

wyke

6TH FORM COLLEGE

Planning on starting A level Philosophy, Ethics and Religious Studies (PERS) next year?

PERS is a great subject to help you build a wide range of skills, including improving your skills as a writer, speaker and thinker.

Even though you haven't been able to finish your Year 11 course this year, you can still practice and develop PERS skills at home. You can read, watch and listen to interesting ideas and think about the opinions expressed. How far do they match your own views? What might someone say if they had a very different opinion? Keep up your writing skills by putting your ideas down on paper – try, if you can, to handwrite, just to keep up the practice of handwriting so that your writing isn't completely illegible by the time you go back to school.

Reading good quality writing is the best way of improving your own writing. As you read a good writer, you will gain a better understanding of the meanings of new words and the ways in which carefully chosen words and punctuation can add real emphasis to someone's argument. Different writers express themselves in different ways, and by reading them you will develop your own 'voice'. Reading also helps with more basic skills such as spelling, because if you see a word written down often enough, you will know when it 'looks right' when you write the same word yourself.

Thinking skills can be developed if you try to take a questioning attitude to the things you watch, hear and read. Do you agree with what's being said? If you watch a film where people have different attitudes towards something, which do you agree with most, or least, and why?

How to get prepared

As well as the official transition work, I have also included activities and exercises below for you to have a go at to help you get as prepared as you can for A Level Philosophy, Ethics and Religious Studies. Please do not feel like you need to do any or all of these activities – they're just a suggestion to help get you thinking and keep the brain ticking over. Whereas the transition work about the challenge of secularization is important as it allows me to assess

where you all are as you start the course, these activities here are just some suggestions in case you're looking for things to do during the lockdown.

Films and TV

All kinds of films and series have philosophical and religious ideas in them, so follow your own interests! You could try these, or choose something else, but try and use them as a stimulus for thinking and writing, rather than just sitting in front of them:

- The Good Place
- The Matrix
- Unorthodox
- Twelve Angry Men

TED talks

These are usually wonderful, with plenty to stimulate your questioning and reasoning skills.

Some favourites:

- Elizabeth Loftus – how reliable is your memory?
- Dan Gilbert – why we make bad decisions
- Richard Dawkins – militant atheism
- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie – We should all be feminists
- Damon Horowitz – Philosophy in prison

There are loads of talks on here, so use the search engine to find topics that interest you. Practise note-taking; write notes as you listen, just as you would if you were listening to a real-life lecture, and practise the skill of jotting down key points at speed. Ask yourself questions when you get to the end: what were the speaker's key messages? Do you agree with the speaker? What might someone who disagreed say, and what might their reasons be?

Books:

- **The Puzzle of ... by Peter Vardy:** this series of non-fiction books is about issues in religion and philosophy, very readable and you don't have to be an expert to enjoy them. You can dip in and out of different chapters rather than having to start at the beginning and work through to the end.
- **The Pig That Wants To Be Eaten and 99 Other Thought Experiments by Julian Baggini:** Is it right to eat a pig that wants to be eaten? Are you really reading this book cover, or are you in a simulation? If God is all-powerful, could he create a square circle? Here are 100

of the most intriguing thought experiments from the history of philosophy and ideas - questions to leave you inspired, informed and scratching your head, dumbfounded.

- **50 Philosophy Ideas You Really Need to Know by Ben Dupré:** a series of accessible and engaging essays, this book introduces and explains the problems of knowledge, consciousness, identity, ethics, belief, justice and aesthetics that have troubled the minds of great thinkers for centuries, from the ancient Greeks to the present day.
- **Think: A Compelling Introduction to Philosophy by Simon Blackburn:** This book is about the big questions in life: knowledge, consciousness, fate, God, truth, goodness, justice. Each chapter explains a major issue, and gives a self-contained guide through the problems that philosophers have studied.

These suggestions are only a few of the very many available, so don't worry if you can't get hold of these specific titles.

Online resources

The Philosophy Man - thephilosophyman.com

This website gives you lots of different ideas to think about. Some are for younger children but you could try the 'brain squeezers'. These are good if you don't have too much time, or if you're finding it difficult to settle to anything more concentrated.

Philosophers Magazine – philosophersmag.com

Try the games on this website, and read the commentaries that go with them. Lots to think about!

