

Philosophy

A level

What will I study and learn?

Philosophy A level gives you the opportunity to explore some of the biggest questions humanity has ever asked, and be trained in techniques for discussing and mapping out arguments in order to reach your conclusions. In studying Philosophy you will become a more disciplined and logical thinker, and develop an ability to analyse and construct concise arguments.

Does what you think about how we should live come straight from your parents and teachers? Or do you think you have good reasons to believe what you do? Doing philosophy provides a perfect opportunity to think for yourself and to consider objections to your own ideas that you hadn't ever thought of. This course

investigates the deepest aspects of what it means to be human. Are we simply animals that have evolved, or is our consciousness a unique substance that will survive the death of our bodies? Philosophy asks you to avoid being too quick to jump to conclusions, especially the conclusions you want to be true. Justified true belief, is that what we mean by knowledge? How do we show that a claim or indeed any claim to be true? The study of such philosophical questions and arguments is academically rigorous and can be challenging, but is also very rewarding.

You will get to study the arguments of some of the greatest minds in philosophy from the Ancient Greeks to 21st century Philosophers of Mind engaged with the rise of Artificial Intelligence.

In the first year you will study:

- The definition of knowledge
- Knowledge from perception
- Knowledge from reason
- Ethical Theories
- Ethical Issues
- Ethical Language.

In the second year you will study:

- Arguments for and against the existence of God
- The meaningfulness of religious language
- Physicalist theories of the mind
- Dualist theories of the mind.

How will I be assessed?

You will sit three exams at the end of the second year:

Paper 1
Epistemology and Moral Philosophy
Paper 2
Metaphysics of God and Metaphysics of Mind

A level/IB

The Greek philosopher Plato likens human existence to that of cave dwellers. We are stuck in a land of shadows, underground, away from the sun. We mistake the shadows on the cave wall, created by the light of a fire, for real objects: we mistake the copy for the original. The theme of this allegory has been played out in countless films and novels, and our course investigates the ongoing search for how do we get out of 'the cave' and discover what is real. Along the way we will encounter questions

such as: Are there ideas that have a 'truth' outside of time and regardless of whether anyone is thinking them? Am I free? How would I know if I were? If we are just material products of our genes, then is there even such a thing as morality?

Your escape from 'the cave' (or denying there is a cave in the first place) is guaranteed to make you think, but it is also bound to make you a desirable applicant for university courses across the spectrum from Law and Medicine to Social Anthropology and Computing.

The future, of course, does not exist and is therefore unknown and unknowable. Both A level and IB Philosophy are highly respected trainings of the mind for any area of degree study. Likewise, the academic skills you evolve and hone along the way will be valued, particularly by the legal professions, but also in business and medicine – not to mention academia. Or, these courses could lead you, more directly, into degree areas like PPE, Philosophy, Theology, or any joint-honours courses where these are a component.



IB

What will I study and learn?

The emphasis of the IB Philosophy course is on ‘doing philosophy’, that is, actively examining both your own perspectives and those of others. You are challenged to find your own philosophical voice while engaging with some of the world’s most interesting and influential thinkers. The core theme is entitled ‘Being Human’ and within it we explore the fundamental question of what it is to be human. Discussion here is of concepts such as identity, freedom, and human nature, and through a consideration of questions, such as what sets humans apart from other species, where the boundaries of being human lie, and whether animals or machines could be considered persons.

All IB students will study optional themes in addition to the core theme. Students taking the standard level course will study Ethics; higher level students will study Ethics and Philosophy of Religion. You will also have a topic based on a prescribed philosophical text that has been chosen by your teacher.

How will I be assessed?

SL			HL			
Paper 1 (50%)	Paper 2 (25%)	Internal Assessment (25%)	Paper 1 (40%)	Paper 2 (20%)	Paper 3 (20%)	Internal Assessment (20%)
Section A: Core.	Philosophical text.	Philosophical analysis of a non-philosophical stimulus.	Section A: Core.	Philosophical text.	Response to unseen text.	Philosophical analysis of a non-philosophical stimulus.
Section B: Optional Theme – Ethics.			Section B: Optional Theme – Ethics and Philosophy of Religion.			

Want to know more?

Mr Richard Smith
 Head of Philosophy,
 Religion and Ethics
rsmith@bgs.bristol.sch.uk

Exam Board:
www.aqa.org.uk
www.ibo.org

“After school I would like to pursue a career in medicine. I chose Philosophy because I think the ethics side of the course will be very helpful, in terms of how this relates to the world of medicine and the decisions that are made within it.

Max Harrison, OB 2020
 Courses: Biology, Mathematics and Philosophy