

■ IB Philosophy HL and SL

Introduction

The IB Philosophy course explores the fundamental questions that people have been asking since the beginning of time and still seem relevant in our contemporary world. These include the following: What exists? What does it mean to be a human being? What can we know? How do we know what is the right thing to do? IB Philosophy is not 'about' philosophy, its emphasis is on 'doing' philosophy. This requires intellectual rigour, an open and critical mind and a willingness to acknowledge the validity of alternative views. In the process, one will need to have the intellectual honesty that is willing to face up to one's own bias and those of others. At the core of this enterprise is the search for truth. Because it requires openness, it transcends internationalism and fosters tolerance because it also transcends ethnic and religious boundaries.

Content

The Philosophy course is divided into two parts:

Part One - Themes

All students study the Core Theme, 'What is a Human Being'? Central questions in the Philosophy of Mind include: What is a person? What are animals? Could animals be persons or machines? Can I know myself - or another? Do I have free will? All students then study, "The Theories and Problems of Ethics" which is concerned with decision-making and the way people conduct their lives. Questions asked include: What kind of person do I want to be? and, How do I decide whether an action is right or wrong? Ethical principles are applied to biomedical, environmental and animal rights issues.

HL students study an additional topic, "The Philosophy of Religion", which analyses the nature of religion using rational arguments for and against religious views with a particular focus on religious language. It asks questions like: Can we prove the existence of God by using reason or experience? Can morality based on religion be justified?

Part Two - Texts

The detailed study of philosophical texts is another good way of enabling students to 'do' philosophy as this requires them to enter into a dialogue with another philosopher. The texts to be studied are: SL and HL: Kant, Immanuel, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. HL only: Aquinas, Thomas, *Summa Theologica* ('Concerning man')

Assessment

The external assessment at both Standard and Higher Level (80%) consists of two written papers containing structured and essay questions. The coursework (20%) comprises a critical analysis and a philosophical dialogue, each of 1000 – 1200 words.