A Saturday in late September/early October 2020.

Whom for?

High school students voting for the first time in 2020 Presidential elections.

How many?

Aiming for 20-25 students, signing up voluntarily.

Where?

The Philosophy Department at the University of Pittsburgh.

How will students know about it?

Project advertised in Greater Pittsburgh Area high schools (public & private), on social media, and in the local press.

Who funds the event?

An application for a \$2000 grant from the American Philosophical Association has been sent. Likely to know the outcome at the end of the summer.

What?

The day-long event will be divided in three 'phases':

Morning (10-noon): Activities and discussion in small groups (up to 7 students each) run by the project coordinator and other graduate students. Each small group will explore the theme "Human nature and public life" from a different 'angle': each group leader will bring their philosophical expertise to bear on the event's theme and will plan activities accordingly. This phase should be organized similarly to a recitation session, with which all graduate students at Pitt are familiar with. There will be two rotations of 45 minutes each, with a break in between.

Lunch break (offered by the organizers)

Early afternoon (1-2 pm): "Interactive lecture" by a Philosophy Department faculty member (TBD) on a topic, accessible to high school students, related to the theme of 'Human Nature and Public Life'.

Late afternoon 2 (2-4 pm): Individual writing for the essay prize.

Example of essay prompt: *Do you think engaging in public life, even minimally by voting in elections, is useful? Motivate your answer.**

What happens after the event?

The participants will receive a survey where they can give feedback and suggestions regarding both the format and the contents of the event. The data from the survey will be analyzed and used to inform the next steps. Ideally, this can become an annual 'tradition' for the Philosophy Department, a day in which we open our doors to young students who might one day become philosophy majors!

* The essays will be collected at the end of the day and read by a committee of grad students and faculty members. A prize of \$250 will be given to the best essay.

****Disclaimer:** this event does not seek to promote any specific political views, and there will be no direct talk about particular presidential candidates with the goal of influencing voters. The main purpose of the project is to offer young citizens time and space to reflect on what it means to participate in a democratic society and on the impact of social-political engagement in an individual's life.