

Course Information



A Level Philosophy

What is A Level Ethics & Philosophy?

The study of Philosophy, encourages students to think seriously for themselves and formulate and express valid, confident and justified points of view on a variety of contemporary and pressing themes. The abstract and intellectually challenging nature of the subject comprises of crucial skills of analysis and a greater ability to think, write and speak clearly without inhibition. In short, a qualification in Philosophy aims to equip students not only with the ability to think independently, but also to know how to contribute towards living a decent life in the context of a rapidly changing world.

What does the course involve?

Throughout the course we use the ancient Socratic method of thinking and learning, set in the context of much discussion, debate, presentations, lectures and written essays. We will turn back to reading original texts and class based resources whilst at the same time looking to the future via podcasts, online community learning zones, music and film.

What themes are studied?

In Year 12 we begin our exploration of philosophy with a rigorous introduction to Epistemology and Moral Philosophy. Epistemology is concerned with the origin of knowledge, asking whether the source of knowledge is from experience via our senses or the mind. How indeed can we be certain of what is 'real' or an 'illusion'? We study the arguments from illusion, perception and hallucination along with scepticism, empiricism and the nature and purpose of justified true belief. Moral Philosophy deals more with the ethics surrounding behaviour and how we act in an orderly society. Is there a right method to follow? How do we apply ethical theories such as Utilitarianism and Kantian ethics to dilemmas in today's society such as Stealing, simulated killing and the eating of animals?

In Year 13 we continue our journey with studies of Metaphysics of God and the Philosophy of Mind. The Metaphysics of God unit questions the nature and existence of God and the impact of such beliefs on the evolution of mankind. Not only do we question and challenge the necessarily pressing questions of the divine, but we push further in exploring fundamental questions of existence itself and what it means to express belief or a lack of belief in the current geopolitical climate of the 21st century. In the Philosophy of Mind, we examine answers to the questions 'What is mind?' and 'How does the mind relate to the body?' Discussions will include explorations into the nature of consciousness and how we know whether or not other people have minds and how the mind itself can cause physical events.

How is it assessed?

Assessment (AQA) is 100% examination. Comprising two 3 hour exams.

Extra Information/Recommended texts

Michael Lacewing - Philosophy for AS

Bertrand Russell - The Problems of Philosophy

AQA Philosophy Year 1 - Jeremy Hayward, Gerald Jones and Daniel Cardinal.

What next?

Surely, 2,500 years of philosophical learning has much to offer the modern world. What is life, after all, if we cease to stop and think about it; are we not after all already philosophers in a constant circle of thought and reflection?

Why not make it a qualification, paving the way for a career in law, policing, journalism, education, business, Human Resources, the Armed Forces, civil service, advertising, industry, IT, marketing, management, film and television?

For more information about the course, your suitability for it, and possible career paths for students with languages skills, see the displays in the E&P area, talk to your E&P teacher, Mrs Correa-Humphries or Mr Hopkins. In the meantime, please see the school website for further information about the content of the course.