

In its most literal sense, philosophy means the love of wisdom. It is an attempt to understand the world, and our place in it, through a well-structured, critical analysis of the fundamental assumptions and concepts that are taken for granted in everyday thinking.

What is Philosophy?

Although philosophers are often interested in abstract questions concerning the nature of reality, how we can ever be said to know anything and the kinds of things we should value, the answers that are given to these questions are likely to have a direct impact upon what we believe and how we subsequently live our lives. For example, if I think that my mind and body are one and the same thing and can defend my belief through rational argument then surely this will have an effect on how I live my life? In Philosophy, we explore such questions and examine the answers that have been given to them by some of the greatest thinkers, including Aristotle, Descartes, Hume, Kant and Wittgenstein.

What topics are taught at A Level Philosophy?

Students follow the AQA Philosophy syllabus. In Lower Sixth, students will study issues relating to knowledge and reality, where philosophers ask questions such as ‘How do we know anything?’ and ‘Is the way that the world appears to me the way that it is, in-itself?’. Students will also tackle central questions in the Philosophy of Religion, such as ‘Can we demonstrate the existence of God through rational argument?’ and ‘Are there compelling arguments against the existence of God?’. In Upper Sixth, students explore key themes in the Philosophy of Mind concerning the nature of consciousness and the relationship between mind and body, as well as Moral Philosophy where ethical theories such as Utilitarianism, Deontology and Virtue Ethics are applied to contemporary moral issues.

Assessment

The course consists of 100% external assessment. There is no coursework element. Students will take two, three-hour examinations at the end of the Upper Sixth. *Paper 1 - Epistemology and Moral Philosophy* and *Paper 2 - Metaphysics of God; Metaphysics of Mind*.

Where to next?

Training in Philosophy develops the ability to think clearly and reason logically, to expound and evaluate arguments, to reject facile assumptions and search for coherent principles of thought and action. As such, Philosophy is a subject that combines well with all academic disciplines. It is highly respected by the top universities and employers as it is seen to aid the development of these key analytical and critical thinking skills. Indeed, it is students who are prepared to challenge conventional ideas and are willing to offer an alternative perspective that are likely to prosper in higher education and beyond.

Who should study Philosophy?

No particular background in terms of specific subjects studied at GCSE is expected or required and no prior knowledge of Philosophy is necessary for candidates to undertake a course of study based on this specification.

