Engaging Lectures:
Philosophy through Relevance and Recency

Angażujące wykłady.
Filozofia poprzez istotność i aktualność

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Abstract. The article addresses the challenge of student engagement in undergraduate lectures on philosophy. It presents a variation of the problem-based approach to course design, proposing an emphasis on relevance and recency as effective means for drawing students into the material, while also helping them to understand that philosophy is very much alive today. Two example modules are also provided to illustrate the idea – one concerning personal identity and the other concerning existentialism. They can be adapted and integrated into existing courses outright, or they may be used as models informing the development of new modules exploring different issues.

Keywords: course design; module; engagement; lecture; higher education

Abstrakt. W artykule poruszono kwestię zaangażowania studentów w wykłady z filozofii na poziomie studiów licencjackich. Przedstawiono wybrane podejście do tworzenia kursów oparte na omawianiu konkretnych problemów, proponując przy tym nacisk na istotność i aktualność jako skuteczne sposoby na zaangażowanie i przyciągnięcie uwagi studentów do omawianego materiału, jednocześnie pomagające im zrozumieć, że filozofia jest wciąż żywą dziedziną. W celu zilustrowania tego pomysłu przedstawiono również dwa przykładowe moduły – jeden dotyczący

tożsamości osobistej, a drugi egzystencjalizmu. Mogą one zostać zaadaptowane i zintegrowane z istniejącymi kursami lub mogą być wykorzystane jako przykład prezentujący rozwój nowych modułów badających różne zagadnienia.

Słowa kluczowe: projekt kursu; moduł; zaangażowanie; wykład; studia wyższe

INTRODUCTION

Undergraduate philosophy courses are often taught across European universities as a basic program requirement, with the courses themselves being tendered as lectures. In effect, class sizes tend to be very large and include many students that are not necessarily interested in being there, while limiting the individuals leading them to a rigid format that discourages student engagement. The challenge for the lecturer is accordingly designing a course that draws students into the material, and doing so at scale with a potentially uninterested audience. This work presents a simple solution that has proven effective in the classroom in the standard lecture format with large undergraduate groups.

The proposal is a basic reorientation of the well-known thematic or problem--based approach to philosophy, where rather than pursuing themes or problems, the material is designed around personal relevance to students, with an emphasis placed on contemporary thought. Issues and topics in philosophy are presented in modules that bear on the lives of the students in some way – with the modules being structured to ultimately reach relatively recent material, engaging with figures that are still alive today or that were active in recent decades. The interplay of relevance and recency are the guiding ideas of the proposed course design, building upon standard problem-based approaches.

The article consists of two sections and a short conclusion. The first section outlines the proposed modules. In closing the section, some of the challenges in implementing this sort of approach are also discussed. The second section presents two example modules that have proven popular in my own courses – one concerning identity and the other concerning existentialism, together with context.

COURSE DESIGN

There are many different approaches to teaching philosophy, particularly where seminar formats or tutorials are concerned (see, e.g., Gettings 2013; Wolfe 2022). There are considerably fewer approaches available to us in the context of a lecture course delivered to a classroom of over a hundred undergraduate

students, with many of the tools for engaging students in smaller tutorials simply not carrying over. The traditional or standard approach is one that effectively presents the history of philosophy, following a standard chronological format; it begins with antiquity and progresses to some later period, discussing figures and movements along the way. While courses like this provide an intuitive framework for preparing and presenting, they often render the philosophical issues they cover distant and abstract.[1] In my own limited experience with this sort of approach, it is simply not effective at engaging students, with attendance falling off quickly.

The most popular alternative is the thematic or problem-based approach – which focuses on exploring issues like free will or properties and universals rather than chronological progression (see, e.g., Blackburn 1999; Chaffee 2015; Perry, Bratman, Fischer 2021). This approach is naturally modular, in that it allows the lecturer to break from the chronological constraints of the standard approach.[2] The different problems of philosophy serve as more or less independent modules, such that the order of the problems is more a question of potential interplay than chronology. That being said, the usual modules relating to problems like universals are still limited in their ability to draw students into the material. The natural solution to this is to incorporate a type of module specifically designed to engage students that can either supplement or altogether replace the standard modules in a traditional problem-centered approach. The proposal here is to take relevance and recency as effective guides in designing engaging modules that can be incorporated into the problem-based framework, with each playing a clear role in determining their direction and structure.

Where relevance is concerned, the idea is to design these modules around issues that bear on the current situation of the students. This is a well-known means for improving student engagement across fields and levels of education (see, e.g., Anderman, Maehr 1994; Jang, Reeve, Deci 2010). It is also well-known in the context of teaching philosophy, with there being a subset of problem--based approaches to teaching philosophy that emphasize relevance in structuring course material (see, e.g., Moore, Bruder 2023; Titus, Smith, Nolan 1994).[3]

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[1] The traditional chronological approach remains popular in Europe, particularly among lecturers not trained in philosophy, with courses often taught on the basis of detailed histories of philosophy (e.g. Copleston 1946) or chronological introductions (e.g. Garvey, Stangroom 2012). I cannot speak for course trends elsewhere.

[2] Modularity is here intended in the familiar sense of structuring courses into independent units (see, e.g., Cornford 1997; Goldschmid, Goldschmid 1973).

[3] It is worth noting that this relevance is sometimes tenuous – Titus et. al's *Living Issues in Philosophy* (1994) is perhaps the most well-known example of this sort of approach, but many

These modules may be paired with any number of themes, including traditions in literary philosophy, basic issues in philosophy of language, identity and individuation, perception and experience, etc. In addition to selecting material that stands to be relevant in itself, the further suggestion here is that it needs to be presented in a way that accentuates that relevance and draws some sort of connections to the students. These "relevance connections" can be made through ethical or practical concerns that engage with contemporary social issues or personal experience; they can also be made through the presentation of simple but interesting and problematic observations outlined with basic and relatable phrasing. For instance, to raise the topic of names in philosophy of language, one might ask how it is that when we say "Aristotle," it manages to refer to an individual from an altogether different age, to reach back thousands of years to some guy from Stagira. To raise the topic of perception and embodiment, we might ask the students to reflect on how unusual it is that we can do such complicated physical things without so much as thinking about them, or simply present and briefly discuss a few illusions.

Moving past relevance (and presentation), the other guiding idea, recency, consists in engaging material that is fairly contemporary – involving the positions of individuals that are alive today or that were at least active in the last few decades. The point is to show students that philosophy is not just something that is potentially relevant or interesting, but that philosophy is a living field with ongoing developments. This novel emphasis goes a long way in engaging students, particularly where the issues can be brought down to some simplified level at which they can bring their own intuitions to bear. Students have found this unexpected and interesting, with students reporting as much in the free-form comment section of student surveys about the class as well as in post-lecture discussions and correspondence.

To achieve this inclusion of recent philosophy, the theme or issue chosen for the module is itself chronologically structured – moving from earlier positions to more recent and usually more relatable positions as it progresses. This introduces the easy-to-follow flow of the chronological approach, only presented on a smaller scale and relating to a more specific issue, helping to structure the material while also limiting what the student needs to keep track of as the module progresses. This micro-chronology is a feature of some problem-based

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of the topics covered remain rather distant to the average student. Moreover, the material there is insufficient for a lecture program – particularly of the type described in this paper, doubly so considering the length of each module, noted later.

approaches, as they move from the genesis of the problem through different approaches that emerged over time.

The modules themselves are be designed to span three or so meetings, assuming 90-minute lecture sessions. A given semester accordingly consists of a few modules. This extended format is intended to provide the time necessary to express and explore the connection between the material and our everyday contexts while also developing the chronological phases of a given module in the requisite detail. The goal is accordingly not to present a bite-sized problem every week, but a progression through some broader issue or theme, allowing for anecdotes and additional explanations that better draw the students into the subject – while indirectly motivating them to attend class to class. This module format also leaves students with a manageable amount of material to catch up on if they happen to miss a lecture or two, while also allowing them to get something of a fresh start with the subsequent modules.

Taken together, the suggestion is to create modules that bear some basic relevance to the students (or that can at least be presented that way) and that ultimately involve contemporary or recent positions in philosophy broadly construed. They may move chronologically through a select set of positions, concluding with material relating to the state of the art of the issue in question. This framework is of course also best supported with the active involvement of students using the limited means available to us in the lecture format. That includes regularly inviting questions but also prompting the students to vote on things or to poll them – that is, to present something and then asking the students to raise their hands if they find it compelling, intuitive, etc. This is sometimes then coupled with additional questions, which further draw the students into the lecture. The voting or polling at the very least provides a metric for the lecturer of who is actually listening and who is not, which is useful in prototyping these modules.

There are structural challenges here. Relating to the design of the course as a whole, there is the basic matter of ensuring that these modules play together. While it is easy enough to present the course as covering a series of distinct problems, it is of course better if the problems can be made to hang together somehow. This is relatively easy to do when attempting to situate a couple of these modules within a larger course. It requires additional thought if one is looking to design an entire series of modules – granted, designing an entire course faces this sort of difficulty regardless of the format, even in the case of standard chronological approaches. The second challenge is that there are very many different problems in philosophy, and it is ultimately up to the teacher to determine which ones they would like to design modules for – while also trying

to gauge what students will find interesting, determining the plausibility of producing some such module given a particular subject, etc. It goes without saying that what we as academics might find interesting is not necessarily something students will find interesting, particularly in an undergraduate course.[4]

The final and principal challenge is, however, that this sort of approach requires more of the teacher than a standard textbook treatment. In designing modules, the teacher will need to be familiar enough with a given field to understand what the contemporary state of the art is like in order to introduce the recency advocated for here. Lecturers that are not themselves trained in philosophy may find this challenging or even daunting. That being said, these same lecturers are still in a position to design interesting modules that relate to their background – producing one or two modules to supplement their existing problem-based course rather than an entire series. Their expertise, and indeed their passion for their field, means that they may very well be in a better position to present interesting philosophical perspectives relating to those fields. For instance, an individual with a background in the natural sciences may be fairly comfortable designing a module exploring basic issues in the philosophy of science, and lecturers with a background in the humanities may have unique insights into literary philosophy or historicism. These different lecturers may very well be able to produce better, more engaging modules relating to their own fields than those trained in philosophy, while the latter would have an easier time preparing a series of modules ranging across fields. Whatever the challenges, two such modules are outlined in the section that follows – which I hope will help illustrate what this sort of module might look like, and which can themselves be readily integrated into an existing problem-based approach.

MODULE EXAMPLES

Two example modules are presented below, each of which has proven effective in my own courses. They are intended to be detailed to a point, providing an outline of the material covered in each case. The two modules are very different,

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[4]   A further minor concern that was raised by a reviewer was the potential for oversimplifying the material in pursuit of compartmentalizing topics into modules. While that may be an issue in advanced contexts, introductory courses like the one being discussed here rather benefit from this structuring, as it allows for depth that may otherwise not be attainable in a competing chronological format. It provides time for introducing basic concepts at the outset that can then be sharpened and furthered in a focused development of the module topic, which is not always easy when proceeding chronologically, particularly when dealing with heterogenous fields like philosophy, which spans ethics, ontology, logic, epistemology, etc.

both in substance and style – which in itself should help illustrate the diversity of topics available for development into these modules. The first centers on the issue of personal identity, and the second explores existentialism as an expression of literary philosophy. The discussion of identity examines classic figures and topics while prominently featuring thought experiments drawn from the literature on identity. The discussion of existentialism similarly moves through major figures, but with a story-telling element and more relatable and even familiar social perspectives.

These two examples are intended to serve as a rough guide for anyone interested in designing their own modules, perhaps relating more to their own area of expertise. I would also invite anyone interested in exploring this approach to borrow these modules and to adapt them for their own courses. While the below is only a pair of outlines, they are detailed enough to require only a (relatively) small amount of work on the part of an interested lecturer to develop into complete scripts or presentations.

1. Personal identity

The module about personal identity conveys traditional philosophical considerations, involving definitions, conceptual engineering, and very prominently featuring thought experiments. The module plan at a distance is to open with a discussion of John Locke, followed by a problematization and solution taken from Sydney Shoemaker. This is then followed by a discussion of Derek Parfit's thought experiments. Finally, animalist and embodied positions may be discussed as emerging views in contemporary work. Each step is described in more detail below.

INTRODUCTION: The module is introduced with a discussion of identity in its most general sense – sketching the fundamental nature of identity, as it carves up the world around us into individual things. This leads into the specific problem of personal identity, which is a more complex and interesting extension of that basic issue. The connection to our current context is easy enough to draw. On the one hand, there is the curious and compelling question of who the students are – and whether they are the same person they were as children, or even last year. On the other, there is the more social question of identity and responsibility, where the former plays an essential role in establishing the latter, such that individuals deserve praise and wrongdoers deserve punishments for their past actions that follow their person, and simple questions of whether a criminal in their youth is still a criminal in their old age, following reform, etc. There are other ways to frame personal identity, but a combination of the

above reflexive and social perspectives has proven effective in my experience, as raising both the theoretical and practical dimensions of the issue, with the initial presentation often polarizing the class.

LOCKE: The module centers on Locke as presenting a seminal conception of identity. This particular phase of the course is interesting, in that it allows us to present Locke's work in the original, using his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (2004). Though the language is somewhat antiquated, the familiarity of the ideas presented there ought to be emphasized to the students; it is fairly remarkable that the characterization that Locke presented hundreds of years ago is still intuitive and even fairly common today. The material also happens to explore the definition with the help of colorful thought experiments – ranging from the soul of a prince to sleepwalking Socrates.

It provides a complete initial picture of Locke's position, with the thought experiments introducing details piecemeal. They also serve to contrast his position with simpler views that would take personal identity as consisting in the body or in the soul. The crucial distinction that Locke draws between the human and the person is also presented in thought experiment form via the prince and the cobbler, while also illustrating the intuitive appeal of Locke's position. These little thought experiments set the tone for the entire module, as thought experiments will recur throughout. They also offer an excellent means for engaging students directly, as each thought experiment can be presented and paired with student voting – such that the students are asked to raise their hands if they feel that Socrates should be punished given the sketched situation, or whether they think the cobbler is actually the prince, etc.

SHOEMAKER: The transition to Shoemaker is a transition to problematizing the basic Lockean view. Two criticisms of that basic view are presented. It opens with the direct memory problem, which is illustrated with the standard example of an individual in three phases of their lives, where in their old age they no longer remember their youth (Reid 2011). A rudimentary technical solution is introduced by modifying the position to require "indirect memory" – which works but which is explained to be at best unsatisfactory and at worst incoherent. We then turn to the personal memory problem (Reid 2011; Shoemaker 1984), according to which memory already assumes identity. This is illustrated, and the solution this time comes in the form of Shoemaker's "Quasi-memory" (Shoemaker 1984). It is likened to the simpler example earlier involving "indirect memory," only sharper and more technically interesting. It is shown to force us away from Locke's position.

At this point, we can turn to Shoemaker's solution involving causality (Ibidem), which is fairly easy to sketch in its basic form. The position is presented as advancing a similar continuity view, only that rather than appealing

to memory, it appeals to causal networks of mental states – with the position being illustrated with a handful of examples that emphasize the intuitive appeal of the position beyond the seemingly technical components. This is communicated as presenting an example of the relatively sophisticated current positions on identity, and which have moved past those basic problems seen with Locke.

PARFIT: The discussion of Parfit is perhaps the most interesting part of the course for students, as it consists in exploring the intuitions of the students through a wide range of thought experiments and modifications (Parfit 1984). Brain transplants present an excellent series of thought experiments, which prompt us to consider the basic question of survival in a situation where our entire brain is transplanted to another body. This is then modified to say that only one hemisphere of our brain is transplanted to another person's body, or to a clean and fully functional clone, etc. At each step, the students are given an opportunity to vote on whether they feel that we would survive the procedure in question, and that is followed by a vote about whether we should survive assuming Shoemaker's proposal – which helps reinforce their understanding of that position while also illustrating to them where their intuitions might diverge from his view.

This culminates in the fission problem (Ibidem). That is, the students are asked to consider a case in which each of their hemispheres are transplanted to two different bodies. They vote, and then the classic logical issue is elaborated. Parfit's own view on the issue is then discussed, as tempering our ambitions or even the sense of pursuing accounts of identity in the traditional philosophical mode. This is again emphasized as a very current and significant view, communicating that we are here engaging with living, contemporary ideas and views in the field.

While having the students vote literally engages them in the course and also seems to interest them as they see others voting differently, the examples can also be made sharper and made to provide an opportunity for interaction in this otherwise stilted lecture format; the examples can be structured to gradually isolate intuitions which can then be discussed. For instance, there are often groups of students that vote against our survival in the case where our brain is transplanted but we suffer from severe physical disabilities, whereas they vote for our survival in the case where our brain is transplanted but we suffer no physical disabilities. This provides a nice moment to discuss differences in how different people conceptualize identity, and where those individuals would lean toward interpretations of identity that diverge from the standard psychological continuity view emphasized to that point. Furthermore, these examples often lead to more general but equally important observations and questions from students – one that is surprisingly often raised is that brain transplants aren't actually done and that these thought experiments are accordingly pointless. It

provides an effective opportunity to illustrate the significance of this sort of hypothetical thinking, where although no one is transplanting brains, the answers provide insights into how we see the world. That is, it provides an opportunity to illustrate the significance of this type of philosophical thinking.

ANIMALISM: The modules are tweaked and paired differently from semester to semester and year to year. Depending on the arrangement, the above material does sometimes provide enough for the whole module. In cases where the above leaves some time in during the last lecture, animalism and more recent embodiment views are discussed as representing a contemporary trend in discussions of identity. This simply consists in presenting the idea that our identities are tied to our organism – where the notion of an organism can be variously defined. The position is contrasted with the psychological continuity views described earlier, together with a few reconsiderations of the earlier thought experiments. No particular individuals are referenced here – it is taken as a nice closing foil to the main discussion relating to Locke, Shoemaker, and Parfit.

SUMMARY: The relevance connection for the module is based on curiosity and practical issues, with the former relating to the student's reflection on their own identity and the latter relating to responsibility, reward, and punishment. There is a strong sense of recency here, in that Shoemaker and Parfit are fairly contemporary thinkers, with the thought experiments also appealing to futuristic scenarios. The module is relatively easy to deliver, and all of the students are invited to participate via voting. The activity prompted by the module is remarkable given the lecture format.

2. Existentialism

The module about existentialism presents a form of literary and social philosophy – one that focuses on individual world-views and centers on stories and illustrations rather than thought experiments. It opens with a sketch of the fundamental questions that existentialism raises, which is thought of as pursuing the notion of individuality and a profound confrontation with our own personal existence. The module plan begins with Søren Kierkegaard as representing a very early from of religiously centered existentialism, proceeds to Friedrich Nietzsche and his emphasis on society and values, and concludes with Jean-Paul Sartre and Simon de Beauvoir together with their emphasis on people as projects. Each presents a distinct world-view and approach to life, with Sartre and Beauvoir relating to both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Again, each step is described in more detail below.

INTRODUCTION: The introduction to this module is relatively complex, though appropriately so given the subject. The general characteristics of

existentialism are presented, together with the usual discussion of the fact that it was not a coherent movement but more of a collection of individuals with often very different views, approaches, etc. This is coupled with an explanation of the dual philosophical and literary character of existentialism, with many existentialist works presenting something nearer to literature and art than to philosophy, and vice versa. It is explained that we can turn to the literary expression of existentialism to set the tone for the coming discussion, as it relates to the core feelings and perspectives that the related philosophical positions often build upon. This literary engagement only serves as an introduction and extends to just one text; the rest of the module is promised to focus on philosophy.

This sketch is then followed by a brief introduction of Fyodor Dostoevsky and his *Notes from Underground* (1994), presented as something of an existentialist manifesto. Its uniqueness is described, and then sections are read to the students beginning with the introduction. This has a strong effect on the room, with the very emotionally charged and sometimes shocking nature of the work. It serves to capture the student's attention, which is then followed with a shift to an introduction of the philosophical expressions of existentialism, emphasizing issues revolving around human values and our agency. This includes our relationship with others, with social structures, and the nature of the self.

The relevancy connection here is twofold. The reading of Dostoevsky evokes some of the basic human feelings that existentialism explores and engages the students emotionally in the topic. This is paired with simple questions that are posed in joining the philosophical expression of existentialism that will be the focus of the module – these questions are as simple as pressing the question of why the students are there – why they are in the class, why they are attending university. And they are furthered by asking them to reflect on the peculiarities of our social and cultural existence, on our being individuals but entangled in a world of others. The engagement here is not intellectual curiosity or some practical context, but an appeal to basic existentialist feelings – the subject is allowed to do the work here.

KIERKEGAARD: Though representing a fairly extreme view, Kierkegaard serves as an important early figure that sets out many important ideas. His position is presented through his basic dichotomy into the inner and outer world, with the systems of ethics being relegated to the latter. This opens the way to Kierkegaard's interesting understanding of the individual and the inner world as a sort of nothing, or of sheer possibility. Possibility in action is developed into his sense of responsibility, and then quickly into his key concept of dread. This is then paired with his example of being upon a ledge and looking down to help illustrate the idea (Kierkegaard 1980).

From here we move to the question of what all of this means for how we should live, or what substantiates all of this, following Kierkegaard. And so we transition to the place of God in his thought, which invariably alienates most if not all of the students. This is simply due to the extreme form of faith that Kierkegaard engenders and the centrality of that extreme faith in his philosophy. To help illustrate the intuitive basis of Kierkegaard's position and the distinctions he draws, the discussion is capped with his commentary concerning Abraham and Agamemnon from his *Fear and Trembling* (2006). This presents an opportunity to tell the story of Abraham and Isaac beside the story of Agamemnon and Iphigenia, with the contrast between them illustrating Kierkegaard's point in taking issue with society and ethics. The telling of each story is engaging for the students, and importantly it provides a concrete expression of what is otherwise a fairly abstract discussion.

NIETZSCHE: We then jump from Kierkegaard to Nietzsche, who is presented as a philosopher of value concerned with the individual in society. This phase of the module opens with some standard contextualization and myth busting (e.g. regarding Nazism), and then proceeds to frame his views on nihilism and values. The discussion is framed through the questions of where our values came from, why we are tumbling toward nihilism, and where we go from here. The initial question is addressed via a retelling of his account from *The Genealogy of Morals* (1913), presented as the story of slave morality. This narrative is a compelling way of conveying the material, as an interesting vision of our past. The explanation of our tumbling toward nihilism is a continuation of that story and our society, with the discussion of where we go from here relating to his ideas of overcoming nihilism and the associated mythos.

These fairly abstract, society-level observations are then addressed from the more personal perspective of what we are to take from Nietzsche, with that being communicated through his call for us to live following our own values, to live dangerously, harkening to master morality (Nietzsche 2010). The unit is closed with his little idea of eternal return as a simple Nietzschean compass for our lives (Ibidem: 341), a thought that invites us to imagine that we will be living this life over and over again, and so imploring us to live fully. This broad social discussion tends to be more interesting to the students than that of the unit on Kierkegaard, and the personal perspective fitting into it with the compass is seen as far more relatable.

SARTRE AND BEAUVOIR: Finally, we arrive at the most recent position here – the existentialism of Sartre and Beauvoir. The discussion begins with Sartre and explores the sense in which there is a fundamental nihilating component to us as people, characterizing his view of the individual as a sort of nothingness (Sartre 1993). This is explored in both the sense of our temporality and the more popular

example of our playing roles – i.e., where you may play the role of a waiter, but are not at bottom a waiter. The sense of nothingness and the clear social character of his position draw clear connections to Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, respectively. This is also perhaps the most inviting view, as one that is both personal and very relatable to the students. The idea is then paired with Sartre's suggestion that we live authentically, which is often well-received as practicable.

Beauvoir is then turned to as introducing a particularly powerful expression of the position – her stance on gender is presented in condensed form (Beauvoir 2011). This accomplishes a number of things. On the one hand, it presents a key feminist position and familiarizes the class with an essential figure that is often not known to the undergraduates attending these courses, which is significant in its own right. On the other, it presents a compelling application of this iteration of French existentialism, with a very real and tangible social consequence that we clearly recognize today. That is, this fairly broad existential perspectives can be shown to have led to the conceptualization of gender as such, which is about as strong as a connection to current contexts as one can find. I close the module with a video clip of Beauvoir speaking about existentialism and answering a few questions about her position, noting for the students that we started with Kierkegaard in the 1800s, and have reached thinkers that you can listen to for yourself.

SUMMARY: The relevance connection for the module consists in appealing to basic existential feelings and reflection on our situation in the world, with the latter relating to our social context. Recency is achieved here primarily through the work of Sartre and Beauvoir, as being both fairly recent by philosophical standards and presenting ideas that are relatable and relevant today. This is one of the more popular modules, but it is also one of the most challenging, as it requires the lecturer to communicate fairly complicated ideas in an approachable form. It also benefits from the lecturer presenting the material in an animated and lively fashion, which can be difficult or taxing for some lecturers, depending upon their personality and style.

CONCLUSION

This work set out to present a simple means to make undergraduate philosophy courses more engaging in large lecture formats. The proposal is a variation of a problem-based approach to course design that centers on relevance and recency. The idea being that material should be selected and presented in a way that clearly relates to the students themselves and that also ultimately relates to recent work in philosophy. The former aspect of relevance serves to better capture their attention and thus engage them in the material. The latter aspect

serves to show them that philosophy is not the history of philosophy, that it is not some distant and dead field but very much alive and continuing to shape how we think.

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