

Philosophy

Philosophy A-level covers 4 of the biggest issues in Philosophy. We study the AQA Philosophy course (The only pure philosophy course available at A-level) Here we have given you some ideas generally, about developing your understanding of Philosophy and an introduction to each of the topics.

Reading almost anything good will help you. Fiction often has ethical or philosophical themes. Non-fiction can show you how to (or not to!) structure your own writing. These are a few suggestions but are not exhaustive at all. Several of the more "classic" ones are available free online.

To Kill a Mockingbird – Harper Lee
Brave New World – Aldous Huxley
Mansfield Park – Jane Austen
Middlemarch/Adam Bede – George Eliot
The pig that wants to be eaten – Julian Baggini
50 Philosophy Ideas you really need to know - Ben Dupre
Think – Simon Blackburn

Online resources

<https://philosophynow.org/> - Very good magazine with short philosophy articles.

You can read 4 articles a month free online

<http://socratesjones.com/> Play a computer game to introduce some of the key thinkers in philosophy and practice your logical thinking skills.

<https://www.philosophybasics.com/> A good introduction to Philosophers and their ideas.

<https://explore.org/> Engage in debates and find out more about lots of contemporary issues in Ethics and Philosophy.

<https://www.uea.ac.uk/documents/241631/16651997/big/45c9f668-02e4-484c-b0f0-ef251fc7e724> UEA has produced a booklet of resources about Philosophical debates, some of which we will cover in the course and others which are, sadly, beyond the syllabus. They give you a great insight into how philosophers argue for their view and against others.

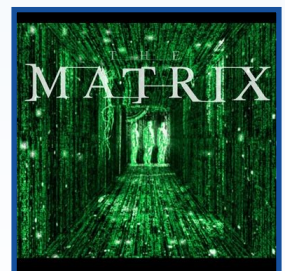
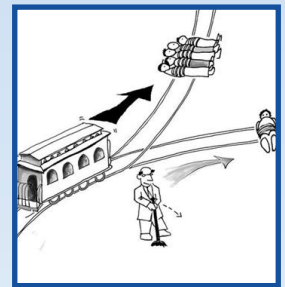
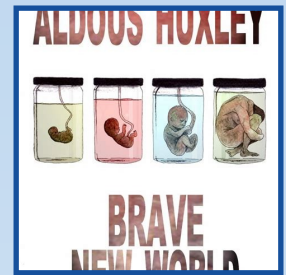
Epistemology (Year 1)

This topic on whether we can ever know anything, and if so how we come to know it. It tends to be the kind of topic which can cause quite a bit of confusion.

Watch "Being John Malcovich" or "The Matrix" to give you some ideas of why people might think we cannot ever know anything for certain. Do you think that the world we are in could be like this? Why(not)? How would you know (if you could)?

Ask people you know what things they are 100% certain of. Find out why they are certain of them. Do you agree with their ideas?

Think about the things you have learned in school. What evidence are these things based on? Are some subjects more reliable about teaching you things which are true? What makes them better?



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Ethics (Year 1)

In this topic we look at some influential ethical theories, considering their good and bad points when applying them to ethical dilemmas. It would be useful to consider these applied ethics areas:

- Eating animals.
- Lying
- Stealing
- Simulated killing (for example in video games or plays)

Research what the different ideas on each of these topics are. Why do people think the actions are bad? What arguments do they give? Why do they think they are not? What arguments are given to argue against others? Eating animals and simulated killing will have had a lot of media coverage in recent years. It might also be worth considering if our ideas change depending on the situation.

If you want even more there is a free pdf textbook available here: <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/product/639>

Metaphysics of Mind (Year 2)

This is Miss Carne's absolute favourite topic in Philosophy ever. Mostly because it has the potential to completely change the way we think about ourselves. In its most basic form it looks at what kind of thing we mean when we talk about the mind and the properties it has like thinking or imagining. Often looking at things like AI as a way of considering the limits of thought.

Here are some TED talks that cover some of the main issues

https://www.ted.com/talks/henry_markram_a_brain_in_a_supercomputer - Can we make a mind out of electrical components? Think about whether this sounds like you would be able to have a computer that could think, feel and sense like a person. If so, why? If not, why not?

https://www.ted.com/talks/david_chalmers_how_do_you_explain_consciousness - One of the key scholars we look at talks about how difficult it is to understand consciousness

<https://www.ted.com/talks/>

[eleanor_nelsen_mary_s_room_a_philosophical_thought_experiment](#) Possibly one of the most famous ideas in Philosophy.

Metaphysics of God (Year 2)

In Philosophy, when we talk about this topic we are not just looking at what religious people say, we are trying to work out what they really mean by things: Are their ideas about God and the words that they use consistent and meaningful?

Try watching https://youtu.be/gS_gY1K1AMU (And the rest of Philosophy Crash Course if you want to know more!) and think about the different qualities of a God. Which ones do you agree or disagree with? Why?

If people are getting annoyed with you for your questions, or you want more ideas you are welcome to email Miss Carne (ecarne@swchs.net) or Mrs Pople (apopple@swchs.net)

