

Quintin Kynaston School

AS Philosophy

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2011 -
2012

Why Study Philosophy?

Why study Philosophy? I honestly don't know. Why do anything?

On the one hand, I could trot out the familiar arguments:

- It is a good grounding in logic and argument.
- It is relevant to the deep study of almost every other subject.
- It encourages clarity of thought.
- It gives us an insight into the true nature of reality - and ourselves.
- It shows us the limits of our own knowledge, and helps us to understand how we may be certain about things - or not...

However, none of these were really reasons that influenced me in choosing to study the subject. I just got hooked on the type of questions that philosophers like to ask. They seemed almost like puzzles, but without the annoying tendency that puzzles have of being solved by other, brighter people! Even after centuries, it seemed, many philosophical questions still remained open.

I could attempt to define philosophy more precisely, but I may simply end up confusing you. After all, the question, 'What is philosophy?' is itself a philosophical question! So, the best thing to do is simply to start philosophising. Take your pick from the following traditional puzzles. If they interest you, maybe you could be a philosopher?

- Can everything be doubted, or are there certain things that we can be absolutely sure of?
- Is your mind separate from your body, or just a product of biological processes (e.g. the brain)?
- Where does the concept of goodness come from? Can we agree on what it is? However, even if we can know what 'good' is, do we *have* to behave morally?
- Is the existence of God a matter of faith, or can it be proven? Are there any conclusive arguments *against* God's existence?
- Why is it wrong to eat people?

Finally, to end with, here's a puzzle:

In an episode of the recent TV series *Heroes*, the Japanese character Hiro Nakamura travels back in time into his own past. Whilst there, he makes a 'phone call to himself. Imagine you were in this situation, what could the future 'you' say to the past 'you' to convince 'you' that you were in fact the same person? Would you be convinced? What possible problems could there be in proving this? Hmmm...

Basic Information

Exam board	AQA
Website	AQA A level Philosophy
Course	AS GCE in Philosophy (1171)
Number of units	2
Unit titles	Unit 1 Introduction to Philosophy 1 Unit 2 Introduction to Philosophy 2
Exam	100%
Coursework	No
Number of exams	2
When	May/June 2012

AQA AS Philosophy

	AS EXAMINATIONS	AS Award 1171
Y13	<p>AS Examinations Unit 1 – PHIL1 An Introduction to Philosophy 1 50% of AS, 25% of A Level Written paper, 1 hour 30 minutes 90 marks Candidates must answer the compulsory question on reason and experience and one other question. Available in January and June</p>	
Y12	<p>Unit 2 – PHIL2 An Introduction to Philosophy 2 50% of AS, 25% of A Level Written paper, 1 hour 30 minutes 90 marks Candidates must answer two questions. Available in January and June.</p>	

AS Philosophy – Student Folders

You will be given lots of paper over the next year and it is absolutely essential that you organise your folders and keep them up to date. You should do this right from the start of the course.

You are studying two units so you should have two A4 ring binders, one for each unit. Each ring binder should be divided up as follows:

Unit 1 An Introduction to Philosophy 1

- Reason & experience
- Why should I be governed?
- Why should I be moral?
- The idea of God (v)
- Persons

Unit 2 An Introduction to Philosophy 2 (completed in Y13)

- Knowledge of the external world (v)
- God and the world (v)
- Tolerance (v)
- The value of art (*may cover this...*)

(v) = already covered in Y12 2010 – 2011

You won't need to bring your ring binders to every lesson – they will be too heavy and you could lose all of your work. Most of the time these will be kept at home.

You should bring into class the work for the topic we are working on – you will need foolscap folders for this.

In class, I will issue you with hand-outs, notes and articles from newspapers and magazines. When you get home, you should read the relevant chapter from the text book you will be given and write up your notes adding additional information.

Cut articles out of newspapers and magazines, highlight them and file them under the relevant headings – don't wait for me to start teaching the topic. If you see something useful, keep it safe!

AS PHILOSOPHY – STUDY SKILLS

- 1 The four basic skills you need when studying Philosophy are:
 - Listening to other people’s ideas
 - Taking an active part in discussions (if you can’t say what you think clearly then you don’t really understand what you are trying to say)
 - Reading widely
 - Writing in depth
- 2 Attendance & punctuality really matter. If you miss lessons you are immediately behind. If you are late you are missing the most important part of the lesson. Fact: the students who get the highest grades have the best records of attendance & punctuality
- 3 Read quality newspapers, watch good TV news programmes, listen to the radio, especially Radio 4. Be well informed.
- 4 Keep a file of press cuttings. If some are relevant to a topic we have done in class then file them next to those notes.
- 5 Read through your notes every evening. Keep reading and rereading them until you know them inside out.
- 6 Don’t try to write everything the teacher is saying. Make notes – write down what the most important points are. Develop a system of notes/abbreviations.
- 7 Write your notes up neatly when you get home, while it is still fresh in your mind.
- 8 Read the text book and add notes to those you took in class. Remember you are creating **NOW** the revision notes you’ll use to prepare for the exam.
- 9 Organise your folder carefully, take pride in it. Spend money on file dividers, plastic wallets.
- 10 Complete all assignments and hand them in on time. They are essential to success. They are giving you a chance to develop and show your understanding. Work hard to impress us.
- 11 If you don’t know what to do **ASK**. My office is U30 my email address is russellchild@gkschool.org.uk.
- 12 Contribute to class discussions. Have an opinion. Listen to what other people have got to say. This gives you a chance to develop your ideas.
- 13 Do extra work – go the extra mile. Do additional essays & tasks and show them to me – the feedback is essential as I can explain how you can improve your work.
- 14 Show initiative – don’t wait for me to tell you to do something
- 15 You’ve got to be determined – Philosophy can be really hard so don’t give up at the first hurdle – believe in yourself and your abilities and keep going

AS Philosophy Curriculum Map 2011-2012

Terms 1 & 2	Terms 3 & 4	Terms 5 & 6
Reason and experience	Why should I be governed? Why should I be moral?	Persons

Philosophy websites

Philosophy Online	http://www.philosophyonline.co.uk/index.html
Ask a Philosopher	http://www.philosophypathways.com/questions/index.html
TED	http://www.ted.com/index.php/pages/view/id/5
The Philosophers' Magazine	http://www.philosophersnet.com/
Philosophy Toolbox	http://philosophy-toolbox.org/
Virtual Philosopher	http://www.nigelwarburton.typepad.com/
Philosophy Bites	http://www.philosophybites.com/