

ST MARY'S COLLEGE



INTRODUCTION

The film 'The Matrix' poses one of the basic questions philosophers have been asking for thousands of years – how do we know that anything around us (including ourselves) is real? This is the starting point of philosophy. It involves trying to establish whether knowledge is ever truly possible, and then to look at whether we can have knowledge of right and wrong, or make sense of our own existence.



AS LEVEL

Content

UNIT TITLES AND CONTENT	UNIT ASSESSMENT
<p>An Introduction to Philosophy 1</p> <p><u>Mind as a tabula rasa</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strengths and weaknesses of the view that all ideas are derived from sense experience. • The strengths and weaknesses of the view that claims about what exists must be ultimately grounded in and justified by sense experience. <p><u>Innate knowledge</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strengths and weaknesses of the view that the mind contains innate knowledge regarding the way the world is: the doctrine of innate ideas and its philosophical significance. • The view that some fundamental claims about what exists can be grounded in and justified by <i>a priori</i> intuition and/or demonstration. • Is 'certainty' confined to introspection and the tautological? <p><u>Conceptual schemes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The idea that experience is only intelligible as it is, because it presents sensation through a predetermined conceptual scheme or framework; and the philosophical implications of this view. <p>In covering these issues, students will be expected to demonstrate their understanding of the contrasts and connections between necessary and contingent truths, analytic and synthetic propositions, deductive and inductive arguments, <i>a priori</i> and <i>a posteriori</i> knowledge.</p> <p><u>Why should I be governed?</u></p> <p>Why is it that we, as free individuals, allow ourselves to be governed by others? What does this say about our <i>state of nature</i>? What do we mean by <i>political obligation</i> and <i>consent</i>, and when if at all is it right to break a law we think infringes our rights and the rights of others?</p>	<p>Written Exam 1 hour 30 minutes June</p>

UNIT TITLES AND CONTENT	UNIT ASSESSMENT
<p>An Introduction to Philosophy 2</p> <p><u>Free will and determinism</u> Are we free to choose what to do when we like or are our actions simply the inevitable outcome of a series of events – in other words do we have free will or are we determined in what we do?</p> <p><u>God and the world</u> Religions influence in the world is being challenged. How do we view the world from a religious point of view? Can we prove the existence of God from what we see in the world or does what we see convince us that there is no God?</p>	<p>Written exam 1 hour 30 minutes June</p>

Entry requirements

To study AS Philosophy you need to have a minimum of 5 GCSE's at grade C or better, including English Language. Please note that the entry requirements for an AS programme depend on the number of courses you intend to take.

What skills and interests do I need?

You will need a curiosity about the world and ability to suspend disbelief and to imagine all sorts of extreme and absurd situations, and apply these to real life. You will need to be able to read for sustained periods of time, and to read material which is challenging and not instantly understandable, such as this extract from the set text: *“What do we mean by saying that existence precedes essence? We mean first of all that man exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world- and defines himself afterwards. If man as the existentialist sees him is not definable, it is because to begin with he is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself.”* You will need to be able to explain new ideas clearly and to give examples to illustrate them, both verbally and in writing. You will need to be able to sit down for 2 or 3 hours and write an essay of 1000 or so words on a regular basis. In future there will be exams in both January and June which should benefit most students.



How does it build upon studies in Key Stage 4?

Philosophy is a new subject; it is not studied at Key stage 4. It builds upon some GCSE Religious Studies modules (dealing with ethics or the philosophy of religion). It will build upon study skills you have mastered at school.

How is the course assessed?

There will be regular exam based assignments to test knowledge and understanding, and a mock-examination at the end of each module. Coaching in essay writing and exam technique will be given.

A2 LEVEL

Content

UNIT TITLES AND CONTENT	UNIT ASSESSMENT
<p>Key Themes in Philosophy</p> <p>This module could include a study of the philosophy of mind, and examination of political philosophy, or a detailed look at metaphysics and the problems associated with knowledge</p>	<p>Written Exam Two hours June</p>
<p>Philosophical Problems</p> <p>Students will approach philosophy through a series of problems raised by philosophers in classic texts. This could include work by philosophers such as Hume, Plato, Mill, Descartes and Nietzsche.</p>	<p>Written Exam One and a half hour June</p>

How is the course delivered?

Right from the word go you will experience a very active approach to build up your skills and knowledge. Among the methods we use are problem solving, teaching other students, group work, research using the LRC and Internet and contemporary film clips.

Entry requirements

A pass grade in AS Philosophy is required. Students passing the AS course with a grade E will need to resit an AS module.

How is the course assessed?

There will be regular exam based assignments to test knowledge and understanding, and a mock-examination at the end of each module. Coaching in essay writing and exam technique will be given.

Progression routes

As well as preparing you for a philosophy degree, Philosophy develops a number of transferable skills such as reasoning and critical analysis, which are valued in employment and higher education.

Further Information

For further information please contact Len Collings

E-mail len.collings@stmarys-sfc.ac.uk

Full specifications can be found at www.aqa.org.uk go to Publications.

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