You need to sharpen your mind - you need to do some Philosophy!

Why Study Philosophy?

- Most of all, Philosophy is an exciting and engaging subject which addresses some of the big questions you were thinking about anyway.
- The Skills for Philosophy course helps you develop skills needed for this subject and bridge the transition from GCSE, such as textual analysis, logical reasoning and argument skills.
- Once known as “The Queen of the Sciences”, Philosophy partners well with all kinds of other subjects, from Maths and Science for logical thought, through Humanities for analysis and evaluation, to Arts for the understanding of the wider world.
- Philosophy teaches you to analyse ferociously, savagely and mercilessly; to strip down an argument to its nuts and bolts to judge whether it works, and explain why.
- Philosophy has ideas and skills which open up a wide range of options for your future. It is well regarded by top universities for courses such as: Philosophy, Religious Studies, English Literature, International Development, Politics.
- The course provides you with knowledge and skills many employers in different sectors say they want, for example analysis and evaluation, clarity of thought, team work, presentation and communication. This means students of Philosophy go on to have careers in areas such as law, journalism, politics, development, teaching, media, industry and business.
Year 12 Course Content
This year focuses on two of the foundational topics in Philosophy which form a basis from which others develop.

Skills for Philosophy
This unexamined course gives a grounding on the study skills specific to Philosophy, as well as preparing students for greater independent learning, which is required at A-Level and for higher study.

This module examines these questions:
- What makes a good argument?
- How can I read philosophical texts?
- How can I write convincing arguments?

Epistemology
This module examines these questions:
- What can we know for sure?
- How do we learn about the external world?
- Where do we get our ideas from?

Students will consider the classic definition of knowledge as a justified true belief, and some challenges to it. We then consider theories of perception and the source of knowledge before defining the limits of our knowledge.

Moral Philosophy
This module examines these questions:
- How do we make moral decisions?
- What does it mean to say something is good?
- Is morality the same for all people and all times?

Students will consider three major theories of ethics (Utilitarianism, Kant’s Categorical Imperative and Aristotle’s Virtue Ethics) learning their basis and how they are applied. We also consider the topic of meta-ethics, which considers what we mean when we use ethical language.

Year 13 Course Content
This year builds on the previous year, delving into the problems of metaphysics; or what exists.

The Metaphysics of God
This module examines these questions:
- What do we mean by “God”?
- Can the existence of God be proved?
- What is the nature of religious language?

Students will consider the concept of God in Western philosophical thought and evaluate the arguments relating to the existence of God. We will also consider challenges such as the problem of evil. Finally, we will consider the meaning of religious language, building on first year work on epistemology and meta-ethics.

The Metaphysics of Mind
This module examines these questions:
- What do we mean when we talk about mental states?
- Do other beings have a mind like mine?
- Can computers have consciousness?

Students read the foundational work of Descartes who argues that we have a non-physical mind. We look at arguments for and against this position, and contemporary ideas which claim mental states are reducible to physical brain states. We consider thought experiments about what it means to have a mind.

How will I be assessed?
AQA Philosophy: Code 7172
This course is linear, so all exams are in Year 13
Paper 1: Epistemology and Moral Philosophy
3 hour exam (100 marks)

Paper 2: Metaphysics of Mind and Metaphysics of God
3 hour exam (100 marks)

How can I prepare?
Start to ask ‘Why?’ and listen to other people’s answers. Listen to “In our Time” on Radio 4. Watch “The Good Place” on Netflix. Read some Philosophy books (ask for suggestions.)

“If you would be a real seeker after truth, it is necessary that at least once in your life you doubt, as far as possible, all things”
René Descartes

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