



SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINE

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	Key teaching points
1–2	<p>Unit content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> numbering propositions, bracketing premises, circling inference indicators and underlining conclusions in arguments written in natural language mapping simple arguments in diagram form – single inferential moves that are either a serial, convergent, divergent or linked inference evaluating simple arguments – premise acceptability, inferential strength and cogency exploring more informal fallacies, including appeal to adverse consequences, false dichotomy, begging the question, ad populum and straw man argument identifying weasel words – intentionally ambiguous words, phrases or statements which demonstrate vagueness, ambiguity or euphemism <p>Task 1: Critical reasoning</p> <p>Key teaching points The process of analysing and evaluating simple arguments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifying and underlying the conclusion identifying and circling inference indicators identifying and bracketing statements/premises in the argument identifying the types of inferential moves made (serial, convergent, divergent or linked) <p>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</p> <p>Identifying and evaluating informal fallacies</p> <p>Note: One period per week for the rest of the semester will be used to practise skills/concepts.</p>
3–5	<p>Unit content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the concept of phenomenology – reflection on the structure and meaning of conscious experience the concepts of humanism, secular society, religion and ultimate values obligations to the human world, including future generations obligations to those in my society and to those outside my society the ideas of social identity and social membership the relationship between social conformity and the idea of individualism the idea of a good society <p>Task 2: Philosophical analysis and evaluation (Community of inquiry dialogue)</p> <p>Key teaching points Husserl’s basic method of observing and evaluating phenomena in terms of the structures of experience and the structure of consciousness, particularly <i>noema</i> and <i>lebenswelt</i> The phenomena of conscience as a window to ultimate values for moral and political philosophy, i.e. Hobbes’ ‘<i>in foro interno</i>’, <i>Leviathan</i> (Norton), p. 70 and pp. 87–88 The notion that secular society and humanism are built on human values in an attempt to articulate human right action <i>as human good</i> rather than being moved by Divine Command 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) The idea that the Good Society must be built on/protect human values</p>

Week	Key teaching points
6–9	<p>Unit content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the idea of the common good, and of public good criteria for a good society the concepts of justice, fairness, liberty, equality, rights and tolerance the concepts of social policy, social planning and public goods the idea of a social contract and its forms the idea of social responsibility the concept of marginalisation moral theories in ethical decision making, including utilitarianism and deontology obligations to the non-human world, including environmental ethics and animal rights <p>Task 3: Philosophical analysis and evaluation (passage)</p> <p>Key teaching points</p> <p>The Good Society and the idea of the Common Good</p> <p>Aristotle’s notion that humans are rational, social and procedural animals, that is humans must have reasons, must live socially, must have procedures and processes for peace and security</p> <p>Criteria for a good society, e.g. communication, security, education, health and welfare, parenting, and agreed decision-making processes and procedures</p> <p>The idea of the social contract based on key points from Rousseau (general will), Locke (the state of nature), Hobbes (sovereignty and the sacrifice of some liberty, the state of nature)</p> <p>Rawls’ ‘the veil of ignorance’ thought-experiment and its emphasis on marginalisation, social responsibility and fair/agreed decision making or justice</p> <p>Fair and agreed decision making or justice as due process and the fit/conflict with moral theories such as utilitarianism/deontology when considering the Common Good</p> <p>The rights of animals in the social contract (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? Do humans have a moral obligation to protect animals, i.e. animal welfare versus animal rights?)</p> <p>The concepts of intrinsic value and extrinsic value in terms of morally right action toward the non-human world (animals and the environment)</p>
10–11	<p>Unit content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the concepts of socialism, liberalism and libertarianism the concept of liberal democracy and its forms the values of liberal democracy the concepts of utopia and dystopia in works of imagination the idea that different cultures have different moral points of view <p>Key teaching points</p> <p>The concept of liberalism as political philosophy and a moral way of life</p> <p>The distinction between socialism and liberalism as competing modern political philosophies</p> <p>The difference between liberalism and libertarianism</p> <p>Democracy as a participative process in the life of the state/polis (the idea of a socialist democracy versus a liberal democracy)</p> <p>The concept of a republic and the idea of the peoples’ self-determination</p> <p>The concept of utopia as an idealised social contract and political philosophy (Thomas More’s Utopia as an idealised liberal social contract; Plato’s Republic as an idealised socialist social contract)</p> <p>Culture, political philosophy and the moral point of view</p> <p>Rawl’s ‘veil of ignorance’ as an example of a political philosophy and a moral point of view shaped by an American liberal and capitalist cultural context (inequality in terms of outcomes is fair so long as there is an equality of opportunity)</p>

Week	Key teaching points
12–14	<p>Unit content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the scientific method, including falsification, the role of thought-experiment, deduction, induction and the problem of induction • the method of sceptical doubt in philosophical inquiry • various relationships between science and society, including the assumption that the scientific method is the dominant paradigm for knowing and understanding reality • the applicability of scientific studies for understanding human beings and their societies <p>Task 4: Construction of argument</p> <p>Key teaching points</p> <p>Empiricism and the scientific method in epistemology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the role of the experiment • the ideas of explanatory power, scope and evidence • the role of probability <p>Are thought experiments the same as scientific experiments?</p> <p>The difference between correspondence theories of truth and coherence theories of truth</p> <p>Deduction and the idea of innate knowledge versus induction and the idea of the <i>tabula rasa</i></p> <p>The problem of pure reason, i.e. not anchored in sensory experience</p> <p>The problem of induction, i.e. observed events are not the observed set of events</p> <p>Methodological scepticism and its role in establishing truth</p> <p>The preoccupation with science in the modern world</p> <p>Explanatory power of the scientific method in the social and pseudo sciences, i.e. psychology</p> <p>Note: A philosophical understanding of the scientific method and its applicability to the human search for meaning is an important theme in Unit 4 where science and religion are considered with regard to reason and meaning.</p>
15	<p>Task 5: Semester 1 Examination</p>

Semester 2 – Unit 4 – Reason and meaning

Week	Key teaching points
1–2	<p>Unit content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 evaluating complex arguments – premise acceptability, inferential strength and cogency identifying, combining and rewriting difficult propositions in arguments commensurate to their function as premises and conclusions the role of complex sentences, conditionals and connectives in argument – if/then; and; but; or exploring more fallacies, including the definist fallacy, post hoc ergo propter hoc, non sequitur, slippery slope fallacy and confusion of correlation and causation distinguishing between analytic and synthetic statements <p>Task 6: Critical reasoning</p> <p>Key teaching points</p> <p>Rewriting statements formally where necessary (replacing pronouns and/or demonstratives with the appropriate noun or noun phrase, using square brackets to indicate the insertion)</p> <p>The four kinds of inferential moves and their potential combinations</p> <p>Analysing and mapping examples of complex arguments</p> <p>Constructing and mapping examples of arguments</p> <p>What to do with conditionals and connectives when bracketing statements and numbering</p> <p>Evaluating the acceptability of statements as premises and/or conclusions (acceptable, conditionally acceptable, not acceptable)</p> <p>Evaluating inferential strength as either nil, weak, moderate, strong or deductively valid</p> <p>Cogency as a product of premise acceptability and inferential strength</p> <p>Identifying and constructing analytic and synthetic statements</p> <p>Identifying and constructing informal fallacies</p> <p>Identifying and evaluating informal fallacies</p> <p>Note: One period per week for the rest of the semester will be used to practise skills/concepts.</p>
3–5	<p>Unit content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ideas of death and the meaning of life the concepts of citizenship, civic involvement, the public sphere and meaningful lives the ideas of faith, belief, knowledge, reason and meaning, and their interrelationships religious and non-religious ideas of the meaning of life the concept of authenticity types of inquiry: existentialism <p>Task 7: Philosophical analysis and evaluation (dialogue)</p> <p>Key teaching points</p> <p>The idea of death and life’s purpose</p> <p>Humans as rational, social and procedural animals (Aristotle) and the need for meaningful lives</p> <p>The concept of the social contract and its relationship to human values and natural rights as an example of the meaningful life (civics and citizenship or public life upholds human values and natural rights through civil society and the law)</p> <p>Typical views on the meaning of life and their connection to human nature and its values</p> <p>Existentialism and authenticity, i.e. meaningful life is not ‘bad faith’ (Sartre)</p> <p>Kant’s essay ‘What is Enlightenment?’ (a meaningful life is the life of reason rather than the shackles or dogma of tradition)</p>

Week	Key teaching points
6–7	<p>Unit content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • religion as an interpretation of religious and mystical experiences • theories of knowledge, including empiricism, rationalism and intuitionism • ideas of the divine • the concept of theism • theism and the problem of evil <p>Task 8: Philosophical analysis and evaluation (passage)</p> <p>Key teaching points</p> <p>The distinction between religion (a structured, contractual institution), religious experience and mystical experience</p> <p>Religious/mystical experience as veridical experience (St Theresa of Avila)</p> <p>Theories of knowledge and their relationship to religious/mystical experience, i.e. is the mystical/religious experience of the divine an empirical experience? Is there a religious method of knowing as there is a scientific method?</p> <p>The concept of theism and its forms (monotheism, polytheism, pantheism, panentheism, immanence, transcendence)</p> <p>The ideas of the divine and the arguments for the existence of God</p> <p>Paley’s argument from design and modern versions of intelligent design/creationism</p> <p>The logical problem of evil and the evidential problem of evil</p>
8–11	<p>Unit content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the relationship between evolution and religion • the concepts of naturalism, materialism, atheism and agnosticism • the comparison between religious experience and scientific ‘experience’ • Darwin’s theory of evolution as an example of scientific theorising • the possibility of misinterpretation with regard to religion and scientific methodologies <p>Task 9: Construction of argument</p> <p>Key teaching points</p> <p>Design and order or order but no design, i.e. a mindless process</p> <p>Natural selection as blind order, i.e. the blind watch maker</p> <p>Evolution as a natural system and the idea of irreducible complexity</p> <p>Evolution/natural selection and atheism, i.e. can natural selection support an atheistic morality?</p> <p>Can natural selection help reveal the meaning of life or meaningful lives? Can natural selection help humans attain the goods of human life, i.e. <i>eudaimonia</i>?</p> <p>How applicable is the theory of natural selection to human moral life and can it offer a credible alternative to a religious explanation of meaningful lives?</p> <p>Is ‘Darwinian’ atheism a credible critique of creationism only? That is, creationism misappropriates the scientific method to make claims about the existence of God, i.e. bad science</p> <p>Can ‘Darwinian’ atheism justifiably critique mainstream religions about their explanations of the meaningful life offered to their adherents if no reference to the scientific method is made?</p>

Week	Key teaching points
12–14	<p>Unit content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the absolutist claim that moral standards, values and rules apply in all cultures the relativist claim that moral standards, values and rules are right for one culture, but not another ethical issues of life and death – murder, manslaughter, killing in war, abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment and the killing of animals <p>Key teaching points</p> <p>The distinction between moral absolutism and moral relativism</p> <p>The wrongness of murder as an example of a value/rule that applies in all cultures, i.e. murder as a morally wrong act that threatens peace and security in the social contract, if permitted</p> <p>Human values and natural rights as markers of expectation for human universal moral standards</p> <p>Cultural examples of different instantiations of the same human values and their degrees of acceptability, i.e. killing in self-defence versus honour killings as instantiations of the human value for justice</p> <p>Due process and permissible capital punishment (murder, manslaughter)</p> <p>Due process and permissible killing? Just war theory (a procedural form of acceptable killing), euthanasia (the Groningen Protocol), abortion, the humane killing of animals as instrumental value for human use and consumption</p>
15	<p>Task 10: Semester 2 Examination</p>