

Sample Syllabus: IT101

Independent Thinking – Fundamentals (IT101) first introduces you to the basic concept of freedom of thought. Then it introduces you to advanced theories and practices on creating fulfilling human lives, based on freedom of mind and action, through real democracy in learning, work, and the economy.

This course starts with John Stuart Mill's classic *On Liberty*, and traces Mill's inspiration back to Wilhelm von Humboldt's *The Limits of State Action*. Both books are cornerstones of the idea of liberty and serve as illuminating guides for both public and private life.

To deepen your understanding of historical events in which liberty was defeated or nonexistent, you are introduced to classics concerning genocide, war, apartheid, etc. The majority of these are anecdotal accounts from personal experience, and often have a profound impact on one's perspective.

Then we turn to modern society, and to the normal situations of our lives. You are introduced to a few voices that stand out from popular opinion, that dare to challenge the status quo. You will scrutinize a few contemporary incidents with your own microscope from your own point of view.

For democracy in education, a classical and controversial example is A. S. Neill's Summerhill School, the only children's republic on earth.

For democracy in the workplace, Ricardo Semler's groundbreaking experiment in organizational revolution is presented. From his account we learn to appreciate how chaotic and rewarding democracy can be.

For democracy in the economy, you are introduced to the Mondragon workers' cooperative, which has lasted for decades and made an otherwise depleted Basque area thrive.

To conclude this course, you will have an imaginary conversation with Socrates, whose famous treatise on morality and the state, *The Republic*, has profoundly influenced human thought and action for the past 2000 years.










(See the next two pages for the topic outline.)

Topic outline






"Our species needs, and deserves, a citizenry with minds wide awake and a basic understanding of how the world works."

— Carl Sagan










1. Two cornerstones of the idea of liberty

-  [Overview](#)
-  [Assignment 1.1: Research on Mill and Humboldt](#)
-  [On Liberty \(audio and text\)](#)
-  [The Limits of State Action \(various text formats\)](#)
-  [Assignment 1.2: Comment on On Liberty and The Limits of State Action](#)
-  [Video: Four ways to fix a broken legal system](#)
-  [Assignment 1.3: How would I fix the legal system of my country?](#)
-  [Assignment 1.4: Rewrite the last chapter of On Liberty](#)
-  [Collaborative research IT101.1](#)


2. A few historical records

-  [Overview](#)
-  [Assignment 2.1: Watch a movie](#)
-  [Assignment 2.2: Read historical records](#)
-  [Assignment 2.3: An ethical dilemma](#)
-  [Collaborative research IT101.2](#)




3. Modern society

-  [Overview](#)
-  [Prof Noam Chomsky \(video\)](#)
-  [Authors@Google: Noam Chomsky \(video\)](#)
-  [Education is Ignorance](#)
-  [Assignment 3.1: Write a speech on liberty](#)
-  [Assignment 3.2: Polish immigrant tasered to death incident at YVR Airport](#)
-  [Assignment 3.3: The Pulitzer-Winning Investigation That Dare Not Be Uttered on TV](#)
-  [Assignment 3.4: The Fate of an Honest Intellectual](#)
-  [Collaborative research IT101.3](#)




4. Democracy in education

-  [Overview](#)
-  [Assignment 4.1: Comment on Summerhill](#)
-  [Collaborative research IT101.4](#)







5. Democracy in the workplace

-  [Overview](#)
-  [Assignment 5.1: Brainstorm on workplace democracy](#)
-  [Collaborative research IT101.5](#)

6. Democracy in the economy

-  [Overview](#)
-  [Assignment 6.1: Article for a public information space](#)
-  [Collaborative research IT101.6](#)

7. Conversation with Socrates

-  [Overview](#)
-  [Assignment 7.1: Conversation with Socrates about the Republic](#)
-  [Survey on critical incidents](#)
-  [General survey on relevance of the course](#)
-  [Collaborative research IT101.7](#)
-  [Self-evaluation and plan](#)