The Examined Life, presents 26 half-hour episodes addressing "Great Questions" philosophers have pursued from ancient times to the present: What is human nature? What is real? Do we have free will? Does God exist? These questions, and many other equally challenging ones, are explored in this series through the writings of historic philosophers and interviews with modern philosophers.

All DVDs are closed captioned.

Lesson 1 - What is philosophy?
Combines two classic examples – Plato's Parable of the Cave and the character of Socrates – with contemporary philosophers’ comments on the subject.

Lesson 2 - What is human nature?
Contrasts traditional Greek and Judeo-Christian views of human nature with post-Darwinian and existential views.

Lesson 3 - Is mind distinct from body?
Examines how Descartes’ dualistic view has been subject to waves of attacks from materialism, including present exponents of artificial intelligence and neuro-science.

Lesson 4 - Is there an enduring self?
Weaves the reflections of an expectant mother with inquiries from philosophers ranging form Socrates to the present about whether or not a person has an enduring self.

Lesson 5 - Are we social beings?
Looks at the relation between personality and culture. Contrasts an atomistic and a societal view of the self, represented by Descartes and Hegel using the endangered culture of the Laplanders in Sweden.

Lesson 6 - What is real?
Explores the conflict between Thomas Hobbes’s materialism and George Berkely’s idealism and the 20th century conflict between realists and antirealists.

Lesson 7 - How do we encounter the world?
Examines the views of Husserl and Heidegger in which reality is a phenomenon related to consciousness.

Lesson 8 - Do we have free will?
Asks if our lives are determined, or if we freely choose among alternatives. Ancient philosophers believed us to be free moral beings, but how do we define our options in a world governed by the laws of physics.

Lesson 9 - Is time real?
Questions whether time is something measured only by clocks and calendars or exists as a separate entity in its own right. The program explores theories of time presented by Aristotle, Augustine and Kant, and contrasts Newton’s theories of time with Einstein’s theory of relativity.
Lesson 10 - Does God exist?
Examines arguments philosophers have used to try to prove that God does or does not exist. How did the world begin? Is there a reason for its order and design? And, can we reconcile the existence of God with the existence of evil?

Lesson 11 - Can we know God through experience?
Considers whether mystical and other experiences are indications of the existence of a Divine Being, and what kind of evidence is necessary for religious relief.

Lesson 12 - Is reason the source of knowledge?
Presents the rationalism of Descartes and Leibniz, the roots of rationalism in Plato and geometry, and the continuing debate over whether pure reason can generate knowledge.

Lesson 13 - Does knowledge depend on experience?
Focuses on the 17th and 18th century empiricism of John Locke, George Berkeley and David Hume, and the 20th century empiricism and naturalism of W.V. Quine.

Lesson 14 - Does the mind shape the world?
Examines Immanuel Kant’s position that we interpret the world through a priori constructs of the mind, as well as later philosophers’ views of how these constructs may vary among languages groups and cultures.

Lesson 15 - How does science add to knowledge?
Highlights the classic, Baconian intuitivist view that grew out of the Scientific Revolution and the challenges posed by Karl Popper and Thomas Kuhn. Includes consideration of Kuhn’s views about the role that paradigm theories play in scientific revolutions.

Lesson 16 - Does science give us truth?
Look at correspondence, coherence, and pragmatist theories of truth, and how conflicts have carried over into realist vs. antirealist views of science, including the Einstein-Bohr debate about quantum mechanics.

Lesson 17 - Are interpretations true?
Inquires how it is possible for us to interpret and understand each other. Is there a true or correct way of interpreting the meaning of what people say or write? Explores the views of schleiermacher and Wittgenstein or language and meaning.

Lesson 18 - Is morality relative?
Discusses whether all morality is culturally determined, or whether there are some moral values that are valid for all cultures. The claims of relativism are explored along with the implications of relativism for child labor.

Lesson 19 - Does the end justify the means?
Look at utilitarianism against the backdrop of a massive dam construction project with environmental import and discusses the problem of what is intrinsically valuable.

Lesson 20 - Can rules define morality?
Addresses rights-based theories of ethics, particularly that of Immanuel Kant, and explores some of the implications of his views for particular issues in ethics.
Lesson 21 - Is ethics based on virtue?
Explores Aristotle’s and other ancient views of virtue, the good life and contemporary virtue ethics with its focus on emotions, personal relationships, character, and long-term values.

Lesson 22 - Moral dilemmas … can ethics help?
Considers the relevance of utilitarian, Kantian, and virtue ethics to the situation of a family with a severely impaired newborn.

Lesson 23 - What justifies the state?
Asks whether the state is merely an artificial arrangement we construct to make life better, as social contract theories claim, or whether it’s natural organism through which people achieve their potential.

Lesson 24 - What is justice?
Explores questions about distributive justice, both from a national and global perspective, and examines the views of Aristotle, Marx, John Rawls and Robert Nozick.

Lesson 25 - What is art?
Looks at several views on the nature of art, and how these have been affected by changes in artistic styles and techniques.

Lesson 26 - What is the meaning of life?
Evaluates how the meaning and purpose of life have been viewed in light of religion, culture or history, as well as from an individual existential perspective. Program features the views of Hegel and Kirkegaard.