

A Level

Philosophy

AQA



A-level Philosophy introduces you to some of the classic debates in the subject. Some of the questions that we explore challenge assumptions made in other subjects that you may be considering studying at Symonds. Questions such as: How do we gain knowledge? Where does our knowledge come from? Can we know that there is a physical world “out there” which we experience through our senses? Or: What do we mean when we say something is “morally wrong”? How can we work out what to do in a moral dilemma? Is there such a thing as the “right” thing to do?

The two year course will develop your skills of analysis and evaluation. You will need to be able to express yourself well on paper and to think logically. You will be examined in two written exams at the end of your second year. There is no coursework in Philosophy.

If you choose not to continue this subject onto year two, you are able to sit an AS exam at the end of year one.

Course Content

Year One

Epistemology (the theory of knowledge)

Perception: what do we perceive?

Can we know that there is a physical world which we experience through our senses?

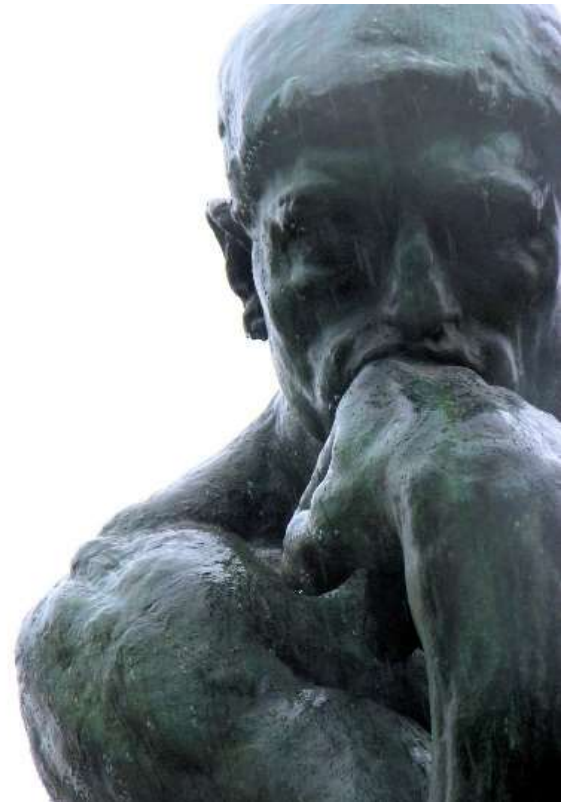
Knowledge: what does it mean to say that we know something?

The origin of knowledge: does all our knowledge come from experience, or are there some things which are known innately (from birth/without any experience)?

Moral Philosophy

Ethical theories: How do we decide what is the morally right thing to do? A study of Utilitarianism, Deontology and Virtue Theory.

Ethical Language: What is the status of ethical language? Cognitivism versus non- cognitivism. What do we mean when we say “Murder is wrong”?



Year Two

Philosophy of Religion

The concept of God: Do the traditional divine attributes of a Western Monotheistic concept of God make sense (either singly or in combination)?

Arguments relating to the existence of God: the ontological argument – does it prove that God *necessarily* exists? The Cosmological argument – the strengths and weaknesses of this argument.

Religious language: what does it mean to say that “God exists”?

Philosophy of Mind

The mind-body problem: what is the relationship between the mental and the physical? This course looks at the issues arising including the indivisibility argument, the philosophical zombies argument, qualia, other minds, functionalism and eliminative materialism.

Philosophy

Each course is supported by an on-line anthology (provided by the exam board) to enable you to examine these arguments in their original contexts.

Methods of teaching

We will use a whole host of methods to assist your learning. Sometimes you will be listening to a teacher explaining a philosophical idea; sometimes you will be taking notes. On other occasions you will be working in pairs or in small groups to research a particular topic area. You may be asked to prepare a presentation to deliver to the class or to read an article and report back on the key features of the text. All your learning experiences will be designed to enable you to fully understand the material and move swiftly from assimilating new information to applying it. One of the key skills you will be developing is the ability to evaluate arguments and communicate your response effectively. Each unit is accompanied by a course booklet to enable you to access the knowledge you require efficiently. We also hope to be able to offer you the chance to attend student conferences that will be directly relevant to the exams.

Methods and patterns of assessment

There is a three hour AS exam in June which accounts for 100% of the AS award. All questions on the exam papers are compulsory.

For the full A-level qualification there are two three hour exams at the end of the second year which account for 50% each of your overall A-level. All questions on the exam papers are compulsory.

Financial Implications

We would recommend that you buy a textbook to support the work we do in class. We will give you a reading list with the details of the books we recommend. Textbooks are also available in the Learning Resources Centre. In addition each unit is accompanied by a course booklet produced here at Symonds. Expect your costs to be no more than £30 per year. We hope to offer trips to relevant student conferences where appropriate, these will however, be optional. The College has a student support fund for anyone who has difficulty meeting these costs.

Career possibilities

A-level Philosophy develops your skills of analysis, interpretation, evaluation, and communication. You will learn to write precisely and to argue logically, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of philosophical positions.

In this respect Philosophy is a subject that compliments many other areas of study including Law, Politics, History, Sociology, English, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Maths and Music. It is a highly regarded and rigorous academic subject that will be of use to a wide range of careers including Journalism, Law, Medicine, Veterinary Science, Police work, Teaching and Public Relations.

Minimum Entry Requirements

5 GCSEs at Grades A* - C including Maths and English.

Apply online: www.psc.ac.uk/apply t: 01962 857555 e: admissions@psc.ac.uk

Peter Symonds College, Owens Road, Winchester, Hampshire SO22 6RX