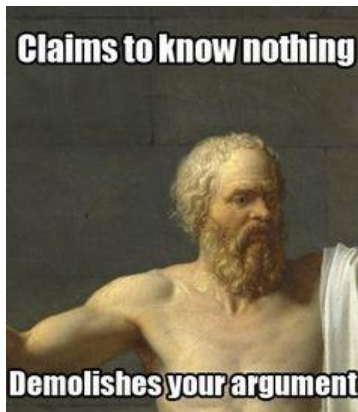


PHILOSOPHY 200 Hour

(The Examined Life)

This course has been written specifically for our girls and endorsed by the Department of Education as a Stage 5 course that contributes to a RoSA. The course can be taken as a 200 hour elective on the X and Y lines or a 100 hour elective on the Z line. Both courses focus on teaching students the skills to be better critical, creative and collaborative thinkers. They are both practical courses in thinking skills. Their main differences are outlined below.



"The unexamined life is not worth living" (Socrates).

Students at North Sydney Girls High School are exceptionally articulate and intelligent. They are, by nature, deeply curious about the world around them. They often ask searching questions that transcend the borders of conventional subject areas. They are not content to master content knowledge for its own sake, but hunger for a more fundamental understanding - the 'bigger picture' of how that knowledge is justified and what it all means. This course is designed to address that hunger. It challenges these gifted students to examine their own assumptions and to critique the received wisdom of their society.

Academically gifted students are naturally thoughtful – this course is designed to give them the tools and skills they need to 'think well', that is, clearly, critically and creatively. It seeks to develop a capacity for sound and informed judgement, by training students in the techniques of argumentation and critical reasoning. It confronts students with authentic ethical, social and political dilemmas and challenges them to formulate consistent and rational solutions. It asks them to experiment with ideas and to express themselves in innovative and unconventional ways.

North Sydney Girls' High School students often have a strong social conscience and a desire to 'make a difference' in their community. Accordingly, this course is designed to equip students with the "21st century skills" essential for active citizenship in today's complex global society. By teaching students to think more flexibly and analytically, the philosophy course encourages a more tolerant and open-minded disposition and a willingness to challenge majority prejudices. By immersing students in a culture of respectful debate and collective inquiry, it instils a capacity for collaboration and communication around complex conceptual problems.

Our school community has identified "an individual's contribution to the community" as one of the keystones of our school *ethos*. The students who have taken this course 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 change it for the better. They have consistently remarked that their broader framework of meaning provided in philosophy has enriched their learning across all subjects and deepened their understanding of the connections subjects have with each other and with the real world.

The course deals with everyday philosophical issues encountered in law, politics, medicine, science, business, and all areas of human endeavour. Our students tell us it is excellent preparation for study in the senior school and university. Some sections of the course are based on Harvard University's political philosophy program and the general level of academic rigor is high.

In their study of philosophy, the students tell us, they come to see themselves as 'practical philosophers', who accept the challenge of leading an 'examined life'. As such, this course will help them take responsibility for the ethical and practical commitments which will shape their decisions as citizens, decision makers and leaders of the future.

There are 8 units of study:

1. Thinking Outside the Box

In this module we focus on the relationship between Science and Philosophy. We also look at the development of Western Philosophy from the time of the Pre-Socratics.

2. Ontology: Time and Mind

In this module, students will be encouraged to question, in some depth, aspects of reality which they may previously have taken for granted. To this end, they will be introduced to two key problems in ontology (the branch of philosophy devoted to questioning the nature of existence), namely:

- Does Time Exist?; and
- What is the Nature of Consciousness?

3. Critical Reasoning 1: Communities of Inquiry

This module provides a systematic introduction to the basic philosophical skills of logic, argumentation and critical reasoning. Explicit training in these skills is provided in the context of guided debate on one 'big question' from each of the following three domains:

- Epistemology/Theory of Knowledge
- Metaphysics and Ontology
- Value Theory

4. Epistemology: In the Matrix

This module is focused on questions of epistemology: what we can know, how we can know it and what counts as reliable knowledge. It is structured around a study of the classic science fiction film, *The Matrix*, into the plot of which several key questions in metaphysics and the philosophy of knowledge are woven.

5. Personal Values - Ethics (The Good Life)

This unit is designed to deepen students' understanding of the major traditions in moral philosophy, through a survey of different theories about the links between human nature, social conduct, freedom and happiness. This survey will be structured as a comparative evaluation of three different philosophical answers to the question, "What is the Good Life?"

6. Political Philosophy - The Just Society.

This unit builds upon the previous unit's study of ethics at the individual level, by inviting the students to apply their ethical understanding to the social sphere, using scenario-based learning to focus the difficulties involved in applying normative ethics to complex fields of application.

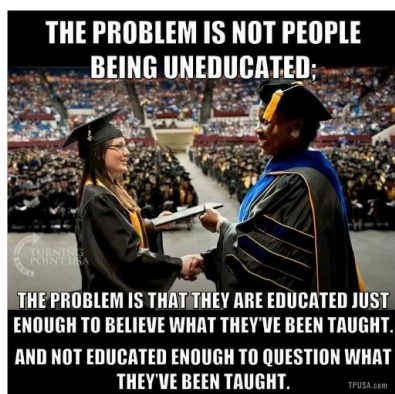
7. Critical Reasoning 2: Philosothon!

This module is designed to reinforce and extend the critical reasoning skills established in Module 3. As in that unit, explicit training in aspects of critical reasoning will be provided in the context of guided debate on one 'big question' from each of the following three domains:

- Epistemology/Theory of Knowledge
- Metaphysics and Ontology
- Value Theory

8. Telos - Developing a Personal Philosophy

In this module, the students will work independently, with regular one-to-one support from teachers and careful scaffolding, to synthesise their learning over the whole of the course and to construct an extended written or multimedia response in answer to the question "What is My Telos?"



The best way to determine whether Philosophy is an elective that you will enjoy and find thought provoking is to talk to any student in Years 9 or 10 who is currently studying it – or ask Mr Henshaw for more detail.

