



UNIVERSITY  
OF LONDON

INTERNATIONAL  
PROGRAMMES

Information for registered students

# Philosophy

Programme handbook

2017–18



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# Welcome to your 2017–18 study year as an International Programmes student



## The International Programmes

The University of London is a federal university which is made up of 18 self-governing member institutions and nine other smaller specialist research institutes, based in and around London. The International Programmes are the suite of programmes that the University offers in partnership with its member institutions, one of which is Birkbeck, University of London. The University of London handles the administrative background to the Philosophy programme, such as helping you to register and pay your fees, organising examinations and despatching your study materials, while Birkbeck determines what you will study and provides academic guidance and support. Alongside this Programme handbook, you should also read the **Student guide to the International Programmes** (Student guide), which will guide you through the practical aspects of studying as an International Programmes student. The Student guide is available on the website:

[www.londoninternational.ac.uk/guide-handbooks](http://www.londoninternational.ac.uk/guide-handbooks)

This handbook provides academic guidance along with practical information and advice that are specific to your studies as a Philosophy student. We hope that we have covered everything that you need to know during your studies, but if you require any additional information or support, please do not hesitate to contact a member of our staff.

You will be notified directly of any changes likely to affect your study programme but you may also find it helpful to check our website, which is regularly updated with the latest news:

[www.londoninternational.ac.uk](http://www.londoninternational.ac.uk)

## The Programme Regulations and Programme Specification

These documents contain all the rules which apply to every aspect of your programme, as well as detailed information about what courses you can study and what you will achieve by the end of your programme. You should make sure that you read them and refer to them regularly throughout your registration with us:

[www.londoninternational.ac.uk/regs](http://www.londoninternational.ac.uk/regs)

## Contact an adviser at the University of London International Programmes

If you have any questions that are not answered in these publications, you can contact an adviser. To use the online system to contact any of the International Programmes departments, please go to the 'Ask a question' tab in the Student Portal:

<http://my.londoninternational.ac.uk>

If you are unable to access the Portal, please contact us via our web form:

<http://enquiries.londoninternational.ac.uk>

If you would prefer to telephone, you can call our Student Advice Centre on:  
+44 (0)20 7862 8360

If you need to send us a letter or any other information by post, please use the address below, including the department it should be sent to (e.g. Student Assessment Office):

University of London International Programmes,  
Stewart House, 32 Russell Square,  
London WC1B 5DN  
United Kingdom.

## Academic direction – Birkbeck

Birkbeck and other member institutions of the University of London have many research interests in common and share the same standards and degree structures. However, Birkbeck was originally founded to provide study opportunities for people who could not attend full-time programmes because of commitments to work or family, and it particularly welcomes students who lack conventional educational qualifications. This makes the Philosophy Department at Birkbeck eminently suitable to provide academic direction for the BA in Philosophy for International Programmes students.

Birkbeck's Department of Philosophy is among Britain's best for research and study in philosophy, and is an active contributor to the programme of intercollegiate seminars and conferences that make London an important centre for philosophy. In recent national and international reviews, the Department of Philosophy was rated highly for its research record with respect to both UK departments and those in the USA. The publications of the department's staff are internationally recognised and cover the whole range of philosophical subjects.

# Message from the Programme Director

Dear Student

Welcome to the International Programme in Philosophy. I hope that you will find your study of philosophy exciting and rewarding. I know that you will find it challenging.

Philosophy has its origins in the puzzlement, indeed perplexity, that marks our struggles to understand the world and our place within it. These struggles centre around a number of fundamental questions about reality, knowledge, mind, language, moral value and beauty – among others – and we can think of the history of philosophy as a discussion of these questions, extended over thousands of years and involving countless participants.

Joining in a discussion at a late stage is never easy. You need to find out what issues are being addressed and what has gone before. In the case of philosophy, the difficulties are compounded by a number of factors. First, the participants often have historical and intellectual backgrounds very different from our own. Second, even when the participants are contemporaries, the vocabulary employed is not always clear to the newcomer. Finally, the aim of this subject is not merely that of making you an informed auditor of this continuing conversation; you will also be expected to take part in it. Indeed, philosophy itself cannot be appreciated without active participation.

Although the study of philosophy is not easy, especially for those working largely on their own, the notes in this Programme handbook, and the other important materials and publications we provide, should help.

First, there are the **Programme Regulations** and **Programme Specification**, which set out the detailed structure and requirements of the qualifications and degrees we offer.

Second, we supply online subject guides for each course you take. These guides will tell you what topics are covered in a particular course, and what reading is appropriate. I will say more about these guides below.

Third, each year we supply a collection of Examination papers and Examiners' commentaries. These are available online to registered students. Each of them contains the previous year's examination paper for a given course, as well as commentaries from Examiners on how best to approach each question on the examination paper. I strongly recommend that you read these commentaries carefully as part of your preparation for any examination.

Note that for the Introduction to Philosophy course, there is a printed text entitled *Reading Philosophy*, which will be posted to you when you register for any programme of which this course is a part.

Finally, to get some idea of the nature of philosophy, even before you begin to follow particular courses of study, you would do well to look at one or other of the items mentioned under the heading 'Introductory and general reading in Philosophy' on p.6.

If you have any questions concerning examinations or registration, please contact the relevant departments of the International Programmes (see p.2). However, if you still have queries of an academic nature after you have read this Programme handbook, you can write to me at Birkbeck (see below for details). For obvious reasons, I cannot answer detailed queries about study in a specific course, but I am happy to provide any general academic advice you might need.

With best wishes,

Dr Florian Steinberger

Programme Director for Philosophy International Programmes students

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# Dates to note

<b>Dates to note</b>	<b>Things to do in the year ahead</b>
<b>At the time of initial or continuing registration</b>	Start planning which examinations you intend to enter for. You will be able to download a personalised examination entry form from the Student Portal from mid-December.
<b>Examination Centre closing date</b>	Check what your Examination Centre's closing date is for making an examination entry. This may be earlier than the University's deadline so it is your responsibility to comply.
<b>1 February</b>	All entries from Examination Centres must be received by the University no later than this date. Entries made after 1 February will only be accepted, in exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the University.
<b>February</b>	Submission of first draft of Dissertation.
<b>Three to four weeks before examinations</b>	You will receive your Admission Notice, which confirms the dates and times of your examinations and your candidate number.
<b>10 days before the examinations start</b>	If you have not received an Admission Notice by this time, please use the online enquiry system (see p.2) to contact the Student Assessment Office.
<b>1 May</b>	Final Dissertation submission deadline.
<b>Early May</b>	The first examinations normally start. Note that the University is unable to take religious and/or public holidays into account when setting the examination dates.
<b>Three weeks after the last examination</b>	Last date by which the University will accept information about, and corroboration of, any medical condition and/or other mitigating circumstance that may have affected your examination performance.
<b>July</b>	Your examination results will usually be released during this month and will be made available to you online.
<b>September/October (depending on programme)</b>	Time to pay continuing registration fees, although you may wish to wait until you have your examination results.
<b>30 September (for the May/June examinations)</b>	The deadline to request an administrative re-check of your examination mark. Please note that this will not be an academic re-mark but purely an administrative re-check.
<b>October</b>	Submission of Dissertation proposal (if you are intending to submit your final Dissertation in May of the following year).

# Studying philosophy as an International Programmes student



As an International Programmes student, you will be given lots of advice about the individual courses that you follow. Most importantly, this will include advice, explanation and reading in the subject guides for each course. In addition, the very useful Examination papers and Examiners' commentaries are published on the virtual learning environment (VLE) each year. They analyse the previous year's examinations on a question-by-question basis. However, ultimately you will have to make your own decisions about courses, reading and preparation for examinations. There is no individual tuition on this programme (though there is individual feedback for the Dissertation on the BA and pilot initiatives introducing more interaction on the VLE with Birkbeck academics). It may be possible to get help in local tuition centres or from certain specialist internet tutors, although this will not be possible for everyone. In sum, studying for the various qualifications with the University of London International Programmes Philosophy programme requires each student to take responsibility for their own study.

That said, International Programmes Philosophy students tend to be very successful and, if you pay close attention to the materials provided, you too should have no special problems. Note: these are not idle words put in simply to encourage you! Those students who stay the course not only tend to get the relevant qualification, but also achieve outstanding results. International

Programmes Philosophy graduates have gained entry to prestigious postgraduate courses and, in some cases, obtained grants for their further studies. Also, the spread of results of those finishing – and their numbers – compare well with most college-based departments of philosophy.

As noted earlier, philosophy is an exciting subject which is always challenging and often difficult. For this reason, and before going into detail about the contents of the various qualifications, it might be useful for you to be given some general advice about studying philosophy and preparing for examinations.

## The VLE in Philosophy

On the VLE, you will find most of the materials you will need to study your chosen courses and prepare for examinations, and you will get access to it when you register. The VLE has a further special role to play, given that you are undertaking your philosophy qualification by independent study. Aside from breaking news bulletins from the Programme Director, the VLE enables students to speak directly to one another. In previous years, the level of participation has been high and we hope that this will continue and, indeed, increase. In facilitating communication with others who share the same intellectual interests, even if they are not in the same country, the student section of the VLE makes meaningful philosophical dialogue possible. It would be good if students



could meet each other in person, but the VLE has proven a worthwhile substitute, and you should take advantage of the opportunities it offers. Recently, online seminars and formative assessment have been introduced on the VLE for Level 4 courses, providing students with the opportunity to discuss topics with, and receive feedback from, academics at Birkbeck. Similar in format to the discussion forums already in place, this development is currently in pilot stage and we hope to introduce further support of this kind in the future. The Philosophy VLE contains the following resources:

- ▶ discussion forums
- ▶ Examination papers and Examiners' commentaries
- ▶ Programme Regulations
- ▶ this Programme handbook
- ▶ links to the Online Library
- ▶ all subject guides.

The VLE is also used to post important notices and other useful links.

## The Student Portal

The address of the Student Portal is:

<https://my.londoninternational.ac.uk>

The Portal is a website that gives you access to online resources that are relevant to you and your programme of study. All you need is the one username and password to access all these resources.

You will be sent your Portal username and password with your study materials. We recommend that you log in as soon as you can.

Once you are logged in you will be able to access:

- ▶ your VLE
- ▶ your Online Library resources
- ▶ your student email account
- ▶ your user details
- ▶ other useful information.

If you require further assistance logging in, please read the user guide and frequently asked questions on the Portal homepage.

## The Online Library

The first place to go to access library resources remotely is the University of London's Online Library, which has a homepage dedicated to Philosophy students to enable you to access the most relevant resources quickly. Read the Student guide to find out more about the kinds of resources it can offer, or visit the website at:

<http://onlinelibrary.london.ac.uk/programme/>

## Introductory and general reading in Philosophy

A famous introduction to philosophy is:

Russell, B. *The problems of philosophy*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, first published in 1912, but continually reprinted) (Oxford University Press, 2001) second edition [ISBN 9780192854230] and (Cosimo Classics, 2007) [ISBN 9781605200255].

More recent books with the same introductory aims are:

Blackburn, S. *Think*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) [ISBN 9780192854254].

O'Hear, A. *What philosophy is*. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992) [ISBN 9780140136395].

Hollis, M. *Invitation to philosophy*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1997) second edition [ISBN 9780631206644].

Nagel, T. *What does it all mean?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) [ISBN 9780195174373].

Dictionaries of philosophy tend to be of limited use because their contents are too brief and sketchy. More useful are the various companions and encyclopedias that have been published in recent years. In particular:

Bunnin, N and E. Tsui-James *The Blackwell companion to philosophy*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002) [ISBN 9780631219088]. A good and comprehensive guide that covers most of the topics which figure in the programme. (However, this is not a substitute for working through the readings in each course.)

Craig, E. *The shorter Routledge encyclopedia of philosophy*. (London: Routledge, 2005) second revised edition [ISBN 9780415324953]. Recently re-edited, this is a massive work of 10 volumes (and is available on CD-ROM). It can be of help with specific questions that arise in the course of your study.

You can also find very useful material – both introductory and advanced – in the online Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:

<http://plato.stanford.edu/>

## Reading

A central part of your work will consist of reading philosophical texts. This is the case for anyone studying the subject, but is especially true for International Programmes students working on their own and without the benefit of lectures. Of course, reading is no less a major activity in any academic study, but there are certain special problems where philosophical reading is concerned, and some hints about it are therefore appropriate.

When reading a novel, you begin reading at the beginning, expecting to absorb more and more of the

content as the pages mount up. No reading is completely passive – you often stop and think over some passage or chapter – but in a typical case, we can, as we say, immerse ourselves in a novel, and do not need to re-read passages merely to understand what is happening. Reading in philosophy is not like this, and this can be frustrating for a newcomer to the subject. On the one hand, in order to get anything out of what you read, you have to be prepared to read through certain passages you don't quite understand, and then to go back and re-read them in the light of other things you have read in that text and in others. On the other hand, you should never adopt a passive attitude towards what you read. This does not simply mean that you should think about what you are reading – that is true of any reading you do. Rather, you should come to a philosophical text with all sorts of questions of your own, questions which structure your reading and re-reading.

To be more specific about this: the philosophers you will read aim to answer certain questions and support their answers with arguments. In the best writing, these questions and answers are given a setting that makes them stand out reasonably clearly. But you would scarcely expect philosophers to aim their writing in every case at the newcomer to philosophical discussion. So, the terms in which the setting is given, the questions posed and, most commonly, the arguments offered, are bound to seem unfamiliar to you.

Therefore, what you have to do as you read is to ask yourself these sorts of questions about the text:

- ▶ What question(s) is (are) guiding the author?
- ▶ What conclusions does the author seek to reach?
- ▶ Is there a single central argument for that conclusion or a number of arguments that are intended to work together?
- ▶ Do you think the premises that figure in the argument are true?
- ▶ Are there premises assumed but not explicitly stated?
- ▶ Are there important premises that are asserted but not argued for?
- ▶ Aside from the truth of the premises, do you think the reasoning to the conclusion is valid?

As I expect you can see, if you read in this active way, with these questions probing what you read, you will have to go back and forth in the text in order to generate a complete picture of what the author is doing. It is this criss-crossing of the text in order to understand it that is characteristic of philosophical reading. By recognising this before you begin reading a philosophical text, you will not think yourself deficient because you cannot sit down and read philosophy as you would a novel or magazine – you simply should not expect to be able to do that.

## Reading and writing

One way to ensure that you get the most out of your reading is by writing down various things as you read. In the broadest sense, this could be described as note-taking, but it is not exactly the same kind of note-taking you might have done up to now. Unlike the notes you might make of a novel or work of history, those done in conjunction with philosophical reading should reflect the probing nature of that reading. Your notes should be answers to the questions described above, including working thoughts of your own, rather than some page-by-page description of the text. By using your own words in this way to analyse a philosophical text, you will find that you not only get more out of your reading, but you will also remember it better.

## Writing

Since the aim of philosophical study is to prepare you to be a participant rather than simply a spectator in philosophical discussion, you will be unsurprised to hear that we recommend that you write essays – not merely notes – arguing for, or against, various philosophical theses. It cannot be stressed too strongly that what is required from you is reasoned and plausible argument – argument addressed to imagined readers who stand to be convinced by what you write. Unless you can offer good reasons to adopt your views, what you have is not philosophy so much as mere assertion and dogma. Of

course, at the beginning of an essay, or as a background to what you write, you are likely to have a view in mind, some position you want to adopt in answering a question. This is not always so – sometimes your writing will aim only at the arguments offered by others – but when it is, that is fine as a starting point. However, you must go on to back up what you think is true. A good question to ask of anything you write is: would I find this persuasive even if I hadn't myself suggested the view? (You should also ask yourself whether you can imagine someone who doesn't think as you do, understanding what you have written. The clearer your writing is, the more likely it is that you yourself have understood the material and are making a genuine contribution to the discussion.)

## Discussion

There can be little doubt that you learn more, and gain clearer insight, by engaging in discussion. However, in philosophy, discussion plays a more central role than in most other intellectual areas. Having to exposit and defend what you think is, in a way, part of what it is to think philosophically in the first place. Writing can help here, but readers who respond to what you say, and to whom you respond in turn, tend to be more useful.

Since you are likely to be working towards this award on your own, the opportunities for discussion are going to be limited. However,

whether talking to friends, or within a local study group, do what you can to engage in philosophical discussion. Explaining what you think about some topic to a friend who is not studying philosophy can often be just as beneficial as engaging in a discussion with other students. (In talking to friends, you might experience the kind of impatience with philosophy that Socrates did, but this should not discourage you.)

## Progress

Do not expect your progress in philosophy to be rapid, steadily incremental or even obvious. Though varying somewhat, all ways into the subject, in some sense, start at the deep end. The material we recommend for each of the courses includes some items that are more accessible and, hence, a little more elementary. However, it is not always clear in philosophy what is elementary and what is not. When studying philosophy you are bound to experience a sense of being lost, or of not having any firm ground under you, and you should not be discouraged by these feelings. They are only to be expected, and are themselves necessary for that most wonderful feeling you get when the mist lifts and you understand something clearly.

On a more practical level, there is something you can do to guide your studies and assess your progress. First, aside from the writing you do while reading, or in preparing

essays, from time to time you should choose an examination question from a past paper and try to answer it under examination conditions. (Typically, give yourself an hour from start to finish and do not allow yourself access to any books or notes.) Second, you should re-read what you have written in conjunction with reading the Examiners' commentary on the question you answered. (These are in the 'Examination papers and Examiners' commentaries' section on the VLE.) By comparing what you have written with what was required, you can gauge how well you answered the question and also see how to improve on it.

## Preparing for examinations

In the subject guides for each course, you will find extensive reading lists. However, when it comes to final examinations, you have only to answer two or three questions (depending on the course level). This indicates that you must exercise a degree of selectivity in your preparations. You should think hard about the particular topics within a subject that interest you. You should then use the reading lists and other materials to prepare these topics. You certainly do not have to prepare all of the topics that arise within any subject, although you should certainly think of preparing more than two or three, since you cannot be completely sure that there will be suitable questions on each of them.

One invaluable resource for making this selection are the Examination papers and Examiners' commentaries that are published each year on the VLE. This includes the examination papers for the previous year and, in many cases, also includes detailed commentaries by the Examiners of those papers. (This is usually done on a question-by-question basis.) However, use caution when revising as core syllabuses do occasionally change. Note also that past examination questions shouldn't be used as a guide to future examinations.

**Important note:** As stated in the General Regulations, the answers you provide in written examinations must be in your own words. This means that you must not try to reproduce work that you might have memorised from books that you have read or from practice essays that may have been produced in a study group.

# Structure of the programme



**Note:** These programmes of study have been designed to make it possible for someone to progress from the Certificate to the Diploma and then on to the BA in Philosophy, accumulating credits along the way. If you have the requisite admissions qualifications, you can register straightaway for the BA in Philosophy or Diploma and so it will not then be necessary to consider the Certificate. But if you do register for, say, the Certificate because you want to see what Philosophy is like, you will be in a good position to progress further.

## BA in Philosophy

The BA Degree in Philosophy consists of 12 courses from Levels 4, 5 and 6, as follows.

Students take the following Level 4 courses:

- ▶ Introduction to philosophy [PY1020]
- ▶ Ethics: historical perspectives [PY1095]
- ▶ Epistemology [PY1025]
- ▶ Logic [PY1070]

Students choose four Level 5 courses from the following list:

- ▶ Greek philosophy: Plato and the Pre-Socratics [PY1085]
- ▶ Modern philosophy: Descartes, Locke, Berkeley and Hume [PY1065]
- ▶ Ethics: contemporary perspectives [PY3115] (Prerequisite: PY1095)
- ▶ Metaphysics [PY3075] (Prerequisite: PY1070)
- ▶ Methodology: induction, reason and science [PY3035]

Students choose three Level 6 courses from the following list:

- ▶ Modern philosophy: Spinoza, Leibniz and Kant [PY3125] (Prerequisite: PY1065)
- ▶ Greek philosophy: Aristotle [PY3120] (Prerequisite: PY1085)

- ▶ Continental philosophy: Hegel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche [PY3190] (Prerequisite: PY3125)
- ▶ Aesthetics [PY3130]
- ▶ Philosophy of language [PY3210]
- ▶ Philosophy of mind [PY3100]
- ▶ Political philosophy [PY3090]
- ▶ Philosophy of religion [PY3110]

All students must do the following Level 6 course:

- ▶ The Dissertation [PY3500]

Please consult the Programme Regulations for full details about how to progress, credit transfers and assessment.

### Course content and selection

In the section 'Philosophy courses' on page 22, you will find descriptions of each of the courses that appear in the Philosophy programme, as well as some introductory reading and sample examination questions. For full information about each course, you should consult the relevant subject guide on the VLE.

In those cases where you have a choice of courses, you should bear in mind two things. First, consider which of the various courses strike you as most appealing, given your own background and goals. It is much easier to stay focused when what you have chosen to study is of genuine interest to you. Second, keep in mind any prerequisites that are listed for the Level 5 or 6 courses, and plan your choices accordingly.

### Dissertation

All students on the BA programme must write a 7,500 word dissertation. Since the dissertation is an independent philosophical project, you should reserve it for your final year of study, so that you can draw on the philosophical knowledge and expertise you have accumulated. You will need to submit an outline proposal for your dissertation in October of the academic year in which you wish to submit it. The proposal should be no longer than a page, but it should include the proposed title of the dissertation,

a brief outline of its projected content, and a brief list of the reading you intend to do for the project. Although the proposal is due in October, you will need to start thinking about the topic of your dissertation well before this. The subject guide for this course, which you will find on the VLE, provides invaluable guidance on choosing a dissertation topic, preparing a proposal, and planning and writing the dissertation itself. You should read it before the beginning of your final year, so that you can start thinking about potential dissertation topics in advance.

### A pathway through the BA in Philosophy

The shortest period of time in which you can take the degree is three years and the longest, eight years. Only someone studying full time can hope to do justice to the degree in three years. Anyone studying part time should expect to take longer: the average length of time in which International Programmes students complete a degree is around five years.

Even after the fulfilment of the prerequisites, you have a great deal of choice about which courses to take and when to take them. However, set out below is a programme of study for a five-year, part-time BA. Based on the experience of students who have completed this and similar programmes in philosophy, we recommend this particular order, and the timing of courses, as that which will enable steady progress towards the BA degree.

#### Year 1

- ▶ Introduction to philosophy
- ▶ Epistemology
- ▶ Ethics: historical perspectives

#### Year 2

- ▶ Logic
- ▶ One Level 5 course

#### Year 3

- ▶ Three remaining Level 5 courses

## Year 4

- ▶ Two Level 6 courses

## Year 5

- ▶ One Level 6 course
- ▶ Dissertation

This is a natural and mutually supportive way to undertake your programme of study. It builds from those courses which introduce you to areas of philosophy and might be less demanding (e.g. they involve two-hour examinations) and moves on to those in the final two years which require more effort and are examined in three-hour examinations or by writing a dissertation.

However, you should recognise that the above plan is only advisory. There is nothing to prevent you completing the BA in less or more than five years.

## Diploma of Higher Education in Philosophy

The Diploma of Higher Education in Philosophy consists of eight Level 4 and 5 courses, as follows:

Students take the following four Level 4 courses:

- ▶ Introduction to philosophy [PY1020]
- ▶ Ethics: historical perspectives [PY1095]
- ▶ Epistemology [PY1025]
- ▶ Logic [PY1070]

Students take four Level 5 courses from the following:

- ▶ Greek philosophy: Plato and the Pre-Socratics [PY1085]
- ▶ Modern philosophy: Descartes, Locke, Berkeley and Hume [PY1065]
- ▶ Ethics: contemporary perspectives [PY3115] (Prerequisite: PY1095)

- ▶ Metaphysics [PY3075] (Prerequisite: PY1070)
- ▶ Methodology: induction, reason and science [PY3035]

Please consult the Programme Regulations for full details about how to progress, credit transfers and assessment.

## Course content and selection

In the section 'Philosophy courses' on p.14, you will find descriptions of each of the courses that appear in the Philosophy programme, as well as some introductory reading and sample examination questions. For full information about each course, you should consult the relevant subject guide on the VLE.

In those cases where you have a choice of courses, you should bear in mind two things. First, you should consider which of the various courses strike you as most appealing, given your own background and goals. It is much easier to stay focused when what you have chosen to study is of genuine interest. Second, you should keep in mind any prerequisites that are listed for the Level 5 or 6 courses, and plan your choices accordingly.

## Certificate of Higher Education in Philosophy

The Certificate of Higher Education in Philosophy consists of four Level 4 courses, as follows:

Students take the following four Level 4 courses:

- ▶ Introduction to philosophy [PY1020]
- ▶ Ethics: historical perspectives [PY1095]
- ▶ Epistemology [PY1025]
- ▶ Logic [PY1070]

Please consult the Programme Regulations for full details about how to progress, credit transfers and assessment.

## Assessment for the BA in Philosophy, Diploma of Higher Education in Philosophy and Certificate of Higher Education in Philosophy

Each course of the BA in Philosophy, Diploma of Higher Education in Philosophy and Certificate of Higher Education in Philosophy will be assessed by a two-hour (Levels 4 and 5) or three-hour (Level 6) written examination held at established centres worldwide. The written examinations take place on one occasion each year, normally in May.

The exception to this is the Dissertation course in the BA in Philosophy. The Dissertation course is assessed by a pre-submitted 7,500 word dissertation. Details of the dissertation arrangements will be given in the Dissertation subject guide, which is available on the VLE.

To see the Scheme of awards, please refer to the Programme Regulations.

### Prizes

University of London Awards for Academic Achievement, of £100 each, may be awarded at the discretion of the Examiners to students who have achieved a distinguished performance in the examination as a whole.



# Philosophy courses



All philosophy courses are listed below, along with some general descriptions, introductory reading lists and sample examination questions. They are also listed with their unique course code, the level of the course and any prerequisites.

Each of these courses has a dedicated subject guide which can be found on the VLE. The information in this section is, therefore, only meant to give you an idea of what a course is about, and you should consult the relevant subject guide for more detailed information.

## Level 4 (compulsory)

### Introduction to philosophy [PY1020]

#### Course description

In this course, students will be introduced to the methods and content of philosophy by considering, at an elementary level and in a carefully guided way, some of the central problems that arise within the subject. Included here will be: free will, determinism and responsibility; personal identity; the relation of the mind to the body; the nature of knowledge; the ideal of equality; issues raised by portrayals of tragedy; the reality of qualities; and our understanding of moral dilemmas.

Unlike other courses, there is a single textbook for this course. It is:

Guttenplan, S., J. Hornsby and C. Janaway *Reading philosophy*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) [ISBN 9780631234388].

You will be sent a copy of this book when you register for any qualification.

*Reading philosophy* is constructed around various philosophical problems. It contains texts related to these problems, as well as commentaries and invitations to the reader to think about the specific issues raised by the texts. As you will see, the book aims to introduce you – in an active way – both to classic philosophical problems and to the reading of philosophical texts.

The final examination will contain questions relating to each of the chapters in the book, and you are not required to read anything other than that which is contained in it. Below is a sample of the kind of questions you might encounter. (Note that the examination questions are closely associated with the texts in *Reading philosophy*.)

### Sample examination questions

1. In his First Meditation, how does Descartes attempt to show that there is reason to doubt everything one believes?
2. In connection with the Second Meditation, Hobbes said that it was possible that something that thinks should be something corporeal. Do Descartes' arguments succeed in ruling out this possibility?
3. Strawson states the principle: 'If we are to talk coherently about individual consciousnesses or minds... we must know the difference between one such item and two such items.' Is this principle acceptable? Does it make a problem for Descartes?
4. Is Hume right to think that tragedy is more enjoyable to an audience the more they suffer painful feelings? How successful is he in explaining why this might be so?
5. Do we, as Feagin alleges, take pleasure in our distress at the sufferings of tragic characters? Does this help us to understand the ethical significance of tragedy?
6. Williams distinguishes between two elements in the idea of equality: equality of opportunity and equality of respect. What is the difference between these? Is there any reason to think that there could be a problem in practice of combining equality of opportunity with equality of respect?
7. What does Nozick mean to show using the example of Wilt Chamberlain? Does the example succeed in showing this?
8. What, according to Lemmon, differentiates the Platonic dilemma from the Sartrean one? Is this difference significant for our understanding of moral dilemma?
9. Does Mill's use of the principle of utility threaten the reality of moral dilemmas? In so far as there is a tension between Mill's theory and the reality of moral dilemmas, what is the best way of resolving it?
10. Outline and evaluate Locke's account of persons and their identity.
11. Is it really possible for one person to change bodies with another?
12. '[T]he will turns at once, like a weathervane on a well-oiled pivot in a changeable wind... It turns successively to all the motives that lie before it as possible, and with each the human being thinks he can will it, and thus fix the weathervane at this point; but this is a mere deception' (Schopenhauer). What are Schopenhauer's reasons for saying 'this is a mere deception'? Are they good reasons?
13. Strawson doubts that the question whether determinism is true is a significant question for morality. What arguments does he give for doubting this?
14. Hume gives two definitions of 'cause' in the Treatise. Say how these definitions differ from one another. Do you think we could accept them both?
15. What are Anscombe's reasons for denying that causal relations are instances of exceptionless universal generalisations?
16. What distinction do Boyle and Locke make between primary and secondary qualities? Explain and assess two arguments, given by Boyle and/or Locke, for making the distinction.
17. 'An idea can be like nothing but an idea' (Berkeley). How does Berkeley argue for this claim? What conclusions does Berkeley draw using this claim?

## Logic [PY1070]

### Course description

Logic is the study of the central notions that figure in our most general attempts to understand reasoning. Included here are: validity, truth, necessity, identity, naming and reference, existence, conditionals and counterfactual conditionals, as well as a number of issues raised by the relationship of formal logic to natural language. The content of this course is sometimes called either 'philosophical logic' or 'philosophy of logic'.

The topics studied are closely related, and count among the most fundamental and challenging in philosophy. Some grounding in them is essential for an appreciation of what is discussed in all other branches of philosophy, and it is for this reason that logic is studied early on.

Formal logic – the systematic study of deductive reasoning – is a separate, although clearly related, course. It would deepen your understanding of this subject if you acquired some background in elementary formal logic. You might do so by reading Guttenplan, *The languages of logic*, which provides an introduction to this subject (see below).

### Introductory reading

Grayling, A.C. *An introduction to philosophical logic*.

(London: Duckworth, 1990) [ISBN 9780631199823].

Guttenplan, S. *The languages of logic*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1997) second edition [ISBN 9781557869883].

(Note: formal logic does not figure as such in the examination for this paper, but some knowledge of elementary formal logic is necessary for the subject as a whole – and this is a gentle introduction to that subject.)

Sainsbury, R.M. *Paradoxes*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) [ISBN 9780521720793].

### Sample examination questions

1. What is it for an argument to be valid?
2. Why might one doubt that entailment is transitive?
3. Examine one challenge to the correctness of classical logic.
4. Is there an adequate account of indicative conditionals in terms of truth-conditions?
5. Does Frege's puzzle about identity show that there is more to the meaning of a proper name than its reference?
6. 'To know the meaning of a name is to know its reference.' Say precisely what you take this claim to amount to, and discuss whether or not it is true.
7. Explain and discuss Russell's analysis of sentences containing definite descriptions in grammatical subject place.
8. 'The referential use of definite descriptions refutes Russell's Theory of Descriptions.' Discuss.
9. Are there any logical reasons to affirm or deny that there are non-existent things?
10. 'Many things don't exist.' Can this claim be refuted?
11. What is the best way to explain the concept of analyticity?
12. Discuss whether the following would be a good formulation of Leibniz's Law (that identicals are indiscernible): 'If a sentence  $a=b$  is true, then any sentence containing  $a$  must have the same truth-value as a corresponding sentence in which  $a$  is replaced by  $b$ .'
13. 'Everything is necessarily itself. So all true identity statements are necessarily true.' Discuss.
14. How should one give the logical form of English sentences containing modal idioms (e.g. 'must', 'can', 'necessarily')?
15. How, if at all, can contingent truths be known a priori?
16. What does the Liar Paradox tell us about truth?
17. Can there be a satisfactory account of the notion of correspondence employed in the claim that 'a proposition or statement is true if it corresponds to the facts'?
18. Asserting that  $P$  is true is equivalent to asserting simply that  $P$  exists. Does it follow that there is no substantive account of truth?
19. 'Truth entails coherence, not vice versa.' Does this refute coherence theories of truth?

## Epistemology [PY1025]

### Course description

Epistemology is sometimes known as the theory of knowledge and, as this name suggests, it is a philosophical enquiry into knowledge. The questions it seeks to answer are: What is knowledge? How do we get it? Are the means we employ to get it defensible? These questions prompt a number of debates. One concerns the conditions that have to be satisfied for it to be true that someone knows something. Enquiry into this problem shows that we need to understand belief and its relation to knowledge, and that we have to be clear about the nature of any justification we have for our knowledge claims. Another debate concerns the adequacy of our ways of getting knowledge. We typically employ reason and perception in this task, but the challenge of scepticism shows that the uses we make of them involve a number of serious difficulties. A satisfactory account of knowledge has to address all these matters.

### Introductory reading

Dancy, J. *An introduction to contemporary epistemology*.

(Oxford: Blackwell, 1985) [ISBN 9780631136224].

Lehrer, K. *Theory of knowledge*. (London: Routledge, 1990)

[ISBN 9780415054089].

### Sample examination questions

1. Does knowledge involve having good reasons for one's beliefs? What are 'good reasons'?
2. 'Knowing that P is at least a matter of having a belief that P which is both true and justified.' Is this an adequate definition of knowledge? If not, how should it be improved?
3. 'I cannot prove that I am not a brain in a vat. Therefore I do not know anything about the external world.' Discuss.
4. 'If we know that P, then we can be certain that P. But we cannot be certain of anything. Therefore we do not know anything.' Discuss.
5. Could I be in error about everything?

6. 'The sceptic's challenge comes down to saying that we can have the very best grounds for asserting P but that P could nevertheless be false.' If this is right, does it matter?
7. 'All our knowledge of the external world derives, in one way or another, from the senses.' Is this true?
8. Do we perceive material objects directly, or only indirectly (i.e. by perceiving them via some kind of intermediate object)?
9. Could it be that, though we use the same language to describe them, the things you see as red I see as green and vice versa?
10. Is there anything a blind man cannot know about colours? If so, what?
11. 'I could have an experience which is qualitatively identical to the experience I am having now, but which is nevertheless hallucinatory.' Is this true? If it is, what does it show about the nature of perception?
12. Does accepting realism about perception entail scepticism about the external world?
13. Does seeing always involve belief?
14. How can I know that I remember something?
15. Is it possible to remember something that did not happen?

## Ethics: historical perspectives [PY1095]

### Course description

**Ethics: historical perspectives** focuses on the history of moral philosophy, including a study of the works of Plato, Aristotle, Hume, Kant and Mill. This historical background prepares the way for the second of the ethics courses, which deals with contemporary perspectives. However, the views discussed in this course are not of merely historical interest. Conceptions of morality that are now widely shared were in large part shaped by these thinkers.

### Introductory reading

MacIntyre, A. *A short history of ethics*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967).

### Sample examination questions

1. Assess Plato's claim that justice is to the soul what health is to the body.
2. Does Socrates give good reason for believing that doing wrong is worse than suffering it?
3. 'The good is the final end of all actions and for its sake everything else should be done.' Are Socrates' reasons for believing this good ones?
4. What does Aristotle believe the characteristic function of man is? Does his account of this provide a satisfactory basis for ethics?
5. How well does justice fit Aristotle's doctrine of the Mean?
6. Why does Aristotle believe that excellence of character and practical wisdom are interdependent?
7. Does Hume offer a convincing account of convergence in moral judgements?
8. 'Tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger.' What was Hume's point in making this remark?
9. 'No action can be virtuous or morally good unless there be in human nature some motive to produce it distinct from the sense of its morality.' Explain and evaluate Hume's claim.
10. Discuss Hume's account of obligation.
11. Discuss Kant's view that a free will and will under moral law are one and the same.
12. 'Treat humanity in yourself and in others never as a means only but always as an end in itself.' What does Kant mean by this? How convincing is his argument for it?
13. Evaluate Kant's claim that it is morally necessary to believe in the immortality of the soul and the existence of God.
14. Could Hume account satisfactorily for the kind of obligation which Kant describes as categorical?
15. Does Mill explain satisfactorily what moves us to act for the sake of happiness in others?
16. What did J.S. Mill think a moral requirement is?
17. Is Mill correct to argue that, since each person desires only her own happiness, happiness is the only desirable thing?

## Level 5

### Greek philosophy: Plato and the Pre-Socratics [PY1085]

#### Course description

Greek philosophy: Plato and the Pre-Socratics focuses on the work of the predecessors of Plato – collectively known as the Pre-Socratics – as well as on the main dialogues of Plato. It has been said that all of philosophy is a series of footnotes to Plato. While this is certainly an exaggeration, it points to the fundamental importance to philosophy of its history, and in particular of the part played in that history by Plato.

#### Introductory reading

Hamlyn, D.W. *A history of Western philosophy*.

(Harmondsworth: Viking, 1987) [ISBN 9780670802432].

Irwin, T. *Classical thought*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) [ISBN 9780192891778].

Barnes, J. (ed.) *Early Greek philosophy*. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987) [ISBN 9780140444612].

Hamilton, E. and H. Cairns *Collected dialogues*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973) [ISBN 9780691097183].

#### Sample examination questions

1. 'The ordering, the same for all, no god or man has made, but it was, is and will be: fire ever-living, being kindled in measures and going out in measures' (Heraclitus fr. 30). Discuss.
2. What is the Heraclitean logos that people do not comprehend?

3. 'What is for saying and for thinking must be' (Parmenides fr. 6). How does this claim figure in Parmenides' argument?
4. Is the unreliability of the senses a premise or a conclusion for Parmenides?
5. Can Achilles overtake the tortoise?
6. Do Anaxagoras' views provide him with effective replies to Zeno's arguments against motion and plurality?
7. Were the ancient atomists sceptics?
8. If Socrates' disavowal of knowledge is sincere, is he entitled to conduct the elenchus?
9. What is the connection between Socrates' search for definitions of virtue and Plato's Theory of Forms?
10. 'One excellent argument [for the recollection theory] is that when people are questioned, they state the truth about everything for themselves – and yet unless knowledge and a correct account were present within them, they would be unable to do this' (Plato Phaedo 73a). Discuss.
11. Is the tripartite soul of the Republic an advance over the immortal soul of the Phaedo?
12. Does Plato have a satisfactory account of the difference between knowledge and belief?
13. Why might Plato be less certain that there are Forms of Man or Mud than that there are Forms of Beauty and Largeness?
14. 'We are in the habit of positing one Form for each multiplicity to which we give the same name' (Republic X). Is this a reasonable basis for the theory of Forms?
15. Does Plato offer a satisfactory refutation of relativism in the Theaetetus?
16. How far does the Sophist explain what it is to be what is not?
17. Does Plato offer a satisfactory account of naming in the Cratylus?

## Modern philosophy: Descartes, Locke, Berkeley and Hume [PY1065]

### Course description

This course is a study of the main works of Descartes, Locke, Berkeley and Hume. In particular, it studies the epistemological and metaphysical views of these philosophers. The philosophers Locke, Berkeley and Hume are generally reckoned to be the main representatives of the empiricist tradition, whereas Descartes is seen as one of the forerunners of the rationalist school. However, the work of the empiricists can be seen as a reaction – in part – to Descartes and rationalism generally, so this first subject guide in modern philosophy begins with Descartes. The label 'modern' is intended as a contrast to 'ancient' (i.e. Plato, the Pre-Socratics and Aristotle, among others). It is generally understood as covering the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries – a period in which there was a decisive break with ancient philosophy.

### Introductory reading

Hamlyn, D.W. *A history of Western philosophy*. (Harmondsworth: Viking, 1987) [ISBN 9780670802432].  
 Woolhouse, R. *The empiricists*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) [ISBN 9780192891884].

### Introductory books on individual philosophers

Kenny, A. *Descartes: a study of his philosophy*. (Bristol: Thoemmes Publishers, 1997) [ISBN 9781855062368].  
 Lowe, E.J. *Locke on human understanding*. (London: Routledge, 1995) [ISBN 9780415100915].  
 Dancy, J. *Berkeley*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987) [ISBN 0631155090].  
 Stroud, B. *Hume*. (London: Routledge, 1977) [ISBN 0631155090].

### Sample examination questions

1. Examine Descartes' reasons for declaring that he is an essentially non-material thinking substance.
2. What weaknesses, if any, do you find in Descartes' proof of the existence of God in the Third Meditation?

3. Has Descartes, by the end of the Meditations, escaped from the sceptical dilemma recorded at the beginning of the Second Meditation?
4. Should Locke be described as holding a 'representational' theory of perception?
5. What gives a Lockean idea its content?
6. Assess Locke's claim about substance that 'we have no idea of what it is, but only a confused, obscure one of what it does.'
7. Does Locke make a good case for saying that the sense of natural kind words should be applied to 'nominal essences' rather than to 'real essences'?
8. Does the primary-secondary quality distinction give us a way of explaining how we perceive things as they really are? Discuss with reference to either or both of Locke and Berkeley.
9. Why does Berkeley reject the concept of material substance? Are his arguments persuasive?
10. What is meant by Berkeley's claim that *esse est percipi*? Is it refutable?
11. Give a critical account of Berkeley's argument for the claim that there is an infinite spirit which perceives everything always.
12. Critically discuss Hume's account of belief.
13. Why does Hume offer two 'definitions' of cause?
14. Can Hume account for the difference between memory and imagination?
15. Why does Hume think it is 'vain to enquire whether there be body or not'?
16. Does Hume deny that there is such a thing as the self? Is his view of the matter coherent?

## Metaphysics [PY3075]

Prerequisite: PY1070

### Course description

Metaphysics is the study of the ultimate nature of reality. It attempts to assess answers to this fundamental question: what exists or is real? Specific metaphysical questions are so various and important that discussion of some of them has come to form separate branches of philosophy, for example Philosophy of mind and Philosophy of religion, both of which are on the list of optional courses. However, the central and more general questions of existence and reality remain part of this core course, and give rise to more specific ones that are also studied, namely: What is time? Are particulars more basic than events? Do human beings have free will? What is causality? Are there universals? Does the world exist independently of our knowledge of it?

### Introductory reading

Aune, B. *Metaphysics: The elements*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985) [ISBN 0631147632].

Van Inwagen, P. *Metaphysics*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) [ISBN 0198751400].

### Sample examination questions

1. Times can be thought of as past, present and future or as earlier and later. Is one of these ways of thinking about time more fundamental than the other?
2. What, if anything, is wrong with thinking of time on the model of a river?
3. What do all red things have in common?
4. 'Triangularity is a shape.' 'Red is more similar to orange than to blue.' Can the truth of such statements be explained only if there are universals?
5. Is there any good reason for thinking that there are events?
6. Are some individuals more basic than others?
7. Is an army truly a substance?

8. What makes a thing the kind of thing it is?
9. Are there essential properties?
10. Can arguments be given to establish that your pen is not a bundle of ideas?
11. Can a fully objective view of human beings account for the subjective qualities of mental states?
12. 'The physical world is entirely objective. But consciousness is essentially subjective. So consciousness cannot be physical.' Discuss.
13. Are causes sufficient for their effects? Are they necessary for those effects?
14. 'A cause has its effects in virtue of its properties. So causation cannot be a relation simply between particulars.' Discuss.
15. What makes a thing the same thing at one time and place as at another time and place? How is it possible for an object to change over time and still, in some sense, be the same object?
16. 'If I were to divide into two people tomorrow, neither of the resulting people would be me. But this would not be as bad as death.' Is this true? If so, why? If not, why not?
17. If 'free choice' is to be better than something random, must determinism be true?

## Methodology: induction, reason and science [PY3035]

### Course description

Methodology is a continuation of epistemology in a particular direction: it is, in part, an enquiry into the nature of the reasoning and methods used in the investigation of the natural and social world. It includes, in fact, elementary philosophy of science, and it considers questions about inductive reasoning, probability, explanation, evidence, 'laws of nature' and the reality of 'theoretical entities' such as elementary particles and fields. The optional course Philosophy of science takes these topics further, but

Methodology provides a groundwork which is both of intrinsic interest and great value to inquiry in other fields of philosophy.

### Introductory reading

O'Hear, A. *An introduction to the philosophy of science*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) [ISBN 9780198248132].  
 Skyrms, B. *Choice and chance*. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1986) second edition [ISBN 9780534051907].

### Sample examination questions

1. 'Inductive methods will lead to truth, if any method will.' Does this provide a basis for the justification of induction?
2. 'Hume did not merely pose the problem of induction, he solved it.' Discuss.
3. Is it more rational to believe that all emeralds are green than that all emeralds are grue? Give reasons for your answer.
4. Do we have evidence for the hypothesis that all emeralds are grue?
5. What is Hempel's 'Paradox of the Ravens'? How, if at all, can it be solved?
6. What is it to explain why something happened?
7. What is the 'deductive nomological' model of explanation? Does it apply to all good scientific explanations, to some, or to none?
8. Everything that happens, happens. Everything that does not happen, does not happen. Does this show that no sense can be made of the notion of the objective probability of something happening?
9. 'Probability theory determines the rational way to change one's degree of confidence in a hypothesis in the light of new data.' Discuss.
10. How can we best explain the meaning of counterfactual conditionals?
11. Do Laws of Nature have exceptions?
12. Is 'nomic necessity' a species of necessity?



13. What distinguishes natural laws from accidental generalisations?
14. 'The existence of experimental error shows that no hypothesis is observationally refutable.' Discuss.
15. What is the relation of observation to theory?
16. What does it mean for a theory (or theory shift) to be ad hoc? What, if anything, justifies the view that ad hoc theories are scientifically unacceptable?
17. Is there any reason to suppose that the conclusion of an inference to the best explanation is likely to be true?

## Ethics: contemporary perspectives [PY3115]

Prerequisite: PY1095

### Course description

Ethics: contemporary perspectives is the study of problems in moral philosophy and contemporary meta-ethics. Ethics or moral philosophy is the inquiry into the nature of moral value. It is concerned with questions about goodness, right and wrong, the virtues and the nature of the worthwhile life. One way into a consideration of moral philosophy is to read the works of those who have made substantial contributions to our understanding of moral questions: Plato, Aristotle, Hume, Kant, Mill and others. (This is the subject matter of the other course in ethics.) But a historical approach needs to be complemented by the more direct consideration of questions about virtue, action, consequences, rights, duties, the 'fact-value' distinction, the nature of moral truth, the universalisability of moral principles, and much more besides. These sorts of issues form the basis of this course.

### Introductory reading

Mackie, J.L. *Ethics: inventing right and wrong*. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990) revised edition [ISBN 9780140135589].

Williams, B. *Ethics and the limits of philosophy*. (London: Fontana, 1985) [ISBN 0001971719].

### Sample examination questions

1. If a principle is a moral principle, must it be universalisable?
2. 'In order to act I must have some end which I desire to achieve by so acting.' Discuss.
3. Must cognitive theories about conflicts of obligation 'eliminate from the scene the ought that is not acted upon'?
4. Does consequentialism give a plausible account of the importance of consequences to the moral evaluation of actions?
5. Can consequentialism adequately account for the way in which we condemn ingratitude or disloyalty and the way in which we praise people who return good for evil?
6. Is the concept of character important to an adequate account of morality?
7. 'Impartiality is not the essence of morality; it is one particular virtue.' Discuss.
8. Is there an important distinction between saying that an act is intrinsically wrong and that it should under no circumstances be done?
9. Are emotions integral to morality? If so, how?
10. What is the best way of defining an altruistic act?
11. Are moral judgements true or false?
12. Discuss the idea that something is intrinsically valuable if and only if a moral person would choose it for itself.
13. What kind of objective moral considerations can there be?
14. Is there a problem about how moral considerations can motivate? Is this problem a special one for moral realists?
15. What is it for an action to be self-determined or autonomous? How is this related to moral responsibility?

16. Is there any form of moral relativism that can escape the charges of incoherence or self-contradiction?
17. If killing a baby is morally wrong, why isn't contraception also morally wrong?
18. How coherent is pacifism?
19. If a doctor has the resources to treat only one of two patients, what sort of grounds should he use to choose which one?

## Level 6

### Greek philosophy: Aristotle [PY3120]

Prerequisite: PY1085

#### Course description

This course focuses on the main works of Aristotle. More than any other single philosopher, Aristotle has shaped the development of Western philosophical thinking, whether because of agreement and development of his ideas, or in opposition to them. The emphasis in this course will be on Aristotle's logical, epistemological and metaphysical views; his ethical writings form part of the subject of historical perspectives on ethics.

#### Introductory reading

Lear, J. *Aristotle and the desire to understand*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) [ISBN 9780521347624].  
Ackrill, J.L. (ed.) *A new Aristotle reader*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987) [ISBN 9780198750611].

#### Sample examination questions

1. What, for Aristotle, is a 'category'?
2. Has Aristotle's doctrine of categories any relevance to the Third Man Argument?
3. Does Aristotle believe that Socrates and Callias have the same form?
4. Explain and assess Aristotle's account of being.

5. In the *Categories* Coriscus is a primary substance; man, a secondary substance. Explain this view and its development in Aristotle's later works.
6. Is Aristotle committed to the existence of featureless prime matter?
7. What would Aristotle say about the claim that either everything is determined, or some things happen without a cause?
8. Discuss Aristotle's treatment of infinite quantities and magnitudes, especially with respect to the size and duration of the universe. Are there any inconsistencies here?
9. Does Aristotle give a good case for a teleological account of nature?
10. Is Aristotle's account of the soul consistent?
11. 'All teaching and all intellectual learning come from pre-existing knowledge' (*Posterior Analytics* I). Does Aristotle succeed in defending this claim?

### Modern philosophy: Spinoza, Leibniz and Kant [PY3125]

Prerequisite: PY1065

#### Course description

This course is a study of the main works of Spinoza, Leibniz and Kant. It focuses on the rationalist tradition in modern philosophy, and begins the study of Kant. (Further work on Kant can be undertaken by studying the optional course devoted to his writings.) As with the other courses in modern philosophy, this one is concerned primarily with the epistemological and metaphysical views of these thinkers.

#### Introductory reading

Hamlyn, D.W. *A history of Western philosophy*. (Harmondsworth: Viking, 1987) [ISBN 9780670802432].  
Cottingham, J. *The rationalists*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) [ISBN 9780192891907].

### Introductory books on individual philosophers

Curley, E.M. *Behind the geometrical method: A reading of Spinoza's ethics*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988) [ISBN 9780691020372].

Ross, G.M. *Leibniz*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984) [ISBN 9780192876201].

Scruton, R. *Kant*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982) [ISBN 0192875779].

### Sample examination questions

1. In what sense did Spinoza believe that everything that happens, happens by necessity?
2. Can Spinoza consistently maintain that Nature is a substance?
3. What mode of extension corresponds to my idea of your body? What importance would Spinoza attach to this question?
4. 'An affect which is a passion ceases to be a passion as soon as we form a clear and distinct idea of it.' What does Spinoza mean by this, and is it true?
5. 'There is nothing positive in ideas on account of which they are called false' (Ethics II, 32). How, then, does Spinoza account for human error?
6. According to Leibniz's metaphysics, should an apple tree be thought of as a monad, an aggregate of monads, a well-founded phenomenon, or none of these?
7. Why does Leibniz say that monads are 'windowless'?
8. Critically discuss the account Leibniz gives of truth.
9. Does Leibniz give an unambiguous account of the relation of mind and body?
10. 'There is nothing in the understanding which does not come from the senses, except the understanding itself' (Leibniz). What is the relevance of this claim to the dispute about innate ideas?
11. How plausible are Kant's conceptions of space and time?
12. Why does Kant argue that there must be 'pure concepts of the understanding'?
13. Is Kant's view of 'things-in-themselves' plausible?
14. What is the 'transcendental unity of apperception', and what is its importance in Kant's doctrine?
15. What does Kant find objectionable about speculative metaphysics?

## Political philosophy [PY3090]

### Course description

Political philosophy is the study of how we can and how we ought to live together. Throughout the history of Western philosophy, those figures whose thought has engaged with ethical problems have been equally concerned with political philosophy and vice versa. Just as the form of ethical theories has varied greatly over the last 2,000 years, so too have the forms that questions and answers take within political philosophy. It is, therefore, very important to address the problems of political philosophy within both a historical and an ethical framework.

Throughout history we have considered the following problems (among others): the question of the nature and claims of justice; the existence of natural rights; the status of positive law; the existence of distinctive obligations towards the state or towards each other as co-members of some society; claims of property; claims of liberty; the best understanding of equality and its claim on us.

In ancient political philosophy we find concerns about the nature of justice and the well-ordered state. In early modern discussion, the authority of the state and questions of right loom large. From this tradition we derive the heuristic use of the state of nature: Hobbes uses this to ask how we can be rationally compelled to obey the sovereign, and to offer an answer; in Locke we find an influential discussion of property rights and the origin of political obligation; Rousseau, much more radically, seeks to explain how we can be bound rationally by law, through the concept of the general will. In different ways Hegel and Marx offer critiques of the Enlightenment conception of the citizen and state. In Mill, we find the radical utilitarianism of the early nineteenth century modulated into a delicate plea for liberty.

In Anglo-American political philosophy over the last 30 years, the work of the Harvard philosopher John Rawls has been central in defining the scope and focus of debate, although the ideas of Isaiah Berlin, G.A. Cohen, Ronald Dworkin, Robert Nozick, Joseph Raz and T.M. Scanlon are of great importance too.

### Introductory reading

- Wolff, J. *An introduction to political philosophy*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) [ISBN 9780192892515].
- Kymlicka, W. *Contemporary political philosophy: An introduction*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) [ISBN 9780198782742].
- Levine, A. *Engaging political philosophy: From Hobbes to Rawls*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001) [ISBN 0631222294].

### Sample examination questions

- EITHER (a) What is the relation between Hobbes's conception of human nature and his political philosophy?  
  
OR (b) Does Hobbes demonstrate that obeying the absolute sovereign is both our duty and to our advantage?
- EITHER (a) 'He that encloses land, and has a greater plenty of the conveniences of life from ten acres, than he could have from a hundred left to nature, may truly be said to give ninety acres to mankind.' (Locke) How does this passage contribute to Locke's justification of private property?  
  
OR (b) On what grounds does Locke affirm a natural right to punish? How plausible is his claim that there is such a right?
- EITHER (a) Why does Rousseau distinguish the general will from the will of all? How clear and illuminating is this distinction?  
  
OR (b) Why does Rousseau claim that we must sometimes be 'forced to be free'? Does this expression show that his is an authoritarian conception of the state?
- EITHER (a) Does Marx show that capitalism must inevitably break down?

- OR (b) What does Marx mean by 'alienated labour'? Under what circumstances is labour alienated?
- EITHER (a) To what extent, according to Mill, may the state coerce individuals to come to the assistance of others? Is this position consistent with Mill's harm principle? Is the position consistent with his principle of utility?  
  
OR (b) Mill says that one may seize a man who cannot be warned against crossing an unsafe bridge, 'for liberty consists in doing what one desires, and he does not desire to fall into the river.' What is the significance of this claim for Mill's case against paternalism?
  - Is every comprehensive conception of the good capable of accommodation in a Rawlsian overlapping consensus?
  - EITHER (a) Do we harm the global poor?  
  
OR (b) 'Against his many critics, Rawls was right not to extend the difference principle to the global level.' Discuss.
  - 'Properly functioning markets reward social contribution, and are therefore just.' Discuss.
  - EITHER (a) On the best understanding of negative liberty, what kinds of 'interference' make us unfree?  
  
OR (b) Are all freedoms valuable?
  - EITHER (a) What, if any, is the relationship between political equality and majority rule?  
  
OR (b) Is it possible to successfully combine intrinsic and instrumental justifications in a single, coherent justification of democracy?
  - EITHER (a) What is the 'levelling down' objection to equality? Can this objection be answered?  
  
OR (b) What role, if any, should the idea of responsibility play in a theory of distributive justice?
  - Can the notion of 'human rights' be given a philosophical justification?
  - 'If we want to understand civil authority, we need to distinguish between there being a government exercising civil authority from two contrasting

things: on the one side, from large-scale voluntary co-operative associations, and on the other from a place's being quite under the control of a smooth sophisticated mafia' (Anscombe). Discuss.

## Philosophy of mind [PY3100]

### Course description

Philosophy of mind is concerned with metaphysical and epistemological issues that arise from reflecting on the mind. You will also find various parts of the logic, metaphysics, epistemology and methodology entries in this subject guide useful.

### Introductory reading

Braddon-Mitchell, D. and F. Jackson (eds) *The philosophy of mind and cognition*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996) [ISBN 9780631191681].

Kim, J. *The philosophy of mind*. (Oxford: Westview Press, 1996) [ISBN 9780813307763].

McGinn, C. *The character of mind: an introduction to the philosophy of mind*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) second edition [ISBN 9780198752080].

### Sample examination questions

1. What does the possibility of hallucination reveal about the nature of perceptual experience?
2. Can one be in error about one's own mind?
3. 'If mental causes were not physical, they would be epiphenomenal.' Discuss.
4. Is there something it is like to hold a belief?
5. 'Mental representations represent things in virtue of a causal relation which holds between representation and world.' Discuss.
6. How should we understand the relationship between a belief ascription and the belief itself?
7. To what extent are our beliefs about other people's mental states justified by an inference to the best explanation?

8. 'If one has to imagine someone else's pain on the model of one's own, this is none too easy a thing to do'... (Wittgenstein). Is this true?
9. What, if anything, would Frank Jackson's Mary learn on seeing something red for the first time? If she learns something, does that show that physicalism is false?
10. What is the 'explanatory gap' and does it cast doubt on the truth of materialism?
11. 'If physicalism were true, zombies would not be conceivable.' Discuss.
12. Can we understand the mind in terms of dispositions to behaviour?
13. 'Functionalism can provide a good account of our beliefs and desires but not our tickles and pains.' Discuss.
14. 'To explain why a subject acted as she did is to situate her action in a wider rational context; it is not to provide a causal account of her movements.' Discuss.
15. Are emotions feelings of changes in the body?

## Philosophy of religion [PY3110]

### Course description

Philosophy of religion is not a course that is easily demarcated in respect of its scope and point. That said, philosophy of religion is commonly understood to be the philosophical scrutiny of the claims of religious believers and those made on behalf of religious traditions. The focus of study is principally on the three monotheistic traditions of the West: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Those coming to the subject for the first time need to be aware that it demands competence in many of the central areas of philosophy: metaphysics, philosophical logic, epistemology and ethics. In this respect, the course provides a student with an opportunity to apply their general philosophical acumen to a body of important questions concerning theism. Among the issues raised are: the existence of God; the coherence of theism; the compatibility of divine omniscience and human freedom; the problem of evil; and immortality.

## Introductory reading

Davies, B. *An introduction to the philosophy of religion*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) second edition [ISBN 9780192892355].

Davis, S. T. *God, reason and theistic proofs*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997) [ISBN 9780748607990].

Kenny, A. *The god of the philosophers*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) [ISBN 9780198249689].

## Sample examination questions

1. How convincing is Anselm's ontological argument?
2. Do cosmological arguments depend on the Principle of Sufficient Reason?
3. Describe and assess a version of the argument from design.
4. Is there a persuasive moral argument for the existence of God?
5. What problems are raised for human freedom by the claim that there is divine foreknowledge? Can these problems be solved?
6. Does the simplicity of God compromise divine freedom?
7. How satisfactory is Augustine's answer to the problem of evil?
8. What is Pascal's Wager? How successful is it as an exercise in apologetics?
9. Critically examine a divine command theory of ethics.
10. Is it reasonable to expect God to act in response to prayer?
11. Is Hume right to reject miracles as a basis for faith?
12. What is the epistemological significance of religious experience?
13. Describe and evaluate Wittgensteinian fideism.
14. Plantinga has defended the view that Christian belief is properly basic. How successful is his argument?
15. Is Swinburne right that there is cumulative evidence for Christian belief?
16. What is eternal life?

## Philosophy of language [PY3210]

### Course description

Philosophy of language is organised around general questions of language and meaning. The nature of language has long been an obsession of philosophers. More recently it has also become the focus of empirical investigation in linguistics. The course is concerned both with the most general and abstract aspects of language, meaning and knowledge, and with more specific problems that arise in understanding particular aspects of natural languages.

Certain, more elementary, aspects of the philosophy of language are covered in Logic and Metaphysics, and it is good to have a grounding in issues surrounding reference and truth covered on those papers. On this paper you will be focusing more on general methodological considerations about meaning and reference: what form should a theory of meaning take; what does knowledge of meaning consist of; what kinds of facts are there about meaning? Certain figures have dominated discussion of language in the 20th century, from Frege and Russell on to Wittgenstein's emphasis on the use of language over representation to Quine's scepticism about the determinacy of translation, Grice's attempt to explicate meaning in terms of speaker's intentions, Davidson's work on theories of truth and radical interpretation to the consequences of Chomskian linguistics. In addition to studying the work of these philosophers, you will have the opportunity to look at particular problems concerning indexical expressions; proper names; the nature of definite descriptions; pronouns and quantified phrases in natural language; indirect contexts and propositional attitude ascriptions; adverbs, adjectives and metaphor.

### Introductory reading

Blackburn, S. *Spreading the word: groundings in the philosophy of language*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984) [ISBN 9780198246510]. Readable, if opinionated, treatment of the central areas of philosophy of language, with large amounts of metaphysics thrown in for free.

Larson, R. and G. Segal *Knowledge of meaning: an introduction to semantic theory*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995) [ISBN 9780262621007]. A thorough introduction to philosophy of language for both philosophy and linguistics students.

McCulloch, G. *The game of the name: introducing logic, language and mind*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) [ISBN 9780198750864]. A vigorous introduction to issues in the theory of reference.

### Sample examination questions

1. 'Human communication has some extraordinary properties, not shared by most other kinds of human behaviour. One of the most extraordinary is this: If I am trying to tell someone something, then (assuming certain conditions are satisfied) as soon as he recognizes that I am trying to tell him something and exactly what it is that I am trying to tell him, I have succeeded in telling it to him' (Searle). Which speech acts have this extraordinary property? Was Searle right to think that the property plays an important part in an account of speech acts?
  2. Does the presence of non-indicative sentences in a language show that truth cannot be used as a central semantic notion in a theory for that language?
  3. How should differences between 'and' and 'but' and differences between 'money' and 'dosh' be accounted for?
  4. What is Carnap's concept of intensional isomorphism? Does it solve the problem it is designed to solve?
  5. What difficulty, according to Quine, arises when we try to specify the semantic representation of a sentence like 'John believes that someone is a spy', on at least one of its readings? Assess Quine's solution of this difficulty.
  6. Is knowing a statement's truth conditions (a) necessary, and (b) sufficient for knowing what it means?
  7. Wittgenstein describes one picture of language as follows: 'Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands' (Philosophical Investigations §1).
- Davidson suggests that this picture, correct or not, is no help when it comes to constructing a semantic theory of a language. Is Davidson right?
8. EITHER (a) 'Many sentences of English have never been uttered, and no one has ever meant anything by uttering them. Therefore their meaning cannot be determined by the speaker's intentions.' Discuss.  
OR (b) 'The Gricean line of explanation [of meaning] is hence essentially no more than a sophisticated version of the code conception of language' (Dummett). Discuss.
  9. How does Grice distinguish between what is said by an utterance and what is implicated by it? Is this distinction defensible?
  10. EITHER (a) 'Quine's thesis of indeterminacy of translation is a reductio ad absurdum of his behaviourism.' Discuss.  
OR (b) What is Quine's proxy-function argument? Is it convincing?
  11. In what ways are the semantics of a language compositional? What reasons are there for expecting it to be?
  12. Explain Kaplan's notions of character and content. What role do they leave for truth in the semantics of a language?
  13. 'For it is a fashionable mistake to take as primary "(The sentence) 'S' is true (in the English language)." Here the addition of the words "in the English language" serves to emphasize that "sentence" is not being used as equivalent to "statement", so that it precisely is not what can be true or false' (Austin). Why is this a mistake? Can the mistake be rectified by relativising truth to parameters?
  14. EITHER (a) 'B is true :=: ( $\exists p$ ). B is a belief that p & p. Def' (Ramsey) Is this an adequate definition of 'true' as it applies to individual states of belief?  
OR (b) 'As a philosophical account of truth, Tarski's theory fails as badly as it is possible to fail' (Putnam) Discuss.

## Aesthetics [PY3130]

### Course description

In Aesthetics we turn to questions about the nature of art, values in art and the appreciation of nature as art. Wide reading in the history of aesthetics is necessary for a proper approach to the course. Issues in contemporary aesthetics are illuminated by their treatment throughout history, and the understanding and assessment of the views of past thinkers is facilitated by reflection on the problems they deal with. Aesthetics, done properly, is as hard and as rewarding as any branch of philosophy. It is philosophy turning its attention to the nature of aesthetic experience and judgement, and to questions about art, the different art forms, how they relate to the world and to the mind, and what value they may have. Some questions in this course also form part of Philosophy of mind or Metaphysics, for example. It is not an easy subject to study. One does best by using as material one's own experience of artworks and of aesthetic situations, but one has to use the tools of philosophy as carefully as possible in order to think about them relatively dispassionately and in a disciplined way. There are no fixed starting points in the course, which is why, again, wide reading in the history of aesthetics is especially recommended.

### Introductory reading

Hanfling, O. (ed.) *Philosophical aesthetics: an introduction*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) [ISBN 9780631180357].

Wollheim, R. *Art and its objects*. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978) second edition [ISBN 9780140551082].

### Sample examination questions

1. What needs to be assumed, if Plato's objections to poetry are to be met?
2. Does Aristotle provide an adequate account of our response to tragic drama?
3. Does Hume establish the existence of a standard of taste?
4. Does Kant succeed in showing that it is possible for a judgement which rests on a feeling of pleasure to have universal validity?

5. Does Schiller make a convincing case for the necessity of 'aesthetic education'?
6. Why does Hegel believe that art 'no longer satisfies our supreme need', and is he correct?
7. 'If the whole world as representation is only the visibility of will, then art is the elucidation of this visibility' (Schopenhauer). Discuss.
8. Explain and evaluate Nietzsche's notion of an 'aesthetic justification' of existence.
9. How, if at all, can music express emotion?
10. Can art be defined?
11. Does pictorial representation involve resemblance?
12. Are works of art physical objects?
13. Can we be moved by the fate of a fictional personage?
14. Must each literary work have one correct interpretation?
15. Is there any aesthetic difference between an original artwork and a perfect forgery?
16. Is the notion of pornographic art incoherent?
17. To what extent, if at all, should moral judgements influence aesthetic judgements?
18. 'The aesthetic attitude is a myth.' Discuss.

## Continental philosophy: Hegel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche [PY3190]

Prerequisite: PY3125

### Course description

This course covers the views of Hegel and two post-Hegelian nineteenth-century German philosophers: Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Students are advised to also have some knowledge of Kant's philosophy.



## Introductory reading

Roberts, J. *German philosophy, an introduction*. (New York: Prometheus Books, 1988) [ISBN 9781573925167].

## Introductory reading on certain individual philosophers:

Janaway, C. *Schopenhauer*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) [ISBN 9780192802590].

Tanner, M. *Nietzsche. A very short introduction*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) [ISBN 9780192854148].

## Sample examination questions

1. What is the basis of Hegel's method in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*?
2. What does Hegel mean by 'recognition' in his narrative of the master/slave relation?
3. To what extent is Hegel's conception of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) consistent with individual freedom?
4. In what sense, or senses, is Hegel an idealist?
5. What is Schopenhauer's conception of will? What reasons does he provide to believe in its existence?
6. Outline and critically discuss Schopenhauer's account of aesthetic experience. Outline and critically discuss Schopenhauer's conception of compassion, and its role in morality.
7. 'The world is my representation.' How does Schopenhauer defend this claim? Is his defence successful?
8. What is Nietzsche's aim in doing a genealogy of morality?
9. EITHER (a) What does Nietzsche mean by claiming that all happenings in the organic world are an expression of the will to power?  
OR (b) What is Nietzsche's perspectivism?
10. What, according to Nietzsche, is the meaning of ascetic ideals?
11. Does Nietzsche value master morality above slave morality?

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Website: [www.internationalschoolofphilosophy.org](http://www.internationalschoolofphilosophy.org)

For further information on institutions, please refer to the relevant pages in the Student guide.

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