

Philosophy

A Level



Overview

Philosophy will show students how to think about some of life's most important questions in a new and critical way: Does God exist? What is the mind? Is eating animals for food wrong? Do humans have freedom? Why does the universe exist?

Students will explore and discuss ideas, examine beliefs, be shown how to explain different views clearly and reach judgements based on a precise evaluation of the available information.

Past Philosophy students have been accepted on a range of degree courses at both Oxford and Cambridge including: Politics, Philosophy & Economics; Mathematics & Philosophy; Languages and Classics.

What goes well with this course?

Topics explored in Philosophy complement other studies including:

- The Natural Sciences & Mathematics
- Languages & Literature
- Psychology

- Law, Politics and Sociology
- Computer Science & IT
- History & Classics
- Film & Media Studies

The skills of analysis, interpretation and evaluation, which are gained from a close study of philosophical ideas, are relevant and useful in most areas of study, from History to Film and Media.

Progression

Studying Philosophy will provide students with an advanced level of generic skills that are immensely useful in a wide range of jobs in such diverse fields as Journalism and Media, Government and Public Administration, Computing, Law, Education and Research, Social Work and of course, Teaching.

Course Content

This course includes the following two topics in the first year:

1. Epistemology which covers major themes such as:

- What is Knowledge? – distinguishing between different kinds of knowledge and defining the concept
- Perception as a Source of Knowledge – exploring our knowledge of the external world
- Reason as a Source of Knowledge – considering whether we can know about the world through reason alone
- The Limits of Knowledge – questioning whether humans can have any knowledge at all

2. The Metaphysics of God which looks at arguments both for and against God's existence. It covers the following themes:

- The concept and nature of 'God'
 - Does the idea of an all-powerful, all-loving and all-knowing God make sense?
- Arguments relating to the existence of God – Does the existence and nature of the world prove God's existence? Does suffering show that He could not exist?
- Religious language – Does religious language make sense or is it just nonsense?

In the second year, students study a further two topics:

3. Moral Philosophy which examines ethical theories and their application to areas like:

- Simulated killing (within computer games, plays, films etc)
- The treatment of animals
- Deception and the telling of lies
- Stealing

4. The Metaphysics of Mind which explores some of the most important issues in philosophical psychology, including:

- What do we mean by 'mind'? What are the defining features of the mind?
- Substance dualism – Is the mind a non-physical soul?
- Property dualism – Are mental states non-physical properties which emerge from the brain?
- Physicalist theories – Is the mind behaviour or the brain?

Educational Experiences

Course Specific Trips, Visits & Experiences

Philosophy students have the opportunity to take part in a variety of course related experiences. In recent years, these have included:

- A trip to St. Mary's Church, Reigate, where students had the opportunity to ask questions concerning religious truth.
- A trip to the Southampton philosophy conference, where students attended a number of fascinating lectures on topics like: 'Nietzsche on the meaning of life', and 'Can we justify human rights?'

Assessment

Philosophy is assessed 100% by examination.

The exam board for Philosophy A Level is AQA.

Entry Requirements

All students need to have at least five GCSEs at Grade 4 or above (and a satisfactory school reference) in order to be accepted on an A Level/BTEC Level 3 Programme.

In addition, students should meet the following minimum GCSE requirements:

- Grade 5 in English Language, and
- Grade 4 in Maths

No previous experience of Philosophy is required. Students should have an enquiring mind, enjoy reading and exchanging ideas in discussion. The ability to argue a case, in speech and writing, is essential.