Philosophy A Level

Preparation work: Pre-course Reading, Research and Tasks

Pre-reading and research will help you to become more familiar with the topics you are going to study on your A Level Philosophy course. If you complete the tasks below they will also help you to become more confident when you start your course.

Specification:

We follow the AQA Philosophy specification. You can have a look at what is on the course here: https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/philosophy/as-and-a-level/philosophy-7172/subject-content

Task 1:

(all videos are on Youtube – click the title below or search for the name)

Watch the following video: **What is Philosophy?: Crash Course Philosophy #1**
   a) Define the following words:
      i) Philosophy   ii) Metaphysics   iii) Epistemology   iv) Ethics   v) Aesthetics
   b) For each of the words in part (a) give an example of a philosophical question that falls under that category
   c) What is the two-step method for thinking philosophically?
   d) What is the marker of success in philosophy?

Now watch: **How to Argue – Philosophical Reasoning: Crash Course Philosophy #2**
   e) Write a paragraph answering the following: What is Plato's tripartite soul? Describe each of the three parts. Do you agree with these three categories? Why or why not? Do you agree with Plato's view of which part should be in control? What would a person be like if they let either of the other parts take control?
   f) Explain Bertrand Russell's barber paradox – why does it lead to contradiction?
   g) What is a deductive argument? Come up with an argument that is both true and valid.
   h) Come up with an argument that is invalid, but with a true conclusion; and an argument that is valid but leads to a false conclusion.

Finally, watch: **How to Argue – Induction and Abduction: Crash Course Philosophy #3**
   i) What is induction? Can you give an example of how you've used induction recently? What is the key difference between an inductive argument and a deductive one?
   j) Could you give an example of when you used induction and it didn't work?
   k) What is abduction? Can you come up with an example of an abductive argument?
   l) What is the Socratic method? What is the goal of a Socratic exchange?

You might want to keep watching this series – if you do then make a summary of the key points in any video that you watch.

Websites for Further Research and Reading:
https://www.reddit.com/r/philosophy
https://www.theguardian.com/world/philosophy
https://plato.stanford.edu
https://www.alevelphilosophy.co.uk
https://philosophyalevel.com

Task 2:
Open and complete this document: Evaluating Philosophical Argument

Books to Read:

Introductions to Philosophy	Classic Philosophical works (some of these can be quite challenging – often better to dip into than read like a novel!)	Fiction
"How to teach Philosophy to your dog" - Anthony McGowan **"A Little History of Philosophy"** - Nigel Warburton **"Big Questions: Philosophy"** - Simon Blackburn **"Modern Philosophy"** - Roger Scruton	**"Meditations on First Philosophy"** - Rene Descartes **"Problems of Philosophy"** - Bertrand Russell **"The Last Days of Socrates"** - Plato **"Nicomachean Ethics"** - Aristotle	**"The Stranger"** - Albert Camus **"Sophie's World"** - Jostein Gaardner **"Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance"** - Robert Pirsig **"Candide"** - Voltaire

Podcasts:
- Philosophize This!
- The Panpsycast
- The Philosopher's Arms
- In Our Time: Philosophy
- Philosophy Bites

Task 3:
1) Choose a **book** or **podcast**. Write a side of A4 on the philosophical ideas you encountered in either one of the book's chapters or a podcast episode.

2) Choose a **film** or **TV show** or another **book** or **Podcast**. Research the philosophical questions that are raised (Google will help you here; lots of articles about the recommended films/shows/books are out there) and write a side of A4 on them.

Films and TV to Watch:
Films
- **Blade Runner (1982)** – Can a machine/robot ever be considered human?
- **The Matrix (1999)** – Descartes' [Cartesian] Dualism – is there a difference between our body and our mind?
- **The Truman Show (1998)** – Plato's cave, is it possible that we experience a "shadow" of reality?
- **Minority Report (2002)** – Do we have free will or are our actions determined?

TV

- **The Good Place** (Netflix) – What does it mean to be "good"? What is the right way to act?
- **Rick and Morty** (Netflix) – existentialism/ nihilism - can we find meaning in an apparently meaningless universe?
- **Mr Robot** (Prime) – Does our personal identity extend to the online world? Moral issues of good vs evil.

Progression Opportunities

Why choose Philosophy A Level:

"The great virtue of philosophy is that it teaches not what to think, but how to think ... Philosophy is, in commercial jargon, the ultimate 'transferable work skill'" (The Times)

As a philosophy student you will develop skills that are invaluable to any University course and employer. Many of our students go on to study philosophy at degree level – and most universities offer the chance to study it as part of a joint degree with other subjects (eg Maths, English, Film, Politics, Economics – the list goes on and on!).

We hope you enjoy completing these tasks – and do drop the college an email if you have any questions – we would love to help.

We hope you enjoy completing these tasks and look forward to you joining the course.