What is Philosophy?
Philosophy is a systematic critical inquiry into profound, fascinating and challenging questions, such as the following:

- What is it to be human?
- Do we have free will?
- Does my life have meaning?
- What do we mean when we say something is right or wrong?

These abstract questions arise out of our everyday experiences, and philosophical tools such as critical and systematic thinking, careful analysis, and construction of arguments provide the means of addressing such questions. The practice of Philosophy deepens and clarifies our understanding of these questions, as well as our ability to formulate possible responses.

Studying Philosophy provides an opportunity for students to engage with some of the world’s most interesting and influential thinkers. The emphasis of the IB Diploma Programme Philosophy course is on “doing philosophy”, that is, on actively engaging students in philosophical activity. The course is focused on stimulating students’ intellectual curiosity and encouraging them to examine both their own perspectives and those of others.

Students are challenged to develop their own philosophical voice and to grow into independent thinkers. At the core of the subject lies a concern with truth and clarity of understanding achieved through critical and systematic thinking, careful analysis of arguments and close reading. They also learn to apply their philosophical knowledge and skills to real-life situations and to explore how non-philosophical material can be treated in a philosophical way.

Skills you will develop
Philosophy develops highly transferable skills such as the ability to formulate arguments clearly, to make reasoned judgments and to evaluate highly complex and multifaceted issues. Philosophy encourages students to question received ideas, to justify their own positions and to persevere with challenging issues.

Opportunities for further study
Philosophy students often contribute significantly to the Sir Antony Browne Society, and participate in debates and Public Speaking. The Philosophy Society allows students to give presentations and discuss particular areas of personal interest, or examine philosophical texts beyond the boundaries of the syllabus.

The Learning Resource Centre contains an extensive collection of works of Philosophy in the form of books, magazines, and access to online journals, as well as extensive commentaries and support materials.

Higher Education opportunities
IB Diploma Philosophy students can go on to do Philosophy at university, either by itself or as a joint honours course with Physics, Linguistics, Politics or the like. The analytical skills and academic rigour in Philosophy support Science-based courses including Medicine, while the skills of essay-writing and developing a sustained argument support applications for Law, History, English Literature or other Arts courses.

Careers for Philosophy graduates
When considering where Philosophy takes you, the Chairman of the CBI (a leading UK business organisation) said recently the following skills are now most important for employers:

- Asking good questions
- Making connections between ideas
- Tenacity in seeking answers
- Coping with uncertainty
- Taking risks

Philosophy students are recognised as being some of the best equipped with these abilities. The key skills of analysis, interpretation and developing a sustained argument can be utilised in many professions including: research, teaching, accountancy, computing, market analysis, publishing, journalism, the civil service, the legal profession or in commercial life.
IB Philosophy (Higher Level)

Content
Students study the “Core Theme”: Being Human. Students question whether their lives have meaning and purpose, examine nihilism and existentialism and non-Western responses. We question what is important about being a person, whether animals or machines could be persons, consciousness, human nature, whether we have free will, our relations with others. Students examine famous thinkers like Sartre, Camus, Wittgenstein and Daniel Dennett, as well as formulating their own ideas. We also make connections with theatre, films and pop music.

Students study a unit on exploring the nature of philosophical activity, looking at the purpose of Philosophy, its aims and methods, whether it should be accessible, whether anyone can be a philosopher, whether it makes progress.

Optional Topics
Students study a classic set text in depth. This will either be Descartes’s Meditations or Nietzsche’s Genealogy of Morality. Meditations focuses on how we can know things and also discusses the self, mind and reality. Genealogy of Morality is a stinging critique of ethics, arguing that a radical new way is needed.

Students will study two “Optional Themes”. Within the department, we have the expertise to teach:
• Political Philosophy – justification of the State, democracy, anarchism, justice, rights, ideologies.
• Philosophy and Contemporary Society – liberty, terrorism, culture and multiculturalism, technology and media.
• Ethics – moral principles and whether they exist, virtue ethics, utilitarianism, Kantian ethics, duty, biomedical ethics.

Internal Assessment
Students choose a non-philosophical stimulus e.g. a piece of art, a music video, a scene from a film, and write a 2000-word essay on a philosophical issue inspired by this stimulus. For example, an essay on existentialism and authenticity inspired by Jessie J, or an essay on Schopenhauer and nihilism inspired by Fight Club. 25%.

External Assessment
Paper 1. 1hr 45min, 50%
Students write two essays: one on the Core Theme, and one on their Optional Theme.

Paper 2. 1hr, 25%
Students answer a two-part question on their set text.

Entry Requirements
There are no formal entry requirements for IB Philosophy. However, the subject requires rigorous analysis and structuring coherent essays. As such, an A in GCSE English Literature and an A in GCSE Mathematics are an advantage.

IB Philosophy (Standard Level)

Content
Students study the “Core Theme”: Being Human. Students question whether their lives have meaning and purpose, examine nihilism and existentialism and non-Western responses. We question what is important about being a person, whether animals or machines could be persons, consciousness, human nature, whether we have free will, our relations with others. Students examine famous thinkers like Sartre, Camus, Wittgenstein and Daniel Dennett, as well as formulating their own ideas. We also make connections with theatre, films and pop music.

Optional Topics
Students study a classic set text in depth. This will either be Descartes’s Meditations or Nietzsche’s Genealogy of Morality. Meditations focuses on how we can know things and also discusses the self, mind and reality. Genealogy of Morality is a stinging critique of ethics, arguing that a radical new way is needed.

Students will study one “Optional Themes”. Within the department, we have the expertise to teach:
• Political Philosophy – justification of the State, democracy, anarchism, justice, rights, ideologies.
• Philosophy and Contemporary Society – liberty, terrorism, culture and multiculturalism, technology and media.
• Ethics – moral principles and whether they exist, virtue ethics, utilitarianism, Kantian ethics, duty, biomedical ethics.

Internal Assessment
Students choose a non-philosophical stimulus e.g. a piece of art, a music video, a scene from a film, and write a 2000-word essay on a philosophical issue inspired by this stimulus. For example, an essay on existentialism and authenticity inspired by Jessie J, or an essay on Schopenhauer and nihilism inspired by Fight Club. 25%.

External Assessment
Paper 1. 1hr 45min, 50%
Students write two essays: one on the Core Theme, and one on their Optional Theme.

Paper 2. 1hr, 25%
Students answer a two-part question on their set text.

Entry Requirements
There are no formal entry requirements for IB Philosophy. However, the subject requires rigorous analysis and the ability to structure coherent essays. As such, an A in GCSE English Literature and an A in GCSE Mathematics are an advantage.
IB Philosophy (HL and SL)

Course Specific Objectives

Within Group 3, Individuals and Societies, the aims of the World Religions course are to:

- Encourage the systematic and critical study of: human experience and behaviour; physical, economic and social environments; the history and development of social and cultural institutions
- Develop in the student the capacity to identify, to analyse critically and to evaluate theories, concepts and arguments about the nature and activities of the individual and society
- Enable the student to collect, describe and analyse data used in studies of society, to test hypotheses and interpret complex data and source material
- Promote the appreciation of the way in which learning is relevant both to the culture in which the student lives, and the culture of other societies
- Develop an awareness in the student that human attitudes and opinions are widely diverse and that a study of society requires an appreciation of such diversity
- Enable the student to recognise that the content and methodologies of the subject are contestable and that their study requires the toleration of uncertainty
- Develop an inquiring and intellectually curious way of thinking
- Formulate arguments in a sound and purposeful way
- Examine critically their own experiences and their ideological and cultural perspectives
- Appreciate the diversity of approaches within philosophical thinking
- Apply their philosophical knowledge and skills to the world around them.

How the course is taught

The IB Philosophy course is taught by one or two subject teachers. A heavy emphasis is placed on student participation, presentation, discussion, research and independent learning. Students are encouraged to think for themselves and “do Philosophy”, rather than passively repeating the ideas of dead thinkers. The classroom fosters intellectual inquiry and debate. Students are supervised through the process of completing their Internal Assessment.

Expectations/Homework

Subject teachers set tasks according to an agreed work programme which helps students to manage their time. All students are expected to engage fully in lessons, keep up-to-date and to read and research widely in order to support their independent learning. IB students are expected to be resourceful and committed to intellectual enquiry.

The Extended Essay

Extended Essays in Philosophy provide students with an opportunity to undertake a philosophical investigation into a topic of special interest. The student is encouraged to engage in serious, personal thought, to develop and explore in a disciplined and imaginative way a specific philosophical question appropriate to the subject, and to arrive at a clear conclusion. The chosen topic may be stimulated, for example, by work done in class, by current events, by issues of contemporary debate, by discussion, by private reading and/or reflection, or by conceptual features of belief systems not previously encountered by the student. Previous students have chosen to write about topics as diverse as philosophy of science, freedom, medical ethics, logic, consciousness, language, anarchism.

The essay must be completed within 4000 words. Up to five hours of staff supervision are available to assist with the planning, research and execution of the Extended Essay.

Preparatory Work

It is recommended that all students read an introductory text to familiarise themselves with the main themes before they embark on the course. Interested students can find reading suggestions here:

http://www.pinterest.com/mrjbarfield/philosophy-reading/