

Top 10 Books Taught in College Philosophy Courses

For most of Western history, philosophy held a place of the highest honor in education. Studies in philosophy would begin at about age 15 and continue through age 18... and beyond for those who chose to specialize in the subject.

[America's schools](#) more or less followed this same pattern of philosophical studies until toward the end of the 19th century.

Fast forward to today, and American schools have removed philosophy from the curriculum in the teenage years and relegated to a minor role in higher education. For most, their exposure to philosophy consists of one introductory course for a general requirement in college. As many have recently [pointed out](#), the declined influence of philosophy has had detrimental effects on the quality of thought and discourse in America.

Realistically, if the modern person wants to become better versed in philosophy—as were his forebears—he's going to have to do a lot of the leg work himself.

For a start, I have listed below the top 10 books taught in philosophy courses in American universities today. It's not a perfect list, but the books included in it will at least help you better understand the human condition and some of the ideas that have shaped the modern world:

1) [The Nicomachean Ethics](#), Aristotle

2) [Utilitarianism](#), John Stuart Mill

- 3) [*The Republic*](#), Plato
- 4) [*Meditations on First Philosophy*](#), Descartes
- 5) [*Dialogues*](#), Plato
- 6) [*The Metaphysics of Morals*](#), Immanuel Kant
- 7) [*Existentialism is a Humanism*](#), Jean-Paul Sartre
- 8) [*Leviathan*](#), Thomas Hobbes
- 9) [*An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*](#)
- 10) [*The Metaphysics*](#), Aristotle

p.s. If reading these is difficult and slow-going, don't worry: it's supposed to be! As Francis Bacon said, "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested." Most philosophical works fall into the third category.

H/T [*The Open Syllabus Project*](#)