NSW BOSTES BEC

Syllabus Document

Stage 6: PHILOSOPHY (Preliminary) Course - 1 Unit

Preliminary (BEC) Stage 6 Philosophy – 1 Unit

BOARD ENDORSED COURSE

RATIONALE:

This course is designed to equip students with the “21st century skills” essential for active citizenship in today’s complex global society. It addresses Goal 2 of the Melbourne Declaration, that “All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens”. In doing so, the course addresses the following different, but related, objectives. The list below explains what is distinctive about a philosophy course. At the same time, it demonstrates why current Board Developed Courses do not fully address this goal. Philosophy helps students develop:

(a) appreciation of the intellectual history that informs Australian knowledge and inquiry: In studying philosophy students gain familiarity with one of the foundational disciplines that have shaped Western civilisation from the time of the Ancient Greeks.

(b) habits of rigour and logical thinking: Philosophical enquiry encourages students to "think in slow motion", and to examine key concepts in detail. In other HSC subjects students acquire knowledge about all sorts of things, but in studying philosophy students must also pause to ask "What is knowledge, and why is it valuable?" This kind of deep thinking in philosophy is accompanied by careful attention to logic and the structure of argument.

(c) skills of critical thinking that are applicable across different disciplines: When engaging in philosophical discussion, students learn to question and to challenge views put forward by others, and learn how to respond to such challenges to their own views. These skills are central to philosophy but are portable in the HSC trans-disciplinary context: students who are trained in these skills will improve their outcomes across other subject areas.

(d) literacy and communication skills: Students of philosophy must read and make sense of philosophical texts, some of which are dense and demanding. Students must also be able to set out philosophical arguments clearly and concisely in oral and written forms. Engaging in philosophical activities helps students develop these skills.

(e) appreciation of diversity and ethical responsibility: The critical thinking skills that students acquire through studying philosophy are useful throughout their lives. Philosophy leads us to reflect not only on how to get what we want, but on which things are worth wanting, and which kinds of lives we ought to lead. Thinking philosophically helps students become intellectually autonomous. Students learn how to think for themselves, to take responsibility for their own views, to seek and respond rationally to evidence, and to consider and evaluate alternative points of view.

While there is a plethora of courses that develop students' abilities to answer questions, this course differs in that it develops a student’s ability to identify the questions we need to ask. This approach to learning, that seeks clarity and understanding, enriches debates in social or political discourse, and equips students with skills to think critically in all areas of study including in the humanities, performing arts and sciences. This meets the needs of students by providing deep conceptual understanding and significance in their learning experiences.

In Australia, school communities have identified “an individual’s active participation in and contribution to the wider community” as one of the keystones of our educational ethos. The students who have studied Philosophy in Stage 5 agree that it has provided them with the concepts they need to see the world in new ways and the skills that they need to actively engage in changing it for the better - in ways that other courses do not. A large number have expressed a desire to continue the study of Philosophy in Stage 6.

Students in Stage 6 are often seeking an additional 1 Unit subject to make up their quota of units studied. Many are forced to take subjects that they are not really interested in (e.g. Photography). The academically gifted students at our school require intellectual rigour. The study of Philosophy in Stage 6 provides all students, but especially academically gifted students, with an opportunity to be intellectually challenged and engaged.

AIM:

This course aims to develop students' understanding of themselves in their world. It confronts students with authentic ethical, social and political dilemmas and challenges them to formulate consistent and rational solutions. The course explicitly teaches the skills of critical thinking, logic, reasoning, and thesis construction. In grappling with these problems, the students will develop a deeper understanding of the way that ethical and philosophical commitments shape personal, social and political decisions.

This course addresses decision-making at a fundamental level: it requires students to evaluate choices from various conceptual viewpoints and to make explicit the underlying structures of thought processes and values that have shaped those viewpoints. An understanding of philosophical viewpoints and an appreciation of the processes of philosophical inquiry will help to stimulate critical thinking in the students in order to help them reflect on their role as active decision-makers in society. To achieve this, students will learn to develop their own personal philosophy and to critically evaluate values and ethics that underpin society as a whole. They will then assess the influence of these two forces on their decision-making process. They will also be encouraged to explore the decision-making process with particular emphasis on ethical decision-making and the consequences of choosing a course of action based on a philosophical "stance".

For the purpose of this course, "Philosophy" is defined as "a set of values, perceptions, beliefs and understandings that we, as humans, use to make decisions and choose courses of action that have the power to shape our world, both personally and on a larger scale." All students will be encouraged to think of themselves as "Practical Philosophers" and to gain a deeper understanding of what drives and informs their personal and shared beliefs. Most importantly, through the study of Philosophy students will gain the ability to think freely, challenging assumptions, ideologies and beliefs through the use of reason and logic.

COURSE STRUCTURE:

The course will run over three terms, as a Preliminary Stage 6 course in Year 11. There are four, 15 hour modules of work:

MODULE 1: LOGIC

MODULE 2: EPISTEMOLOGY

MODULE 3: ETHICS

MODULE 4: METAPHYSICS

Module 1: Logic is the basis of the "Philosopher's Toolkit" and should run as an overarching module that is studied concurrently with each of the other modules.

OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

The following objectives and outcomes relate to the course as a whole.

The emphasis given to particular objectives and outcomes will depend upon the modules selected.

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS (KS) OBJECTIVES AND RELATED OUTCOMES

KS OBJECTIVE 1 STUDENTS WILL DEVELOP:

Skills in logic and critical thinking.

OUTCOME KS 1.1 A STUDENT:

Constructs logically valid arguments.

OUTCOME KS 1.2 A STUDENT:

Differentiates between logic, rhetoric and fallacies.

OUTCOME KS 1.3 A STUDENT:

Asks creative questions which consider issues from multiple perspectives.

KS OBJECTIVE 2 STUDENTS WILL DEVELOP:

Skills and understanding of knowledge acquisition, justification and application.

OUTCOME KS 2.1 A STUDENT:

Understands how knowledge is acquired, justified and applied in a variety of fields.

OUTCOME KS 2.2 A STUDENT:

Presents knowledge with justification.

OUTCOME KS 2.3 A STUDENT:

Critically examines the validity of knowledge from multiple philosophical and scientific perspectives.

KS OBJECTIVE 3 STUDENTS WILL DEVELOP:

Ethical understanding.

OUTCOME KS 3.1 A STUDENT:

Develops an understanding of models of ethical decision-making.

OUTCOME KS 3.2 A STUDENT:

Applies ethics to evaluate a range of decisions and consequences.

KS OBJECTIVE 4 STUDENTS WILL DEVELOP:

An understanding of the nature of existence.

OUTCOME KS 4.1 A STUDENT:

Differentiates between appearance and reality.

OUTCOME KS 4.2 A STUDENT:

Understands the complexity of the human condition.

OUTCOME KS 4.3 A STUDENT:

Demonstrates understanding of a variety of philosophical theories when discussing metaphysical problems.

KS OBJECTIVE 5 STUDENTS WILL DEVELOP:

Research and communication skills.

OUTCOME KS 5.1 A STUDENT:

Communicates ideas effectively, using a range of modes, media and technologies.

OUTCOME KS 5.2 A STUDENT:

Conducts independent research using a variety of research tools.

OUTCOME KS 5.3 A STUDENT:

Synthesises information from multiple sources.

VALUES AND ATTITUDES (VA) OBJECTIVE AND RELATED OUTCOMES

VA OBJECTIVE STUDENTS WILL DEVELOP:

Reflective awareness and understanding of the positive influence philosophy has on society.

OUTCOME VA1 A STUDENT:

Reflects explicitly on personal values and beliefs.

OUTCOME VA 2 A STUDENT:

Develops an understanding that each individual can make a difference.

OUTCOME VA 3 A STUDENT:

Develops a tolerance for divergent philosophies.

MODULE 1: LOGIC (15HRS)

Logic is defined here as the study of reasoning. Students will gain a basic understanding of the principles of logic and learn how to construct valid arguments. The students will hone these skills in structured practical philosophical discussions called Communities of Inquiry. *(See Supplementary Material 1 – Communities Of Inquiry)* This module should be dealt with as an overarching unit of work that is concurrently taught with all other modules.

MODULE ONE OUTCOMES:

OUTCOME KS 1.1 A STUDENT:

Constructs logically valid arguments.

OUTCOME KS 1.2 A STUDENT:

Differentiates between logic, rhetoric and fallacies.

OUTCOME KS 1.3 A STUDENT:

Asks creative questions which consider issues from multiple perspectives.

OUTCOME KS 5.1 A STUDENT:

Communicates ideas effectively, using a range of modes, media and technologies.

OUTCOME KS 5.2 A STUDENT:

Conducts independent research using a variety of research tools.

OUTCOME KS 5.3 A STUDENT:

Synthesises information from multiple sources.

CONTENT OF CORE MODULE 1

1 - STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT

The Origins of Logic: Aristotle's concepts of Pathos, Ethos, and Logos. The students will develop an understanding of the nature and characteristics that distinguish each of them.

STUDENTS LEARN TO

Critically examine texts/speeches to identify the use of Pathos, Ethos or Logos by an author/speaker.

2 - STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT

- The structure of and the construction of arguments. An argument is here defined as a set of premises or propositions intended to support a conclusion through logical derivation that is free of Pathos, Ethos or other rhetorical devices.
- The use of existential and universal quantifiers in philosophical arguments, including the use of ‘all’, ‘some’ and ‘none’.
- The standard logical operators: Negation, Conjunction, Disjunction, Conditional, and Biconditional.

STUDENTS LEARN TO

Construct simple arguments using logical operators: e.g. If P then Q and P, therefore Q. Construct and identify simple statements and arguments using quantifiers: All P are Q and some P are S, therefore some Q are S. Use logical symbols to express statements and derive conclusions using a formal calculus. (Examples in Supplementary Material 2 - Formalisation)

3 - STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT

Ambiguity (Lexical and Syntactic) and Vagueness: how to avoid them in philosophical discussion.

STUDENTS LEARN TO

Define and narrow philosophical problems in Communities of Inquiry to achieve clarity.

4 - STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT

- The elements of Deductive, Inductive and Abductive arguments.
- The difference between Deductive Validity and Deductive Soundness.
- The difference between Inductive Force and Inductive Soundness.
- David Hume's Problem of Induction.
- The forms of Modus Ponens and Modus Tollens, and the formal fallacies of Affirming the Consequent and Denying the Antecedent

STUDENTS LEARN TO

- Construct and identify Deductive, Inductive and Abductive arguments.
- Critique the discussions of their peers identifying the types of logic used and their validity/soundness or degree of force/soundness.
- Use the forms of Modus Ponens and Modus Tollens in Philosophical discussion/writing.

5 - STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT

Rhetoric and Fallacies: Appeal to Emotion, Buzzwords, Scare Quotes, Trading on Equivocation, Majority Belief, Common Practice, Appeal to Authority, Ad Hominem, Tu Quoque, Weak Analogies, Conflation of Morality with Legality, Post hoc ergo propter hoc, Straw Man, False Dichotomy and Begging the Question.

STUDENTS LEARN TO

Identify the use of Rhetoric and Fallacies in Texts and Discussions.

6 - STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT (OPTIONAL EXTENSION ACTIVITY)

The conventions and use of “Truth Tables” to explore the structure of arguments in greater detail.
(See Supplementary Material 3 – Examples of Truth Tables)

STUDENTS LEARN TO

Use “Truth Tables” to explore the structure of arguments in greater detail.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL 1: COMMUNITIES OF INQUIRY (BASIC GUIDELINES)

A community of inquiry (COI) is a group activity in which students listen to each other with respect, build on one another's ideas, challenge one another to supply reasons for otherwise unsupported opinions, assist each other in drawing inferences from what has been said, and seek to identify one another's assumptions. A community of inquiry attempts to follow the inquiry where it leads rather than be penned in by the boundary lines of existing disciplines. A dialogue that tries to confirm to logic, it moves forward indirectly like a boat tacking into the wind, but in the process its progress comes to resemble that of thinking itself. Consequently, when this process is internalised by participants, they come to think in moves that resemble its procedures. They come to think as the process thinks.

- Be prepared for the discussion
- One person speaks at a time
- There is a need to ask questions
- Deep listening is integral to the process
- Give reasons for opinion
- Check assumptions, reasoning, evidence – your own as well as others
- Define and discuss points of difference as well as points of agreement
- Ask others for reasons, definitions, evidences, examples, assumptions if necessary
- Admit when you disagree with something that you may have thought earlier
- Sense of community is essential
- All opinions are respected
- The discussion makes the pathway not a leader
- Differences are a fundamental part of the process
- Accept that others may disagree with you
- Conflict and mistakes made in good faith are to be seen as opportunities for learning and growth.
- This is a thinking process that can challenge assumptions and preconceived ideas
- It may be that you need to change your mind
- It is NOT about winning an argument. Argument in Philosophy is not adversarial.
- It is about thinking more deeply about matters of importance to you as a member of the community.
- All challenges are to ideas expressed and not to the people expressing ideas.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL 2: FORMALISATION

In order to be sure that we are concerning ourselves only with the validity of the argument, and are not being waylaid by rhetorical force or intuitiveness, it is important that we formalise the argument under consideration into a formal calculus.

To do this, we take a natural language argument, such as: 'If there is fire, there is smoke; there is fire; therefore, there is smoke', and we create a lexicon of symbols to stand for the various propositions of the argument. Let 'P', then, stand for 'there is fire', and 'Q' for 'there is smoke'. As for the connectives of the argument (in this case, 'if ... then ...'), we use the following conventional symbols, which also have the following names:

Natural Language Connective	Formal Operator/ Connective	Formal Name
'Not'	¬	Negation
'... and ...'	∧	Conjunction
'... or ...'	∨	Disjunction
'If ... then ...'	⊃	Conditional
'... if and only if ...' or 'iff'	≡	Biconditional

So, in the case of our natural language argument, we would formalise it as follows, where, like in mathematics, the horizontal line indicates the conclusion below:

P⊃Q

P

Q

Natural Language Argument:

'Joel studies logic and Jill studies Art if, and only if, they are in different classrooms for Period 2; Joel studies logic; but Jill doesn't study Art; therefore Joel and Jill are not in different classrooms for Period 2.'

Lexicon

P – 'Joel studies logic'

Q – 'Jill studies Art'

R – 'Joel and Jill are in different classrooms for Period 2'

Formalisation

(P ∧Q) ≡ R

P

¬Q

¬R

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL 3: EXAMPLES OF TRUTH TABLES

Truth-value, in logic, is the truth (T) or falsity (F) of a given proposition or statement. Logical connectives, such as disjunction (symbolized ∨, for "or") and negation (symbolized ¬), can be thought of as truth-functions, because the truth-value of a compound proposition is a function of, or a quantity dependent upon, the truth-values of its component parts.

The truth-value of a compound statement can readily be tested by means of a chart known as a truth table. Each row of the table represents a possible combination of truth-values for the component propositions of the compound, and the number of rows is determined by the number of possible combinations. For example, if the compound contains just two component propositions, there will be four possibilities and thus four rows to the table. The logical properties of the common connectives may be displayed by truth tables as follows:

And

p	q	$p \wedge q$
T	T	T
T	F	F
F	T	F
F	F	F

Or

p	q	$p \vee q$
T	T	T
T	F	T
F	T	T
F	F	F

If . . . then

p	q	$p \supset q$
T	T	T
T	F	F
F	T	T
F	F	T

Not

p	$\neg p$
T	F
F	T

(In the "or" table, for example, the second line reads, "If P is true and Q is false, then P ∨ Q is true.")

Truth tables of much greater complexity, those with a number of truth-functions, can be constructed by means of a computer

p	q	p∧q	
T	T	T	← The first row says "p" is true, "q" is true, and "p∧q is true."
T	F	F	← The second row says "p" is true, "q" is false, and "p∧q" is false.
F	T	F	← The third row says "p" is false, "q" is true, and "p∧q is false.
F	F	F	← The fourth row says "p" is false, "q" is false, and "p∧q" is false.

← These are statements. "p∧q" stands for "p and q."

MODULE 2: EPISTEMOLOGY (15HRS)

Epistemology is the study of the nature of knowledge, its acquisition, justification and application. Students will be introduced to views of knowledge that shaped western intellectual history as well as some views of how such knowledge is acquired and justified. The course also considers how knowledge is applied in different fields: mathematics, science, art, social sciences and the humanities. Familiarity with key concepts and basic themes, and engagement in epistemological debates, will help students inculcate a deeper awareness of what it means to know something. The activities associated with this module will help develop the metacognitive skills of students through structured reflection, especially when they reflect on what they learn, how they learn, and how they apply their knowledge. Students who have grasped these ideas and successfully developed these skills will think more critically and become more active learners, taking an independent role in planning and reflecting on their own learning in their different fields of study.

MODULE TWO OUTCOMES:

OUTCOME KS 2.1 A STUDENT:

Understands how knowledge is acquired, justified and applied in a variety of fields.

OUTCOME KS 2.2 A STUDENT:

Presents knowledge with justification.

OUTCOME KS 2.3 A STUDENT:

Critically examines the validity of knowledge from multiple philosophical and scientific perspectives.

OUTCOME KS 5.1 A STUDENT:

Communicates ideas effectively, using a range of modes, media and technologies.

OUTCOME KS 5.2 A STUDENT:

Conducts independent research using a variety of research tools.

OUTCOME KS 5.3 A STUDENT:

Synthesises information from multiple sources.

CONTENT OF CORE MODULE 2:

MODULE COMPONENT CONTENT 1 (2 HOURS): KNOWLEDGE: WHAT IS IT?

1 - STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT

(A) Different types of knowledge including theoretical knowledge, practical knowledge and knowledge by acquaintance.
(B) The roles different types of knowledge have in contemporary life, for example in different professions.

1 - STUDENTS LEARN TO

(A1) Describe and differentiate between different types of knowledge with reference to everyday examples (e.g. “I know that acid turns blue litmus red,” “I don’t know how to drive.” etc.).

(B1) Understand the place of these different types of knowledge in contemporary society by reflecting on different professions and how they rely on some combination of these types of knowledge.

MODULE COMPONENT CONTENT 2 (2 HOURS): HOW DO WE DEFINE KNOWLEDGE?

2 - STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT

How knowledge is defined in terms of belief and truth.

(A) How is knowledge connected to belief? Must we believe what we claim to know?

(B) How is knowledge connected to truth? Can we know what is false?

2 - STUDENTS LEARN TO

(A1) Outline the definition of knowledge and its constituents.

(A2) Describe the connection between knowledge and belief.

(A3) Reflect on some foundational beliefs that underpin subject areas (e.g. physics, commerce, geography, music).

(B1) Describe the connection between knowledge and truth.

(B2) Reflect on some truths assumed in different subject areas (e.g. drama, biology, history).

MODULE COMPONENT CONTENT 3 (2 HOURS): SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE: RATIONALISM

3 - STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT

(A) A theory of knowledge called 'rationalism,' of which the main proponent is Descartes.

(B) The importance of rationalism and the place of reason in contemporary life.

3 - STUDENTS LEARN TO

(A1) Outline key elements of rationalism.

(B1) Assess the main elements of rationalism.

(B2) Describe the weaknesses and strengths of a rationalist account of knowledge so as to understand the place of reason in our thinking.

MODULE COMPONENT CONTENT 4 (2 HOURS): SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE: EMPIRICISM

4 - STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT

(A) Empiricism, a theory of knowledge that emphasises the primary place of experience in knowledge. Locke, Berkeley and Hume are famous proponents of this view.

(B) The importance of empiricism and the nature of inductive reasoning in science.

4 - STUDENTS LEARN TO

(A1) Outline key elements of empiricism.

(B1) Assess the main elements of empiricism.

(B2) Describe the weaknesses and strengths of an empiricist account of knowledge in order to understand the process of inductive reasoning and the scientific method.

MODULE COMPONENT CONTENT 5 (3 HOURS): THE JUSTIFICATION OF KNOWLEDGE

5 - STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT

The importance of providing *good reasons* for what we claim to know.

(A) Different types of evidence we call upon to justify our beliefs in different subject areas.

(B) Foundationalism, which holds that, while all beliefs must be justified, some beliefs are basic and they are self-justified (Descartes proposed a version of foundationalism).

(C) Reliabilism, which proposes that knowledge resulting from reliable processes either does not require justification, or immediately qualifies as knowledge.

5 - STUDENTS LEARN TO

(A1) Describe the importance of justification in knowledge through understanding that what they believe to be true must be properly grounded in good reasons for holding that belief.

(A2) Evaluate the justification required for different types of knowledge claims, e.g. knowledge of a scientific theory (justified by other established theories, experimental results, refining and further testing), knowledge of pain in one's toe (justified by a person feeling the pain directly), knowledge of another person's character (justified by testimony, shared experiences, etc.).

(B1) Describe the main aspects of foundationalism.

(B2) Evaluate foundationalism, setting out its strengths and weaknesses.

(B3) Identify a foundationalist approach to knowledge and discuss its applications in contemporary life (e.g. mathematical knowledge).

(C1) Describe the main aspects of reliabilism.

(C2) Evaluate reliabilism, setting out its strengths and weaknesses.

(C3) Identify a reliabilist approach to knowledge and discuss its applications in contemporary life (e.g. reliance on witness accounts in legal trials).

MODULE COMPONENT CONTENT 6 (2 HOURS): SCEPTICISM ABOUT KNOWLEDGE

6 - STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT

The limits of knowledge: how much do we, or can we, know? There are different reasons to be sceptical and two main theories are investigated.

(A) Being sceptical about what our senses 'tell' us. Descartes was sceptical about our sensory experiences.

(B) Being sceptical about how we understand our experiences. Hume raised questions about how our expectations 'filter' what we observe.

6 - STUDENTS LEARN TO

(A1) Describe the limits to knowledge acquired through the senses.

(A2) Evaluate the importance of relying on our senses through understanding the role of the senses in different professions (e.g. dentist, economist, bank teller, teacher and artist).

(B1) Describe the limits to inductive knowledge when it is based on questionable assumptions.

(B2) Evaluate the place of inductive knowledge in everyday life (e.g. reliance on the alarm clock to wake us up, taking public transport, interacting with friends, using electronic devices).

MODULE COMPONENT CONTENT 7 (2 HOURS): THE ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE

7 - STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT

How different types of knowledge may be learnt and applied.

(A) The differences between theoretical and practical knowledge and how each of these, or both in combination, is part of ordinary life (e.g. knowing how to dance, knowing how to play team sport, knowing the chemical reactions of particular elements).

(B) How theoretical and practical knowledge are learnt (e.g. memorising, practising, repeating, writing, working through examples, listening, discussing).

7 - STUDENTS LEARN TO

(A1) Distinguish between practical and theoretical knowledge.

(A2) Explain how practical and theoretical knowledge play a role in ordinary lives and in the professions.

(B1) Describe the relation between a particular type of knowledge and how it is best learnt.

(B2) Describe the differences between different learning activities.

(B3) Reflect on their own learning styles.

FURTHER DETAIL FOR THIS UNIT FOLLOWS IN SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL 4

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL 4: EPISTEMOLOGY MODULE CONTENT DESCRIPTIONS

MODULE COMPONENT CONTENT 1: KNOWLEDGE: WHAT IS IT?

Students learn that, in ordinary usage, the term 'knowledge' covers a broad range of subject matter, including different content and skills. In this Module Component, they learn about the diverse types of knowledge, how to differentiate them and to understand their place in contemporary life.
(A) The different types of knowledge include:

- Practical knowledge: S knows how to jump-start a car
- Theoretical knowledge: S knows that 2 + 2 = 4
- Knowledge by acquaintance: S knows the Attorney-General quite well

(B) These different types of knowledge have their place in society. What is the importance of mathematical knowledge? What types of knowledge does a climate scientist rely on? What is the importance of knowledge about political processes in Australia?

MODULE COMPONENT CONTENT 2: HOW DO WE DEFINE KNOWLEDGE?

What is knowledge? Students are introduced to a dominant conception of knowledge (as may be found in Plato's *Meno*), which explains it in terms of (A) belief (B) truth (C) justificatory reason: we can only know what we *believe*, we can only know what is *true* and we need to provide plausible reasons to justify what we know. This definition continues to be widely-held and students are encouraged to explore the two major elements, belief and truth.

(A) How is knowledge connected with belief? Must we believe what we claim to know? Can a person know something on the basis of a false belief?

(B) How is knowledge connected to truth? Can we know what is false?

MODULE COMPONENT CONTENT 3: SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE: RATIONALISM

A number of key theories of knowledge underpin debates in a range of areas, and have done so through the course of Western intellectual history. Students will acquire familiarity with the main ideas in these theories, their strengths and weaknesses and their applications in contemporary life.

A theory of knowledge called 'rationalism' holds that knowledge is not derived from the senses but from thought processes or the exercise of human intellect. Descartes (well-known for the proposition "I think, therefore I am") was a major proponent of this view. In learning about rationalism, students will begin to appreciate the place of reason, both in rigorous, intellectual endeavours and in ordinary life.

MODULE COMPONENT CONTENT 4: SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE: EMPIRICISM

Empiricism emphasises the primary place of experience in knowledge. Empirical knowledge is acquired through the senses. Philosophers including Locke, Berkeley and Hume are famous proponents of this view and some of their ideas will be explored. This theory of knowledge is a fundamental strand in induction (covered in the "Logic & Reason" module) which is a central methodology in science.

MODULE COMPONENT CONTENT 5: THE JUSTIFICATION OF KNOWLEDGE

To have knowledge is not simply to hold on to a piece of information. In this Module Component, students are shown why it is important to provide *good reasons* for what we claim to know. Because knowledge is not a purely subjective matter, we need to give an account of how we have come to hold our true beliefs.

(A) What counts as adequate justification will differ according to the type of inquiry and the knowledge we claim to have. Students explore different ways in which we may justify our beliefs.

(B) Foundationalism is a theory that, while all beliefs must be justified, some beliefs are basic and they are self-justified (Descartes proposed a version of foundationalism). Students learn to evaluate this view and to understand its applications in contemporary life.

(C) Reliabilism proposes that knowledge resulting from reliable processes (e.g. vision) either does not require justification, or immediately qualifies as knowledge. Students learn to evaluate this view and to understand its applications in contemporary life.

MODULE COMPONENT CONTENT 6: SCEPTICISM ABOUT KNOWLEDGE

A fuller understanding of knowledge includes understanding its limits: how much do we, or can we, know? A sceptic claims there are limits to our knowledge and students are introduced to two basic versions of scepticism.

(A) Descartes was a sceptic about our sensory experiences, claiming that we could be deceived (our senses can trick us – think about how we 'see' the portion of a stick under water as bent).

(B) Hume was sceptical about how we understand our experiences. In making sense of our experiences, we expect that nature is uniform (that the future will be like the past). We also assume that parts of the world we have not experienced will be like the parts we have experienced. These assumptions of inductive reasoning present problems for knowledge.

MODULE COMPONENT CONTENT 7: THE ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE

One reason why it is important to clarify our conceptions of knowledge is so that we may find out more about how best to acquire that type of knowledge. We may need to learn content (in which case we might read a book or speak to experts) or we may need to learn how to operate machinery (again, we might ask an expert or read a manual, but we will need at least to try it out ourselves, manually).

(A) Gilbert Ryle distinguished between knowing-how and knowing-that, suggesting that we need to appreciate the significance of knowing-how in vocational training. Students learn to understand the importance of theoretical knowledge as well as knowledge acquired through practice.

(B) How do we learn? We may learn from more concrete experience (such as auditory, visual or kinaesthetic experiences) or abstract conceptualisation (such as learning through reading and writing). Which types of learning experiences are more closely associated with which fields of knowledge (e.g. learning to be an artist, learning mathematics, learning history)?

MODULE 3: ETHICS (15HRS)

Students will become familiar with key ideas and theories in the philosophical study of morality. These include conceptions of what is morally good and morally right, and both teleological or ends-based and deontological or duty-based ways of evaluating conduct, as well as approaches that emphasise character rather than conduct. They will also consider a variety of views regarding the basis of moral standards, the nature of moral knowledge and how we come by it, as well as the conditions under which people are morally responsible for what they do. Students will explore all these matters through structured philosophical discussions called Communities of Inquiry.

MODULE THREE OUTCOMES:

OUTCOME KS 3.1 A STUDENT:

Develops an understanding of different models of ethical decision making.

OUTCOME KS 3.2 A STUDENT:

Applies ethics to evaluate a range of decisions and consequences.

OUTCOME KS 5.1 A STUDENT:

Communicates ideas effectively, using a range of modes, media and technologies.

OUTCOME KS 5.2 A STUDENT:

Conducts independent research using a variety of research tools.

OUTCOME KS 5.3 A STUDENT:

Synthesises information from multiple sources.

CONTENT OF CORE MODULE 3

1 - STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT

Students learn about the distinction between goodness of ends and goodness of means and different conceptions of the moral ends of human conduct (such as promoting happiness or living in accord with moral principles). They also learn about different conceptions of the relationship between goodness and right action (such as an action's being right insofar as it promotes good consequences, or being right by conforming to moral principles irrespective of the consequences).

STUDENTS LEARN TO

Students learn to make means-ends distinctions. They learn to recognise and distinguish between different conceptions of moral goodness, as well as different ways in which they may be related to an understanding of what makes an action right.

2 - STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT

Students learn about teleological accounts of moral judgment, such as ethical egoism, and act- and rule-utilitarianism, by reference one or more major proponents such as Bentham, Mill and Peter Singer, and criticisms of their ideas.

STUDENTS LEARN TO

Students learn to identify teleological approaches to moral judgments. They learn to defend and critique them.

3 - STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT

Students learn about deontological approaches to moral judgment, such as Divine Command Theory and Kantian ethics, and major criticisms of these approaches.

STUDENTS LEARN TO

Students learn to identify and evaluate deontological approaches to moral judgments.

4 - STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT

Students learn about virtue ethics, as in the ethics of Aristotle.

STUDENTS LEARN TO

Students learn to distinguish a character-based approach to morality from a conduct-based one. They learn to appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of a character-based approach.

5 - STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT

Students learn about different answers that have been given to a number of meta-ethical questions, such as: What is the ultimate source of morality and what is the basis of claims to moral authority? How do we come by moral knowledge, if indeed we can claim to *know* what is good and right? Under what conditions are people to be held morally responsible for what they do?

STUDENTS LEARN TO

Students learn how to approach contentious moral issues through reasoned argument. They learn to appreciate different points of view when dealing with moral disagreement.

MODULE 4: METAPHYSICS (15HRS)

Metaphysics is a disciplinary field within philosophy that attempts to understand the nature of existence, or what is ultimately real. Often, this will involve getting beyond the appearance of this world and our understanding of it. The questions metaphysics raises are some of the most fundamental in philosophical inquiry. In this module, students will explore some central problems in metaphysics, drawing upon both the history of philosophy and contemporary discussion. The topics covered include Plato's theory of forms, Descartes' mind-body problem, Berkeley's idealism and modern materialism, free will and determinism, and personal identity. The reflections on the natural world complement studies in the sciences. More generally, consideration of points of view, themes and arguments will equip students in any subject area with skills for metacognitive reflection.

MODULE FOUR OUTCOMES:

OUTCOME KS 4.1 A STUDENT:

Differentiates between appearance and reality.

OUTCOME KS 4.2 A STUDENT:

Understands the complexity of the human condition.

OUTCOME KS 4.3 A STUDENT:

Demonstrates understanding of a variety of philosophical theories when discussing metaphysical problems.

OUTCOME KS 5.1 A STUDENT:

Communicates ideas effectively, using a range of modes, media and technologies.

OUTCOME KS 5.2 A STUDENT:

Conducts independent research using a variety of research tools.

OUTCOME KS 5.3 A STUDENT:

Synthesises information from multiple sources.

CONTENT OF CORE MODULE 4:

METAPHYSICS: APPEARANCE AND REALITY (3 HOURS)

We believe our world, people, furniture, and the like, are 'real'. We believe unicorns are not real. What criteria do we use to make these distinctions? Plato famously introduced a world of forms – ideals – which he claimed were real, indeed, more 'real' than the world we live in. Familiarity with these ideas will equip students with an understanding of the important historical origins of why we value ideas and ideals. Consideration of Plato's arguments will help students develop skills for standing back from what they conventionally believe to be true, to take a different stance.

STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT

(A) Plato's theory of forms: thinking about ideas, including whether they are 'real'.

(B) Plato's allegory of the cave: the distinction between appearance and reality

(C) The role of the intellect in the acquisition of knowledge.

STUDENTS LEARN TO

(A1) Identify realist claims about abstract and theoretical objects.

(A2) Apply their understanding of abstract and theoretical objects to conceptions in other areas of study, as in the objects of geometry, numbers, and theoretical entities in science.

(B1) Appreciate the role of analogy in the presentation of ideas.

(B2) Understand analogical reasoning.

(B3) Critically evaluate analogical reasoning.

(C1) Distinguish metaphysical from epistemological claims.

(C2) Explain the connection between metaphysical and epistemological claims.

METAPHYSICS: MIND-BODY DUALISM (3 HOURS)

We believe we have a body, and a mind. This distinction is a legacy of Descartes' philosophy. Descartes drew a distinction between the body and the mind, arguing that the mind is radically different from the body. One implication of this dichotomy is that, as human beings, we are comprised by these two different sets of properties or states. A series of problems arises from this dichotomy, including: if the body and mind were essentially different, where do they interact?

What/where is the human person – mind or body? How is the mind connected with the brain? David Armstrong, an Australian philosopher, argued that the mind is the brain – there is only the brain, and our 'talk' about mind effectively is talk about the brain. These ideas have a direct relation to discussions in biology. Additionally, they touch on issues of human functioning, thought and personal identity, helping students develop as reflective learners. Finally, the discussions of David Armstrong's work helps students appreciate the significance of Australian philosophy and its influence in the global context.

STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT

(A) Descartes' theory of mind-body dualism and the reasoning behind Cartesian dualism.

(B) Problems with Cartesian dualism including the brain in the vat.

(C) Materialist theory of the mind, including Australian Materialism (or the Identity Theory) and arguments for and against it.

STUDENTS LEARN TO

(A1) Describe Descartes' mind-body dualism.

(A2) Explain Descartes' reasoning behind mind-body dualism.

(B1) Understand the implications of viewing the human person as mind and body.

(B2) Understand the limitations of Cartesian Dualism and Dualism more generally.

(C1) Describe key elements in a materialist theory of mind.

(C2) Evaluate arguments for and against Materialism.

(C3) Understand the contemporary significance of Materialism and how some of its ideas relate to recent scientific research in psychology and evolutionary biology.

(C4) Critically examine a philosophical theory by engaging in the analysis and construction of arguments.

METAPHYSICS: IDEALISM, MATERIALISM AND PHENOMENALISM (3 HOURS)

Do physical objects continue to exist when no one is observing them? Berkeley's answer to this question is that they do not. According to Berkeley, the physical world exists only while it is being perceived. Berkeley was grappling with the representational theory of perception, which posits that all our perceptions of the real world are mediated by ideas. He was also concerned about how scientists in his day were focused primarily on the material world, pushing religious belief into the periphery. Berkeley claimed that all we really know are our sensory experiences, and nothing else! However, God is the prime perceiver who observes all things and guarantees that they exist – hence, things don't pop in and out of existence as we perceive them (or not). Phenomenalism, a theory which grows out of Idealism, holds that only phenomena, not things, are real. These debates in

Idealism, Materialism and Phenomenalism are an important part of Western intellectual history. In addition, engagement with these ideas encourages students to reflect on the connections between their thoughts and the world.

STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT

(A) Berkeley's idealism and objections to it.

(B) The contrast between Berkeley's idealism and materialism.

(C) The relation between idealism and the view known as phenomenalism, while considering arguments and objections.

STUDENTS LEARN TO

(A1) Describe Berkeley's idealism and his reasoning.

(A2) Engage in a form of reasoning whereby students suspend judgment in order to properly consider a startling contention or theory.

(A3) Evaluate Berkeley's idealism.

(B1) Locate Berkeley's idealism in its context of scientific materialism.

(B2) Appreciate the bearing of religious beliefs and other 'external' motivations on argumentation and theory construction in philosophy.

(C1) Outline the key features of phenomenalism.

(C2) Weigh up arguments for and against a proposition.

METAPHYSICS: DETERMINISM, FREE WILL AND COMPATIBILISM (3 HOURS)

We believe we are free agents. We live our lives as if we make decisions of our own: we choose what kind of diet we want to have, we aspire to do well, we procrastinate, and we have meaningful relationships. Determinism is the theory that challenges this belief. It holds that everything we do is determined. We might think we have chosen, but we haven't. Compatibilism is a view that falls between Determinism and Free Will theory. It holds that we do make free choices but that this is compatible with Determinism. Consideration of these issues helps students understand the nature and limits of responsibility which are in turn critical aspects of ethics and social responsibility.

STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT

(A) The ancient conception of fate, the causal principle of determinism, and both ancient and modern indeterminism.

(B) The problem of free will and determinism, and the standard resolutions of the problem—libertarianism, hard determinism and compatibilism—and objections to each of them.

(C) The implications of this debate for responsibility, autonomy and ethical conduct.

STUDENTS LEARN TO

(A1) Analyse concepts, such as those of fate and freedom of the will.

(B1) Make explicit conceptual connections and distinctions, as in examining the similarity and difference between fatalism and determinism, or the difference between hard and soft determinism.

(C1) Explain constraints to freedom in ordinary life (e.g. limited by our physical make-up, our sensory organs, our intellect, legal and social constraints)

(C2) Outline the connections between free will and responsibility.

(C3) Explore the scope and limits of responsibility and ethical action.

METAPHYSICS: PERSONAL IDENTITY (3 HOURS)

Personal Identity has an important place in metaphysics because it dwells on the nature of the self and its existence. It considers the questions, "How do I exist, and what makes me, me?" Students will be introduced to philosophical theories on personal identity in the early modern and contemporary periods. These reflections will help students place themselves in context, giving them greater understanding about identity, distinctiveness and citizenship.

5 - STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT

(A) The problem of personal identity, as to what makes a person the same person (if indeed they remain the same person) over time and change.

(B) David Hume's and John Locke's views on personal identity.

(C) Contemporary views on personal identity, such as those of Derek Parfit and Daniel Dennett.

STUDENTS LEARN TO

(A1) Think about their own identity in philosophical terms.

(B1) Describe the main elements of Hume's account of personal identity.

(B2) Describe the main elements of Locke's account of personal identity.

(C1) Describe the main elements of a contemporary account of personal identity.

(C2) Analyse sample passages of philosophical writing.

(C3) Construct an extended reasoned defence of a philosophical position.

PRELIMINARY COURSE - ASSESSMENT TASK OUTLINE

The tasks listed here will be used to generate an A-E grade for reporting on the Record of School Achievement. These will be submitted to the Board at the end of Year 11.

TASK 1

Communities of Inquiry (COI) 40%

Students participate in COI during the entire course and four of these will contribute to the formal mark for each student. The COI discussions are evaluated using the following rubric: (each section scored 5 – 0, Excellent to Poor)

Critical thinking

- Grasped philosophical problem
- Crafted an argument
- Evaluated others' arguments
- Distinguished beliefs and reasons in own or others' arguments
- Challenged reasons and / or examples in others' arguments
- Identified an assumption in others' arguments

Creative thinking

- Contributed original ideas
- Made interesting links between ideas
- Provided examples, analogies or thought experiments
- Used others' ideas in original way

Collaborative thinking

- Contributed **appropriately** to philosophical discussion
- Encouraged peers
- Showed intellectual humility
- Supported and / or developed others' reasons or views
- Showed intellectual courage
- asked thought provoking questions

TASK 2

Extended Essay (Personal Interest Project - PIP) 40%

An extended essay of 2,000 to 3,000 words on an individually negotiated philosophical question or problem.

TASK 3

Examination 20%

Short answer and extended response evaluating content understanding and the application of skills.

COURSE EVALUATION

Student feedback will be sought at the conclusion of each module and this feedback will be collated and discussed by a panel, consisting of the course Teacher(s), HT Teaching and Learning, Deputy Principal, and Principal.

Formal parent and student feedback will be sought via survey at the conclusion of each year to help inform the evaluation process. Modifications will be made to the course delivery and approach as necessary.

SPECIAL THANKS

Thank you to the following for their contributions, support and collaboration in producing this syllabus:

Associate Professor Karen Lai – UNSW.

Associate Professor Phil Cam – (UNSW), President, Philosophy in Schools Association of NSW.

THIS SYLLABUS WAS CONSTRUCTED FOR USE IN ANY NSW HIGH SCHOOL INTERESTED IN OFFERING PHILOSOPHY AS A STAGE 6 PRELIMINARY COURSE ELECTIVE.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN OFFERING THIS COURSE AT YOUR SCHOOL PLEASE CONTACT GREG HENSHAW (DEPUTY PRINCIPAL) NORTH SYDNEY GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL WHO WILL ORGANISE BOSTES APPROVAL.