

A Philosophical Reading List

To get a feel for the whole range of philosophy, you could read one of the many **introductions**: some are very good and quite deep, and all deal with a range of areas like ethics, religion, mind, aesthetics, politics, epistemology, logic and so on.

Thomas Nagel. *What Does it all Mean?*

Simon Blackburn. *Think*

Edward Craig. *Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction*

Julian Baggini. *The Pig that Wants to be Eaten*

Nigel Warburton. *Philosophy: The Basics*

John Hospers. *An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis*

An interesting way to do this is to approach it historically:

James Garvey and Jeremy Stangroom. *The Story of Philosophy*

David Edmonds and Nigel Warburton. *Philosophy Bites* (series)

Simon Critchley. *The Book of Dead Philosophers*

James Garvey. *The Twenty Greatest Philosophy Books*

Bryan Magee. *Confessions of a Philosopher*

Gareth Southwell. *Words of Wisdom*

Nigel Warburton. *Philosophy: The Classics*

Richard Tarnas. *The Passion of the Western Mind*

A C Grayling. *The History of Philosophy*

Anthony Gottlieb. *The Dream of Reason and The Dream of Enlightenment*

Bertrand Russell. *History of Western Philosophy*

Anthony Kenny. *A New History of Western Philosophy*

Reading one of these should inspire you to consider something more specific, depending on what piques your interest.

Or you could choose to focus on more **specialised areas** you're curious about. Examples that I have enjoyed include:

Julian Baggini. *A Short History of Truth*

Sarah Bakewell. *How to Live: A Life of Montaigne and At the Existentialist Café*

Simon Blackburn. *Truth: A Guide for the Perplexed*

Costica Bradatan. *Dying for Ideas*

Steven M Cahn. *Political Philosophy: The Essential Texts*
David Cooper. *Existentialism*
Richard Dawkins. *The Blind Watchmaker*
Rebecca Newberger Goldstein. *Plato at the Googleplex*
Jacob Golomb. *In Search of Authenticity*
Walter Kaufmann. *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*
Bryan Magee. *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*
Ray Monk. *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*
Stephen Toulmin. *Cosmopolis*
Jonathan Wolff. *An Introduction to Political Philosophy or Why Read Marx Today?*

And, of course, the *Very Short Introductions* would be included here. See also the political philosophy reading list in **Appendix 1** of this document.

Or you could read some **original texts**. It is worth being choosy here: a lot of primary philosophical texts are difficult, but some are very engaging. Examples of the latter would include (in chronological order):

Plato. *Republic* or *Meno* or *Symposium* or ‘*The Last Days of Socrates*’
Marcus Aurelius. *Meditations*
Augustine. *Confessions*
Descartes. *Meditations on First Philosophy*
David Hume. *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* or (Selected) *Essays*
Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *First and Second Discourses*
Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. *The Communist Manifesto*
John Stuart Mill. *Utilitarianism* or *On Liberty*
Friedrich Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil* or *Twilight of the Idols*
Bertrand Russell. *The Problems of Philosophy*
Sigmund Freud. *Civilisation and its Discontents*
Albert Camus. *The Myth of Sisyphus*
Michel Foucault. *Discipline and Punish*
Thomas Nagel. *The View from Nowhere* or *Mortal Questions*
John Gray. *Straw Dogs*
Michael Sandel. *What Money Can’t Buy*
Markus Gabriel. *Why The World Does Not Exist*

A comprehensive list of original texts is included in **Appendix 2** of this document.

Or you could read some of the **pop-Philosophy books** out there, many of which mix history, journalism and philosophy really well. Outstanding examples include:

David Edmonds and John Eidinow. *Wittgenstein's Poker*
David Edmonds and John Eidinow. *Rousseau's Dog*
Stephen Greenblatt. *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern*
Jim Holt. *Why Does the World Exist?*
Matthew Stewart. *The Courtier and the Heretic*

Or you could read some of the more philosophical **novels**. Try:

Margaret Atwood. *The Handmaid's Tale*
Paul Auster. *The New York Trilogy*
Jorge Luis Borges. *Labyrinths*
Mikhail Bulgakov. *The Master and Margarita*
Albert Camus. *The Plague* or *The Fall*
Philip K Dick. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*
Denis Diderot. *Jacques the Fatalist*
Fyodor Dostoevsky. *The Brothers Karamazov* or *Notes from the Underground*
Umberto Eco. *The Name of the Rose* or *Foucault's Pendulum*
Andre Gide. *The Counterfeiters*
Rebecca Goldstein. *The Mind-Body Problem* or *36 Arguments for the Existence of God*
Lars Iyer. *Wittgenstein Jr*
Samuel Johnson. *Rasselas*
Milan Kundera. *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*
Georges Perec. *Life, A User's Manual*
Robert M Pirsig. *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*
Alain Robbe-Grillet. *Jealousy*
Jean-Paul Sartre. *Nausea* or *The Wall and other stories*
Leo Tolstoy. *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*
Voltaire. *Candide*
Kurt Vonnegut. *The Sirens of Titan* or *Slaughterhouse Five*
H G Wells. *The Island of Dr Moreau*
Irvin D Yalom. *The Spinoza Problem*

Appendix 1: political philosophy

The following offer good introductions to Political Philosophy:

- Wolff, Jonathan. *An Introduction to Political Philosophy*. Oxford, 1996
Miller, David. *Political Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, 2003
Sandel, Michael J. *Justice*. Penguin, 2010
Swift, Adam. *Political Philosophy: A Beginner's Guide*. Polity, 2006
Kymlicka, Will. *Contemporary Political Philosophy*. Oxford, 2002
Boucher, David & Kelly, Paul. *Political Thinkers*. Oxford, 2009

The following key texts can be found in various editions and in most cases online:

- Plato. *Republic*, c.380BCE
Aristotle. *Politics*, c.350BCE
Machiavelli, Niccolò. *The Prince*, 1532
Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*, 1651
Locke, John. *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, 1689
Locke, John. *Second Treatise of Government*, 1690
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, 1754
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *The Social Contract*, 1762
Paine, Thomas. *Common Sense*, 1776
Marx, Karl & Engels, Friedrich. *The Communist Manifesto*, 1848
Mill, John Stuart. *On Liberty*, 1859
Mill, John Stuart. *Utilitarianism*, 1863
Popper, Karl. *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, 1945
Berlin, Isaiah. *Four Essays on Liberty*, 1969
Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*, 1971
Nozick, Robert. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, 1974

Excerpts from many important primary texts can be found in:

- Cahn, Steven M. *Political Philosophy: The Essential Texts*. Oxford, 2005

Appendix 2: original texts

The following are perhaps the most recognised texts in the history of Philosophy (in chronological order).

Many can be found online. Readable versions of some texts can be found at [Early Modern Texts](#). Helpful summaries of many can be found at [Squashed Philosophers](#).

Confucius	<i>Analects</i>
Lao Tzu	<i>Tao Te Ching</i>
Plato	<i>The Last Days of Socrates</i> <i>The Republic</i>
Aristotle	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> <i>Politics</i> <i>Poetics</i>
Seneca	<i>Letters from a Stoic</i>
Epictetus	<i>Discourses / Enchiridion</i>
Marcus Aurelius	<i>Meditations</i>
Augustine	<i>Confessions</i> <i>The City of God</i>
Boethius	<i>The Consolation of Philosophy</i>
Aquinas	<i>Selections from Summa Theologiae</i>
Machiavelli	<i>The Prince</i>
Montaigne	<i>Essays</i>
Bacon	<i>New Organon</i>
Hobbes	<i>Leviathan</i>
Descartes	<i>Discourse on the Method</i> <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i>
Spinoza	<i>The Ethics</i>
Leibniz	<i>Philosophical Essays</i>
Pascal	<i>Pensées</i>
Locke	<i>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> <i>Two Treatises of Government</i>
Berkeley	<i>Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous</i> <i>The Principles of Human Knowledge</i>
Hume	<i>A Treatise of Human Nature</i> <i>Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> <i>Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion</i>
Rousseau	<i>Two Discourses</i> <i>The Social Contract</i>

Wollstonecraft	<i>Vindication of the Rights of Women</i>
Kant	<i>Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals</i> <i>The Critique of Pure Reason</i>
Hegel	<i>The Phenomenology of Spirit</i>
Schopenhauer	<i>The World as Will and Representation</i>
Marx	<i>Communist Manifesto</i> <i>Selected Writings</i>
Kierkegaard	<i>Either/Or</i> <i>Fear and Trembling</i>
Nietzsche	<i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> <i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i> <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i>
Mill	<i>Utilitarianism</i> <i>On Liberty</i>
James	<i>Pragmatism</i>
Russell	<i>The Problems of Philosophy</i> <i>A History of Western Philosophy</i>
Wittgenstein	<i>Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus</i> <i>Philosophical Investigations</i>
Heidegger	<i>Being and Time</i>
Sartre	<i>Being and Nothingness</i> <i>Existentialism is a Humanism</i>
De Beauvoir	<i>The Second Sex</i>
Camus	<i>The Myth of Sisyphus</i>
Arendt	<i>The Human Condition</i>
Popper	<i>The Logic of Scientific Discovery</i> <i>The Open Society and its Enemies</i>
Foucault	<i>Madness and Civilisation</i> <i>Discipline and Punish</i>
Derrida	<i>Of Grammatology</i>
Rawls	<i>A Theory of Justice</i>
Nozick	<i>Anarchy, State, Utopia</i>
Searle	<i>Minds, Brains and Science</i>
Singer	<i>Practical Ethics</i>
Parfit	<i>Reasons and Persons</i>
Nagel	<i>A View from Nowhere</i> <i>Mortal Questions</i>
Kripke	<i>Naming and Necessity</i>