

Welcome to the Philosophy Department

Subject Leader: Mr J Briggs

Subject Overview

Post 16

Philosophy deals with questions that are:

- **Conceptual:** They are about 'big' ideas.
- **Common:** They bear on everyday concerns.
- **Contestable:** They elicit many different views and not everyone agrees about the answers.
- **Central:** They are at the heart of how humans think of themselves and their relations with others and the world.¹

The Philosophy course has been designed to enable students to gain a thorough grounding in key philosophical concepts, themes, texts and techniques. Students will develop a range of transferable skills which can be applied far beyond the study of Philosophy.

¹ Creative Philosophical Enquiry - Cape UK

Teaching Aims and Objectives

The course aims to introduce students to the key methods and concepts in philosophy through the study of four broad themes: Epistemology, Philosophy of Religion, Ethics and Philosophy of Mind. Students will develop and refine a range of transferable skills, such as the ability to ask penetrating questions, to analyse and evaluate the arguments of others and to present their own arguments clearly and logically.

Course Information

Post 16

Year 12: Epistemology:

- What are the immediate objects of perception?
- What is the definition of knowledge?
- Where do ideas/concepts and knowledge come from?

Philosophy of Religion:

- How can arguments relating to the existence of God be analysed?
- What issues are raised by religious language?

Key Reading:

- Berkeley, Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous
- Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy
- Russell, The Problems of Philosophy

Year 13: Ethics:

- How do we decide what it is morally right to do?
- Utilitarianism
- Kantian deontological ethics
- Aristotle's virtue ethics
- What is the status of ethical language?

Philosophy of Mind:

- The mind–body problem: What is the relationship between the mental and the physical?
- Dualism
- Philosophical Zombies
- Qualia
- Causal interaction
- Materialism
- Behaviourism
- Super-Spartans
- Mind–brain type identity theory
- Eliminative materialism

Key Reading:

- Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics
- Ayer, AJ (1973/1991), The Central Questions of Philosophy
- Warnock, GJ (1967) Contemporary Moral Philosophy, New Studies In Ethics
- Letter from Princess of Bohemia to Descartes in May 1643
- Block, N (1980), 'Troubles with functionalism'
- Chalmers, D (2003), 'Consciousness and its place in nature'
- Jackson, F (1982), 'Epiphenomenal Qualia'
- Ryle, G (1949/2000) The Concept of Mind

Homework Expectations (Including ICT resources and websites)

Philosophy students will be set a variety of homework and will be expected to engage in extended independent study, this will amount to approximately 7 hours per week:

- Habitual - i.e. reorganising notes, writing summaries, file keeping etc. (assessed by file checks). This usually takes about 1 hour per week;
- Directed- i.e. students will be set specific tasks to complete e.g. revision for a test, preparation for next lesson, exam questions etc. This usually takes about 2 hours per week;
- Course specific reading. This usually takes about 2 hours per week;
- Optional additional tasks that might not form part of their formal progress assessment but will help students develop their understanding of the topic being studied and
- Wider reading and research that students choose to undertake of their own initiative to broaden their understanding of the subject in general. This usually takes about 2 hours per week.

Philosophy:

<http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/philosophy/as-and-a-level/philosophy-2175>

<http://www.routledgetextbooks.com/textbooks/9781138793934/>

Extra-Curricular Opportunities

Philosophy students are advised to take part in national and international essay competitions.

There are several scheduled Philosophy trips including visits to:

- The Ashmolean Museum Oxford
- Oxford Brookes University Philosophy Department

- Royal Holloway and Bedford New College Classics Department
- The Oxford Playhouse

In addition, Philosophy students are advised to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by debating. These include training for and taking part in:

- Oxford, Cambridge, Birmingham, Bristol, Warwick, UCL, Nottingham University Debate Competitions
- The Oxford and Cambridge Union Debates
- The English Speaking Union and Debating Matters competitions

Marking and Assessment

Sixth Form

Students' work is marked regularly to acknowledge effort, knowledge, understanding and development of extended writing and analytical skills. Students will be given detailed feedback to which they will be expected to respond and set themselves targets to improve. Self and peer assessment are an integral part of Philosophy A Level.

Work is set each week to develop key skills including the ability to:

- demonstrate understanding of the core concepts and methods of philosophy;
- explain fully, clearly and precisely, making logical links between clear points;
- articulate their understanding with precision and with minimal redundancy, using appropriate technical philosophical language;
- analyse and evaluate philosophical argument to form reasoned judgements;
- argue in a clear, integrated and logical form, demonstrating clear intent;
- select and deploy sufficient material to answer philosophical questions fully;
- argue to conclusions based on a balancing of arguments, with appropriate weight given to each argument and the argument overall and
- distinguish between crucial and less crucial arguments, where appropriate.

Work is also set to stretch and challenge students, this includes:

- extended reading and comprehension tasks;
- having a deeper critical awareness and being able to engage in more sophisticated discussions and
- engaging in sustained textual analysis.

Examinations

<http://filestore.aqa.org.uk/subjects/AQA-2175-W-SP-15.PDF>

A level

AS

- Section A: Epistemology
- Section B: Philosophy of Religion
 - 100% of AS, 50% of A-level
 - 3 hour written examination
 - Total marks: 80
 - All questions are compulsory
 - Available June only

A2

- Section A: Ethics
- Section B: Philosophy of Mind

- 50% of A-level
- 3 hour written examination
- Total marks: 100
- All questions are compulsory
- Available June only