**An introduction to Philosophy**

**“Philosophy is thinking in slow motion.”**

**(John Campbell, Professor of Philosophy at Berkeley)**

**In our everyday life we usually think at great speed, never having time to properly think about our decisions or the way the world appears to us. In philosophy we take assumptions about the world, break them down, describe them carefully and examine moves we would normally take for granted. By doing this we reveal that our ‘common sense’ view of the world is full of contradictions and alternatives are possible.**

**Recommended books and programmes**

Books that offer a good introduction to philosophy

* **Sophie’s World** by Jostein Gaarder – gives an overview and introduction to western philosophy in a story/novel format.
* **How to teach philosophy to your dog** by Anthony McGowan – a good introduction to key philosophical issues and topics told through the writer’s conversations with his dog.

Other sources for an introduction to philosophy

* **Crash Course – Philosophy** on YouTube. Over forty 10-minute lessons on philosophy pitched at A-level standard. Well-made and explained, but very condensed, so will need further development in class.

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

* **In Our Time** presented by Melvyn Bragg on BBC radio 4. There is a whole section of programmes on philosophy to listen to which can be downloaded as podcasts from the ‘Sounds’ app or the radio 4 website.

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

* **The Philosopher’s Arms** presented by Matthew Sweet. Available on the BBC radio 4 website or the BBC ‘Sounds’ app. Some great discussions on philosophical problems.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01lyb82>

* **The Public Philosopher** presented by Michael Sandel. Available on the BBC radio 4 website or the BBC ‘Sounds’ app. The renowned Political Philosopher Michael Sandel chairs topical philosophical discussion with members of the public and academia.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01nmlh2>

* **Rob Newman’s half full philosophy hour.** The comedian Rob Newman takes an irreverent, and often deliberately inaccurate, look at the thought and influence of philosophers. Listen to this for fun and an introduction to some of the key thinkers of the last 3000 years. **DO NOT** listen to this to gain completely accurate and unbiased accounts of these philosophers.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000n5yy>

**Resources for Year 1- Epistemology and Ethics**

Textbook for year 1 (AS) – required

* **Philosophy for A-Level year 1 and AS** (for AQA exam board) by Jeremy Hayward, Gerald Jones and Daniel Cardinal.

Introduction to ethics

* **Ethics: A very short introduction** or **Being Good: a short introduction to ethics** both by Simon Blackburn. Both of these offer a good overview and introduction to ethics.
* **Practical Ethics** by Peter Singer. Peter Singer’s arguments, particularly on animals, will be studied in the A level. This is not a general introduction but Singer’s rather controversial arguments. A contemporary classic.
* **CrashCourse Philosophy,** YouTube.

Introductions to epistemology – suggested reading

* **Knowledge: a very short introduction** by Jennifer Nagel - this is the most accessible starting point for the epistemology (the study of knowledge) but is still challenging.
* **The problems of philosophy** by Bertrand Russell – again, challenging but we will study some of Russell’s arguments in the first term.
* **Crash Course Philosophy,** YouTube.

The original texts for the 3 ethical theories studied in year 1 – you are not required to buy these but it would be beneficial if you had them.

* **Utilitarianism** by John Stuart Mill
* **Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals** by Immanuel Kant. This is very challenging to read. We will use commentaries and the textbook.
* **Nichomachean Ethics** by Aristotle. We will study this 2370-year-old book in detail in term 2.