



Philosophy and Ethics KS3 Curriculum

The aims and rationale of the curriculum in Y7-9 are:

Rationale and Ethos

The Hitchin Girls' School Philosophy and Ethics department holds that its purpose is to introduce students to two fundamental questions. Firstly: what kind of thing (in the broadest possible sense) is it reasonable to believe? Secondly: what kind of thing (in the broadest possible sense) is it good to do? These questions are, respectively, the foundational questions of Philosophy and Ethics as academic disciplines.

We hold that this ought to be our purpose for two reasons: firstly, simply because these existential issues are an inescapable part of the Human Condition, and the search for deep wisdom that studying them involves is a source of inherent value. Secondly, we believe that the process of exploring these questions will aid students in becoming confident; intellectually mature and compassionate people, as well as informed; tolerant and engaged citizens.

We hold that properly introducing these questions requires teaching students at all Key Stages the skills of Explanation and Evaluation. That is: to see a philosophical or ethical issue with clarity; to understand a sufficient range of existing approaches and answers to it, and then to come to an informed personal judgement upon it.

We hold that students will require substantive knowledge; curriculum knowledge and personal knowledge to do this. The substantive knowledge of our subject is the intellectual tradition that has been produced by aeons of philosophers, theologians and other thinkers considering the questions outlined above. The curriculum knowledge of our subject is the ability to engage with and think critically about that intellectual tradition. The personal knowledge of our subject is produced by the student as we facilitate them reflecting upon what they themselves value, and how what they have learned coheres with those personal values.

We hold that the study of the world's religions is an invaluable part of developing these skills and knowledges. The world's religions are repositories of deep wisdom that are relevant to the issues we explore, but they are also examples of value-systems that students might be unfamiliar with, and hence examining them acts as a spur for students to reflect on what they themselves consider to be important. Hence the department will approach religion very broadly: as a set of philosophical claims; and as a sociological phenomenon, and as a lived psychological reality.

We hold that in order to achieve any of the above, our classrooms must be inclusive and open spaces where students feel welcomed into a common community of inquiry and exploration. Our approach is therefore never confessional; dogmatic or polemical. Whilst restraints of decency and reasonableness apply, fundamentally we exist not to teach students *what* to think, but *how* to think.

Curriculum Design

The KS3 curriculum is structured around introducing students to the process of approaching and answering philosophical questions, and then applying these skills to a range of different issues.

Early in the first scheme of work in Year 7, students are introduced to this process, and the key skills that it involves: explanation and evaluation. First, students take a question and learn to explain how a range of different worldviews would answer it. These worldviews include different religions, including those of Christians, Muslims, Jews and Buddhists, and also non-religious perspectives that draw on different philosophical traditions. Secondly, students learn to evaluate these answers by deciding what they personally believe about the question they are exploring and learning to justify this answer as convincingly as possible.

Explanation and Evaluation prefigure, respectively, the AO1 and AO2 skills at GCSE and A-Level. Thus the entirety of the HGS curriculum can be seen as one smooth process of incremental improvement in these two areas. It may initially appear that the decision to focus only on two skills is a conservative or unambitious one, but the truth is that these skills are akin to learning to play chess or speak a language – things with infinite potential for improvement that can be continually nuanced; deepened; refined and improved.

However, foundational though they are, these skills are only one side of the coin for the curriculum. Students cannot practice the application of skills without subject-matter to apply them to, and hence the need for a structured and systematic introduction to the curriculum and subject knowledge of philosophy as a discipline. Given any one question could easily provide content for a three-year course on its own, the content and topics selected represent a compromise between approaching each of the foundational questions of the subject we could discuss, and understanding the religious and philosophical worldviews that would inform answers to them.

Curriculum sequencing.

The symbiotic process of skills and knowledge acquisition benefits from a rough thematic structure across each year. This allows students to make links between their current topic and the previous one, helping them understand that philosophical and ethical knowledge does not exist as discrete packets of information that need to be rediscovered in isolation for each new question, but rather as a set of foundational commitments and dispositions that one aims to make coherent across every issue.

In brief then, the rough logic is this: in Year Seven, students are introduced to the core skills of P+E, and are given a general outline of different worldviews. In Year Eight, students apply these to more philosophical or abstract questions, and in Year Nine students apply them to more ethical and concrete ones. However, it must be noted that the apparent two-step process of first acquiring skills and then applying them is an oversimplification. The processes of skills-development and knowledge acquisition in fact develop in tandem. The better students get at applying the skills of the philosophical process, the more knowledge they will acquire when approaching the topic in the curriculum. The more knowledge they have acquired over the topics they have studied, the more opportunities they will have had for refining their philosophical skills, and the more information they have to draw upon to inform their explanations and evaluations, allowing these skills to develop also. A more detailed explanation of this process is given below.

Year Seven:

In the first ten minutes of their first lesson, students learn that philosophy is about: “deciding what it is reasonable to believe about deep and difficult questions that may not have clear answers.” The first topic, then, is necessarily about the nature of belief: what we believe; why we believe it and how to act and think when we encounter the differing beliefs of others. This topic focuses on those things, as well as a lesson on explanation and evaluation explicitly. After acquiring these fundamental skills, students then need to acquire a basic knowledge of religious and philosophical worldviews to draw upon in the explanations and evaluations they will be making. Given the large

number of schools in the HGS catchment, previous subject knowledge is very varied and a consistent foundation between pupils cannot be assumed. Hence the next two topics (*Exploring God* and *Introduction to Philosophy*) are very broad in scope, attempting to give students a basic familiarity with a range of worldviews. Suitably armed with key philosophical skills and a synoptic, if basic, knowledge of relevant worldviews to serve as starting points for comparisons and evaluations, students are ready for two topics that give a more in-depth examination of a religion: First *Introduction to Islam*, and then the *Life of Jesus*. Beginning with a topic the majority of students are less familiar with allows them to approach the study of a religion with open minds, and means they will begin at the beginning with the most fundamental questions. Moving back to what is, for many, more familiar territory in the next topic, students are encouraged to replicate that same process of open-minded enquiry, perhaps allowing a re-examination of previous assumptions. The second topic, *Life of Jesus*, is also intentionally narrower in focus, which prevents the topic simply being a repeat of the previous one about a different religion as the kind of question that is asked are more propositional in nature.

Year Eight:

Here students begin with a reminder of the core skills of the subject. We start with *Life After Death* as it bridges the transition from the more religious focus of the previous year to the more philosophical focus of Year Eight, as the question of the afterlife is naturally one that can be easily discussed from both a religious and philosophical perspective; as is the second topic on the *Problem of Evil*. These are followed by a long topic on *Buddhism*. We decided to teach this religion in Year Eight as the Buddhist tradition has a consistent philosophical emphasis, making it most relevant to the theme of the year. It is taught as the third topic, so that as students go through the *Buddhism* topic they will see how the teachings of Buddhism can inform new answers to the questions they have already studied. The final topic of the year, *The Island*, denotes a turn for metaphysical philosophy to more political philosophy. Here students will see how the philosophical skills they have studied so far can be applied to the questions of collective living.

Year Nine:

In Year Nine, a range of apparently disparate topics are brought together with a focus on ethical thinking, particularly a focus on overcoming injustice and oppression. The year starts with *Animal Rights* as an accessible introduction to this applied ethical thinking, before leading into the longest topic of the year: *Remembering the Holocaust*. This topic begins with a suite of lessons on Jewish culture, history and identity, so that students will be better placed to understand the moral and religious aspects of this period, and also to being the process of re-humanising the historical victims. The Holocaust topic is naturally a challenging one – as students also study this period in History, it focuses more on the moral, political and psychological aspects of the period, attentive throughout to the complex questions of blame and causation that it raises, and also attempting to draw out moral lessons for contemporary society. Next comes a study of Sikhism and Sikh practices. Addressing a religion through its practices provides yet another way to approach a religion that students have not yet been introduced to. Careful attention is paid in this topic to relating the Sikh emphasis on equality and service to the core themes of justice and equality in this year. The final topics deal with this core theme in two further contexts – firstly the topic on Human Rights, and secondly environmental issues.

Philosophy and Ethics KS3 Curriculum Map



Year 7	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Topic	Beliefs	Exploring God	Introduction to Philosophy	Introduction to Islam	Life of Jesus	
Content: what will students know?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Introduction to what Philosophy and Ethics are. 2) Introduction to core skills of P+E (Explanation and Evaluation) 3) Understanding how to approach differences of belief sensitively. 4) Understanding how to justify beliefs. 5) Introduction to basic religious beliefs. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Traditional apologetics arguments for the existence of God. 2) The qualities of God included in the traditional Christian Concept of God. 3) The doctrine of the Trinity. 4) Hindu descriptions of God/s. 5) Islamic descriptions of God/s. 6) Controversies in the comparative theology of these descriptions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The philosophical method. 2) Introduction to some of the sub-fields of philosophy. 3) The life and teachings of Socrates. 4) Utilitarian moral philosophy. 5) Kantian moral philosophy. 6) Egoistic moral philosophy. 7) Applying these three moral theories. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The history, basic content and influence of the Qur'an. 2) The life of the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh). 3) The Five Pillars of Islam. 4) The role and events of Hajj. 5) Islamic art and artefacts. 6) Islam in modern Britain. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Introduction to the historical period in which Jesus lived. 2) The childhood of Jesus. 3) The parables of Jesus. 4) The miracles of Jesus. 5) Jesus' claims about himself. 6) The events around the end of Jesus' life. 7) Where the blame lies for Jesus' death. 8) The putative events of the Resurrection. 9) The putative events of the Ascension. 	
Skills: What will students be able to do?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Explain a range of their central beliefs. 2) Explain a range of basic religious beliefs. 3) Simple evaluation of the beliefs of others. 4) Simple evaluation of different religious worldviews. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Evaluate the convincingness of the traditional arguments for the existence God. 2) Explain the similarities and differences between the concepts of God in the religions that are studied. 3) Evaluate the controversies produced in (2). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Explain the philosophical method. 2) Explain how the philosophical method has been applied to various questions. 3) Evaluate which of the moral theories is most convincing. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Explain the core beliefs and practices within Islam. 2) Explain the history of these things, and their importance in the lives of Muslims. 3) Evaluate the convincingness of the core claims made by Islam. 4) Explain the diversity that exists within the religion on these questions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Explaining Christian beliefs about the life, teachings and importance of Jesus' life. 2) Evaluating the convincingness of these claims. 3) Evaluating how reliable the sources about Jesus' life are. 4) Evaluating the contemporary importance of Jesus' life and teachings. 	
Other: Literacy, numeracy, ethos etc.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Appreciating diversity of worldviews. Cultural capital. 2) Oracy and discussion skills. 3) Persuasive writing in assessment. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Religious literacy. 2) Teamwork and creativity. 3) Oracy and discussion skills. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Ethical reasoning. 2) Critical thinking. 3) Oracy and discussion skills. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Appreciating diversity of worldviews. Cultural capital. 2) Historical knowledge of the period of the founding of Islam. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Appreciating diversity of worldviews. Cultural capital. 2) Historical knowledge of the period in which Jesus lived. 3) Assessing the reliability of historical sources. 4) Literacy through reading and working with these sources. 	
Assessment	Written 20-mark assessment using skills of Explanation and Evaluation			Written 20-mark assessment using skills of Explanation and Evaluation	Written 20-mark assessment using skills of Explanation and Evaluation	

Philosophy and Ethics KS3 Curriculum Map



Year 8	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Topic	Life After Death	Problem of Evil	Introduction to Buddhism		The Island	
Content: what will students know?	1) How mortality affects our view of the meaningfulness of life. 2) Different kinds of evidence for the Afterlife: Past Life Regression; Near Death Experiences etc. 3) In-depth case study on Past Life Regression, culminating in a class debate.	1) Understanding the challenge to God's existence presented by evil and suffering. 2) The soul-making theodicy. 3) The Augustinian theodicy. 4) The Free-Will defence. 5) Buddhist perspectives on evil.	1) The life of the Buddha. 2) The Buddha's teachings. 3) The Four Noble Truths. 4) The Eightfold Path. 5) Different types of Buddhism. 6) Pilgrimage in Buddhism. 7) Buddhist festivals. 8) Meditation.		1) How to fairly distribute wealth and resources. 2) Which laws a society should set for itself. 3) How a society should govern itself. 4) How to create social cohesion through symbology. 5) How a society should recognise important events in the lives of its members. 6) The role of religion is shaping a society. 7) Defending a society from threats.	
Skills: What will students be able to do?	1) Explain various kinds of evidence for the afterlife. 2) Evaluate these kinds of evidence and decide whether any of them are convincing.	1) Explain the Problem of Evil, and its implications for traditional theism. 2) Explain the responses to this challenge that theodicy can offer. 3) Evaluate the convincingness of these responses arrive at a justified conclusion.	1) Explain the core beliefs and practices within Buddhism. 2) Explain how these can inform the philosophical issues approached in the previous two topics. 3) Explain the influence of these beliefs and practices on the lives of Buddhists today. 4) Evaluate the plausibility of the core claims of Buddhism, and the answers that they give to the questions students have been discussing this year.		1) Explain a range of challenges that arise as a result of collective living in a society. 2) Explain how a range of different philosophical positions would address these challenges. 3) Evaluate the convincingness of each answer, and come to a justified conclusion.	
Other: Literacy, numeracy, ethos etc.	1) Personal reflection on existential questions. 2) In-depth analysis of a single question. 3) Debate skills.	1) Debate, discussion and oracy skills. 2) Critical thinking.	1) Appreciating diversity of worldviews. Cultural capital. 2) Ethical reasoning. 3) Historical knowledge of the period of the Buddha's life.		1) Teamwork and collective decision-making. 2) Political education, cultural capital. 3) Debate, oracy and discussion skills. 4) Creativity and artistic skills in designing their ceremonies.	
Assessment	Written 20-mark assessment using skills of Explanation and Evaluation	Written 20-mark assessment using skills of Explanation and Evaluation			Written 20-mark assessment using skills of Explanation and Evaluation	



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Year 9	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Topic	Animal Rights	Introduction to Judaism + Remembering the Holocaust		Sikh Practices	Human Rights and Discrimination	Planet Earth
Content: what will students know?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Human use of animals. 2) Medical testing 3) Vegetarianism 4) Genetic modification 5) Justifying animal rights 6) Intensive farming 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Diversity in Judaism. 2) Abraham 3) Moses 4) Jewish Festivals <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What was the Holocaust? 2) Pre-war Germany and the Nuremberg Laws 3) Resistance to the Holocaust 4) Moral culpability for the Holocaust 5) The Kindertransport 6) The Righteous Among Nations 7) Individual stories of Holocaust victims 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Core Sikh beliefs 2) Sikh festivals and ceremonies. 3) Sikh rituals 4) The importance and relevance of practices 5) The link between beliefs and practices. 6) The link between Sikh practices and the ethical issues of the year. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The content of UNDHR 2) History of UNDHR 3) Case studies in application of human rights. 4) Prejudice and discrimination 5) Sexism and religion 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The value of the natural world 2) Threats to the Natural World 3) Conservation and environmentalism 4) Conservation at home 5) Conservation research project
Skills: What will students be able to do?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Explain which putative rights animals have. 2) Explain a range of different challenges to these rights. 3) Evaluate these ethical challenges, and justify a personal opinion on them. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Explain basic Jewish beliefs and foundational stories 2) Explain the importance of these beliefs to the historical and present Jewish community. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Explain the historical events surrounding the Holocaust. 2) Explain how individuals and groups resisted Nazi rule. 3) Explain how the Jewish community responded to the Holocaust, drawing upon the material of the previous topic. 4) Evaluate the moral lessons of the Holocaust. 5) Evaluate how the Holocaust should be taught and remembered. 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Explain core Sikh beliefs and practices. 2) Explain how these relate to the questions of previous topics. 3) Explain the contemporary importance of these beliefs and practices. 4) Evaluate these core beliefs are practices for both plausibility and efficacy. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Explain the content, history and philosophical assumptions of the UNDHR. 2) Explain how the UNHDR could be applied to contemporary events. 3) Explain some current threats to Human Rights. 4) Evaluate the efficacy of the UNDHR at achieving its stated aims. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Explain different perspectives on valuing the natural world. 2) Explain a range of threats to the environment, and responses to these. 3) Evaluate the validity of different valuations of the natural world. 4) Evaluate how environmentalism should be ethically prioritised.
Other: Literacy, numeracy, ethos etc.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Ethical reasoning. 2) Debate, discussion and oracy skills. 3) Teamwork. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Historical knowledge of the relevant period 2) Empathy and moral sensitivity 3) Ethical reasoning. 4) Debate, discussion and oracy skills. 		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Appreciating diversity of worldviews. Cultural capital. 2) Critical thinking. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Historical knowledge of the relevant period 2) Ethical reasoning. 3) Debate, discussion and oracy skills. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Environmental science. 2) Ethical reasoning. 3) Research skills and inquiry learning.
Assessment	Written 30-mark assessment using skills of Explanation and Evaluation	Written 30-mark assessment using skills of Explanation and Evaluation				Written 30-mark assessment using skills of Explanation and Evaluation