



## **SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINE**

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**PHILOSOPHY AND ETHICS**

**ATAR YEAR 12**

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Sample course outline  
 Philosophy and Ethics – ATAR Year 12  
 Semester 1 – Unit 3 – Reason and society

Week	Syllabus content	Suggested teaching points
1–3	<p><b>Critical reasoning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>numbering propositions, bracketing premises, circling inference indicators and underlining conclusions in arguments written in natural language</li> <li>mapping simple arguments in diagram form – single inferential moves that are either a serial, convergent, divergent or linked inference</li> <li>evaluating simple arguments – premise acceptability, inferential strength and cogency</li> <li>exploring more informal fallacies, including appeal to adverse consequences, false dichotomy, begging the question, ad populum and straw man argument</li> <li>identifying weasel words – intentionally ambiguous words, phrases or statements which demonstrate vagueness, ambiguity or euphemism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The process of analysing and evaluating simple arguments           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identifying and underlining the conclusion</li> <li>identifying and circling inference indicators</li> <li>identifying and bracketing statements/premises in the argument</li> <li>identifying the types of inferential moves made (serial, convergent, divergent or linked)</li> </ul> </li> <li>Weasel words/phrases in statements and the attempt at shoring up support for a conclusion when that support is questionable due to vagueness, ambiguity or euphemism</li> <li>Identifying and evaluating informal fallacies that can include students writing and discussing examples of their own</li> </ul> <p><b>Task 1: Critical reasoning</b></p>
4–6	<p><b>Conceptions of ultimate reality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the concepts of humanism, secular society, religion and ultimate values</li> </ul> <p><b>Analysing, clarifying and evaluating concepts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the idea of the common good, and of public good</li> <li>the concepts of justice, fairness, liberty, equality, rights and tolerance</li> </ul> <p><b>Governance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the concepts of social policy, social planning and public goods</li> <li>the concept of liberal democracy and its forms</li> <li>the concepts of socialism, liberalism and libertarianism</li> <li>the values of liberal democracy</li> <li>the idea of a social contract and its forms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The notion that secular society and humanism are built on the study of human values in order to interpret right action as ‘human good’ rather than divine command</li> <li>Examples of human values that serve as a standard for right action, such as the pursuit of happiness, liberty, property, fairness and justice, security and peace, relationships (family and friendship), tolerance</li> <li>The idea of human values as common goods for social planning</li> <li>The concept of liberalism as political philosophy and a moral way of life for social planning</li> <li>Liberalism and its attempt to interpret natural human values and human goods</li> <li>The distinction between socialism and liberalism as competing modern political philosophies</li> <li>The difference between liberalism and libertarianism</li> <li>Democracy as a participative process in the life of the state/polis (the idea of a socialist democracy versus a liberal democracy)</li> <li>The concept of a republic and the idea of popular</li> </ul>

Week	Syllabus content	Suggested teaching points
		<p>sovereignty and self-determination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The idea of the social contract based on key points from Rousseau (general will and the need for chains or restrictions on freedom), Locke (the state of nature), Hobbes (sovereignty and the sacrifice of some liberty, the state of nature)</li> <li>The difference between a Lockean State of Nature and a Hobbesian State of Nature</li> </ul> <p><b>Task 2: Philosophical analysis and evaluation (article/extract)</b></p>
7–9	<p><b>Imagination and interpretation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the idea of a good society</li> <li>the concepts of utopia and dystopia in works of imagination</li> </ul> <p><b>Analysing, clarifying and evaluating concepts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>criteria for a good society</li> </ul> <p><b>Persons</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the ideas of social identity and social membership</li> <li>the relationship between social conformity and the idea of individualism</li> <li>the concept of marginalisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aristotle’s notion that humans are rational, social and procedural animals, i.e. humans must have reasons, must live socially, must have procedures and processes for peace and security</li> <li>The idea that a good society must interpret, express and protect human values as common goods</li> <li>Self-interest, rational self-interest and conflict – mine, yours and ours</li> <li>Criteria for a good society, such as clear communication, security, education, health and welfare, parenting and agreed decision-making processes and procedures that make and maintain the social contract in accordance with human values, particularly keeping the peace (Hobbes)</li> <li>The concept of utopia as an idealised social contract and political philosophy based on human values and the pursuit of common goods; for example <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thomas More’s <i>Utopia</i></li> <li>Plato’s <i>The Republic</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>Rawl’s original position or ‘veil of ignorance’ as an example of utopian thinking about political philosophy and a moral point of view shaped by an American liberal and capitalist cultural context that addresses natural human values (inequality in terms of outcomes is fair so long as there is an equality of opportunity)</li> <li>Rawls’ emphasis on marginalisation, social responsibility and fair/agreed decision-making or justice based on natural human values and the innate need to secure human goods through the social contract as suggested by the veil of ignorance</li> <li>Fair and agreed decision-making or justice as due process and the fit/conflict with moral theories, such as utilitarianism/deontology when considering human values and common goods</li> </ul>

Week	Syllabus content	Suggested teaching points
10–12	<p><b>Self and others</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the idea of social responsibility</li> <li>moral theories in ethical decision making, including utilitarianism and deontology</li> <li>obligations to those in my society and to those outside my society</li> <li>obligations to the human world, including future generations</li> <li>obligations to the non-human world, including environmental ethics and animal rights</li> </ul> <p><b>Communities and cultures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the idea that different cultures have different moral points of view</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic value in terms of social responsibility toward the human and the non-human world (animals and the environment)</li> <li>Common moral theories and their moral points of view – utilitarianism, deontology and virtue ethics</li> <li>The concept of moral obligation and its tension with rights, or the tension between duty and autonomy</li> <li>Do animals have intrinsic value and rights? Do animals only have extrinsic or instrumental value to human life?</li> <li>The rights of animals in the social contract; for example <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>can animals have rights if there are fundamental differences that preclude them from participating in a rational, social and procedural way in the social contract?</li> <li>do humans have a moral obligation to protect animals, i.e. animal welfare versus animal rights?</li> </ul> </li> <li>Are human moral obligations to the environment based on the environment’s intrinsic or extrinsic value? How do we know?</li> <li>Human and non-human moral obligations and the question of moral relativism</li> </ul> <p><b>Task 3: Construction of argument</b></p>
13–14	<p><b>Methods of inquiry</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the scientific method, including falsification, the role of thought-experiment, deduction, induction and the problem of induction</li> <li>the method of sceptical doubt in philosophical inquiry</li> <li>the concept of phenomenology – reflection on the structure and meaning of conscious experience</li> </ul> <p><b>Scientific world view</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>various relationships between science and society, including the assumption that the scientific method is the dominant paradigm for knowing and understanding reality</li> <li>the applicability of scientific studies for understanding human beings and their societies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empiricism and the scientific method in epistemology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the role of the experiment</li> <li>the ideas of explanatory power, scope and evidence</li> <li>the role of probability</li> </ul> </li> <li>Are thought experiments the same as scientific experiments?</li> <li>The difference between correspondence theories of truth and coherence theories of truth</li> <li>Deduction and the idea of innate knowledge versus induction and the idea of the <i>tabula rasa</i></li> <li>The problem of pure reason, i.e. not anchored in sensory experience</li> <li>The problem of induction, i.e. observed events are not the observed set of events</li> <li>Methodological scepticism and its role in establishing truth</li> <li>The demarcation of science from pseudo-science</li> <li>The difference between science and scientism in the scientific and phenomenological methods</li> <li>If the phenomenological method is scientism, then is it pseudo-science?</li> <li>Pseudo-sciences in academia</li> </ul>
15		<b>Unit 3 revision</b>
16		<b>Task 4: Semester 1 examination (Unit 3)</b>

Sample course outline  
 Philosophy and Ethics – ATAR Year 12  
 Semester 2 – Unit 4 – Reason and meaning

Week	Syllabus content	Suggested teaching points
1–2	<p><b>Critical reasoning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mapping complex arguments in diagram form: 3–5 premises; 2–3 inferential moves; a combination of serial, linked and/or convergent and divergent inferences written in natural language</li> <li>identifying, combining and rewriting difficult propositions in arguments commensurate to their function as premises and conclusions</li> <li>the role of complex sentences, conditionals and connectives in argument – if/then; and; but; or</li> <li>evaluating complex arguments – premise acceptability, inferential strength and cogency</li> <li>exploring more fallacies, including the definist fallacy, post hoc ergo propter hoc, non sequitur, slippery slope fallacy and confusion of correlation and causation</li> <li>distinguishing between analytic and synthetic statements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rewriting statements formally where necessary (replacing pronouns and/or demonstratives with the appropriate noun or noun phrase, using square brackets to indicate the insertion, etc.)</li> <li>The four kinds of inferential moves and their potential combinations</li> <li>Analysing and mapping examples of complex arguments</li> <li>Constructing and mapping examples of arguments</li> <li>What to do with conditionals and connectives when bracketing statements and numbering</li> <li>Truth conditions, meaning and connectives (if/then, and, but, or) including necessary and sufficient conditions in conditionals, i.e. statements that mean the same as each other</li> <li>Evaluating the acceptability of statements as premises and/or conclusions (acceptable, conditionally acceptable and not acceptable)</li> <li>Evaluating inferential strength as either nil, weak, moderate, strong or deductively valid</li> <li>Cogency as a product of premise acceptability and inferential strength</li> <li>Identifying and evaluating analytic and synthetic statements that can include students writing and discussing examples of their own</li> <li>Identifying and evaluating informal fallacies that can include students writing and discussing examples of their own</li> </ul> <p><b>Task 5: Critical reasoning</b></p>
3–5	<p><b>Analysing, clarifying and evaluating concepts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ideas of the divine</li> <li>the concept of theism</li> <li>the concepts of naturalism, materialism, atheism and agnosticism</li> </ul> <p><b>Conceptions of ultimate reality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>theism and the problem of evil</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The concept of theism and its forms (monotheism, polytheism, pantheism, panentheism, immanence and transcendence)</li> <li>Forms of belief in the nature of ultimate reality – naturalism, materialism, atheism and agnosticism</li> <li>The ideas of the divine and the arguments for the existence of God</li> <li>Paley’s argument from design and modern versions of intelligent design/creationism</li> <li>The use or abuse of science in contemporary claims about religious belief</li> <li>The preference for empirical evidence in the modern</li> </ul>



Week	Syllabus content	Suggested teaching points
		<p>world of Enlightenment rationality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The logical problem of evil and the evidential problem of evil</li> <li>• Evil and the concept of God and its function or role in human life (theodicy)</li> <li>• The wager</li> <li>• The distinction between religion (a structured, contractual institution that gives form or process or procedure to sacred mystery or experience), religious experience and mystical experience in the context of pursuing a meaningful life of human values</li> </ul>
6–8	<p><b>Methods of inquiry</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• theories of knowledge, including empiricism, rationalism, and intuitionism</li> </ul> <p><b>Persons</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the ideas of faith, belief, knowledge, reason and meaning, and their interrelationships</li> </ul> <p><b>Imagination and interpretation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• religion as an interpretation of religious and mystical experiences</li> <li>• the comparison between religious experience and scientific ‘experience’</li> <li>• the possibility of misinterpretation with regard to religion and scientific methodologies</li> </ul> <p><b>Scientific world view</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the relationship between evolution and religion</li> <li>• Darwin’s theory of evolution as an example of scientific theorising</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The concept of God and its function or role in human life</li> <li>• Theories of knowledge and their relationship to religious/mystical experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the mystical/religious experience an empirical experience?</li> <li>▪ Is it an experience of union with a divine other or a pure form of natural human being?</li> <li>▪ Is there a religious method of knowing as there is a scientific method?</li> <li>▪ What role does rationalism play in religious knowing or knowledge?</li> <li>▪ What role does empiricism play?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Design and order or order but no design, i.e. a mindless process</li> <li>• Natural selection as blind order, i.e. the blind watch maker</li> <li>• Creationism and pseudo-science</li> <li>• Evolution/natural selection and atheism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can natural selection support an atheistic morality?</li> <li>▪ Can natural selection help reveal the meaning of life or meaningful lives?</li> <li>▪ Can natural selection help humans attain the goods of human life?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Can ‘Darwinian’ atheism justifiably critique religion about its explanations of the meaningful life?</li> <li>• Epistemological differences between scientific discourse and religious discourse and problems for the debate, i.e. the possible incommensurability of an empirical critique of religious experience and discourse when religious discourse about religious experience depends on rationalist thought rather than empirical evidence</li> </ul> <p><b>Task 6: Philosophical analysis and evaluation</b></p>

Week	Syllabus content	Suggested teaching points
9–11	<p><b>Governance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the concepts of citizenship, civic involvement, the public sphere and meaningful lives</li> </ul> <p><b>Conceptions of ultimate reality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ideas of death and the meaning of life</li> <li>religious and non-religious ideas of the meaning of life</li> </ul> <p><b>Persons</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the concept of authenticity</li> </ul> <p><b>Methods of inquiry</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>types of inquiry: existentialism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Humans as rational, social and procedural animals (Aristotle) and the need for meaningful lives, see <i>Politics</i>, Book One</li> <li>Angst, care and being in the world</li> <li>Kant's 'What is Enlightenment?' (a meaningful life is the life of reason rather than the shackles or the dogma of tradition)</li> <li>Existentialism and authenticity, i.e. meaningful life is not 'bad faith' (Sartre)</li> <li>The idea of death and life's purpose, e.g. 'fear of death is something we reason from, not to' RE Ewin, (2002). <i>Reasons and the Fear of Death</i>. Rowman and Littlefield</li> <li>Heidegger, death and authenticity</li> </ul> <p><b>Task 7: Construction of argument</b></p>
12–14	<p><b>Communities and cultures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the absolutist claim that moral standards, values and rules apply in all cultures</li> <li>the relativist claim that moral standards, values and rules are right for one culture, but not another</li> </ul> <p><b>Self and others</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ethical issues of life and death – murder, manslaughter, killing in war, abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment and the killing of animals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The distinction between moral absolutism and moral relativism</li> <li>The wrongness of murder as an example of a value/rule that applies in all cultures, i.e. murder threatens peace and security in the social contract, undoing society if permitted</li> <li>Human values and natural rights as reference points for human universal moral standards</li> <li>Cultural examples of different instantiations of the same human values and their degrees of acceptability, e.g. killing in self-defence versus honour killings as instantiations of the human value for justice</li> <li>Humans as social, rational and procedural animals and Just War theory as a model for justifiable killing when there is agreed-on due process</li> <li>Due process, miscarriage of justice and capital punishment (murder, manslaughter, etc.)</li> <li>Due process and permissible killing – neo-natal euthanasia and the Groningen protocol</li> <li>Due process and permissible killing – Voluntary Assisted Dying and its eligibility criteria and protocols</li> <li>Due process and permissible killing – abortion</li> <li>Due process and permissible killing – the humane killing of animals as instrumental value for human use and consumption</li> </ul>
15		<b>Unit 3 and Unit 4 revision</b>
16		<b>Task 8: Semester 2 examination (Unit 3 and Unit 4)</b>