

IB Philosophy Presentation: Course Outline

Core theme

Both SL and HL students take the core theme: What is it to be human?

- Free will: Is free will possible in a deterministic universe?
- Identity: What is a person? What is involved in being the same person over time?
- Mind and psychology: Are minds/consciousness physical? What are the proper methods of psychology?
- Human nature: Is there such a thing as human nature? If there is, what is it?
- The self and other: Are our identities as people essentially tied up with our connections with others?

Optional themes

There will be two optional themes, selected from the three below partly on the basis of student interest. HL students will take both of the two optional themes, SL will take one of them:

Optional theme 1: Ethics

- Moral theories: what principles, if any, should we live by?
- Virtue ethics: What is involved in having a good life or flourishing as a person?
- Metaethics: Are moral truths objective or subjective? Are there any moral facts at all?

Optional theme 2: Political Philosophy

- Civil society, the state, and government
- Justifying the state
- Who should rule?
- Political freedom
- The distribution of property

Optional theme 3: Epistemology

- What is knowledge and how does it differ from belief?
- Is knowledge really possible at all?
- Does all knowledge come from experience?
- Does science have a special claim on knowledge?
- Are there things that science cannot tell us?

Prescribed text

Both SL and HL students study a book which is designated as the prescribed text. This will be one of the following two books:

- The Life You Can Save: How to play your part in ending world poverty (Author: Peter Singer)
- Meditations (Author: Rene Descartes)

HL Extension

This part of the course, which is only taken by HL students, explores questions about philosophy itself:

- What is philosophy? (SL students will do this bit too)
- What are the methods of doing philosophy? (SL students will do this bit too).
- Does philosophy have its own distinctive subject matter?
- What is the relationship between philosophy and other areas of human activity such as science and art?