

# Philosophy

## Brief Overview of the Course

Philosophy is a subject that encourages you to think for yourself. Students will have the opportunity to explore some of the most profound questions that can be asked, such as, 'What is knowledge?' and 'Is the mind the same thing as the brain?'. Studying this subject involves looking at some of the most important contributions to these topics from Philosophers including Aristotle and Rene Descartes. Studying Philosophy will help students to analyse arguments, solve problems and write persuasively. Those taking this subject will be encouraged not just to learn about the ideas of others, but to grapple with these questions for themselves and develop their own ideas.

*(For further details, please see our Sixth Form Prospectus*

*[Sixth Form Prospectus • Sir Thomas Rich's School \(strschool.co.uk\)](https://www.strschool.co.uk/sixth-form-prospectus))*

**Exam Board: AQA**

**Specification web link:** <https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/philosophy/a-level/philosophy-7172/specification-at-a-glance>

**Topics Covered:  
Year 12**

### Epistemology

- What is Knowledge?
- Perception as a source of Knowledge
- Reason as a source of Knowledge
- Limits of Knowledge

### Moral Philosophy

- Utilitarianism
- Kantian Deontological Ethics
- Aristotelian Virtue Ethics
- Applied Ethics
- Meta-ethics

**Topics Covered:  
Year 13**

### Metaphysics of God

- Concept and Nature of God
- Ontological Arguments
- Teleological Arguments
- Cosmological Arguments
- The Problem of Evil
- Religious Language

### Metaphysics of Mind

- Dualist Theories
- Physicalist Theories
- Functionalism

Please follow the instructions in the boxes below. The aim of these activities is to introduce you to the study of this subject at Advanced Level by:

- reinforcing your core knowledge and understanding of your chosen subject;
- encouraging you to think more deeply about your subject;
- supporting you to develop a deeper understanding of and appreciation for your subject as an academic discipline.

### Core Knowledge and Understanding Task

**Whether you have studied this subject before or not, there are elements of core knowledge and understanding that you must have prior to starting the A Level course.**

**Please provide a written answer to each of the following questions. These are very open questions and we are more interested in your own thoughts and the reasons for them. The links later on will give you information about how others have approached the questions.**

- What does it mean to be human?
- What is Knowledge?
- Where does knowledge come from?
- How do I know I exist?
- Is the mind the same as the brain?
- How should I behave?
- Where do these rules come from and why should I keep them?

**Now try this more structured activity:**

Watch these videos introducing Epistemology:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r\\_Y3utleTPg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r_Y3utleTPg)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PqjdRAERWLc>

1. What different kinds of knowledge are mentioned in the video? Can you give alternative examples of them?
2. What is the difference between knowledge and belief?
3. Define the following terms: Justification, Proposition, Belief
4. What is the Brain-in-a-Vat Thought Experiment? Do you think this shows you don't know anything? Explain your answer.

**Links to support:**

<https://philosophyalevel.com/>

<https://www.alevelphilosophy.co.uk/>

<https://iep.utm.edu/epistemo/>

## The Bigger Picture Task

**As well as reinforcing your core knowledge and understanding, our A Level curriculum will expose you to what are called the 'established orthodoxies' within each subject, which can include key research, important people who have contributed to the field, as well as broader methods and theories that exist within the subject.**

**Prior to starting the A Level course, it is important that you are aware of the following themes and topics so that you can develop an understanding of how they contribute to some of the established orthodoxies within Philosophy**

We would like you to research one of the key thinkers in the subject and to begin to understand the contribution that they made. Please choose any figure from the list below:

Rene Descartes  
Linda Zagzebski  
John Locke  
David Hume  
Plato  
Aristotle  
Jeremy Bentham  
Immanuel Kant  
Philippa Foot  
John Stuart Mill

Think about:

The context in which they lived (period of time, culture)

How did they become interested in the subject?

What were the key ideas that they contributed?

What were their major works called?

What was their impact? (This may be tricky to answer but is something that you will be evaluating throughout the course.)

### **Links to support:**

<https://philosophyalevel.com/>

<https://www.alevelphilosophy.co.uk/>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01f0vzr>

<https://thepanpsycast.com/panpsycast>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qk11/episodes/downloads>

## Recommended Reading List and the Department's 'Top Pick' Title

**As an A Level student, we want you to value academic endeavour (scholarship) and develop a thirst for learning in your chosen subject. Our curriculum will help you to understand that scholarship is not just about learning facts, it is about nurturing powerful knowledge.**

**We will help you with this by directing you to resources that will not only deepen your knowledge and strengthen your understanding of the A Level content, but also broaden it beyond that of the exam board specification.**

**Please find the full subject reading list alongside our prospectus on the Sixth Form section of the STRS website here: <https://strschool.co.uk/sixthform/prospectus>. We would encourage you to explore as many of these titles as you can.**

**From the published reading list, the most highly recommended book(s)/article(s) to read before September are:**

- Julian Baggini – 'The Pig That Wants To Be Eaten: And 99 Other Thought Experiments'

Once you have read the recommended book/chapter/article, consider the following:

- What did you learn from the reading?
- Have you identified any patterns or made any connections?
- What unanswered questions has the reading left you with?
- Did you agree entirely with what you have read? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Are there any themes or topics that you would like to explore further?

## Other Recommended Activities

**Please find below a selection of suggested additional activities that the department feel it would be useful for you to explore prior to starting the A Level course in September.**

Our subject is concerned with every aspect of human existence and the material studied will often be explored through art, literature and film. There are many films that we recommend you watch to help you think about some of the themes that the subject examines. As you watch the films, try to identify these themes and the questions they raise.

- The Matrix
- The Truman Show
- Inception
- Contact
- Minority Report
- After Dark
- Dead Man Walking
- The Island
- Cry Freedom
- Vera Drake
- My Sister's Keeper
- Batman
- Million Dollar Baby
- The Founder

### **Other useful links:**

<https://www.youtube.com/user/WirelessPhilosophy/featured>

<https://www.ted.com/talks?sort=relevance&q=philosophy>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b04bwydw>

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8dPuuaLjXtNgK6MZucdYldNkMybYIHKR>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HGzvAG1oDa8>

<https://philosophynow.org/>