**Read Me!**

Welcome to the Department of Philosophy—we’re very pleased that you are joining us, and we look forward to meeting you. We hope you enjoy your time at York and that you find your course stimulating and rewarding.

This handbook explains what you need to know about beginning to study Philosophy at York. Read it carefully, keep it safe, and refer back to it; you’ll need to refer to it several times during your first year (the information is available online on the Department’s web-pages, together with other useful information, but it will be handy to have a copy of this).

Some of you will be coming to Philosophy for the first time. For nearly all of you, studying at university will be very different from the work you have done at school or college. I can’t emphasise too strongly just *how* different it is. We expect you to take responsibility for your own ideas and your own progress, to become an independent scholar and thinker, not just to absorb what we tell you and report it back to us. But that is why university study is so rewarding: you have the opportunity to really *think* and work out your ideas, and it is our job to support you in doing that. It is not easy to think carefully about difficult topics, but by the end of the three years you spend here you will have a set of skills which will not only allow you to engage with interesting philosophical debates, but are also applicable to all sorts of other work and areas of life.

To succeed you will have to be disciplined and self-motivated, manage your time effectively, think critically and carefully, and *use* what you learn to develop answers to new problems and work out your own position on philosophical issues. This is an exciting process, and the work you do in your first year will help you make the transition from school to university successfully. The rest of this booklet covers:

 **•** Things to know and do before you arrive at York

 **•** **Your first week at University (Key dates and times for Week 1)**

 **•** Studying philosophy at York

 **•** Your course requirements

 **•** Your first year modules

We’ll see you soon!



**Dr Chris Jay**

**Director of the First Year Programme**

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# Things to know and do before you arrive

How can you prepare for your first term? This section makes some suggestions to help you get into the swing.

## Information

The [University Welcome](https://www.york.ac.uk/students/new/) page has lots of information about becoming a student at York. It will guide you through the various things you need to do before you arrive, and provides a link to your timetable of welcome and orientation events.

It also tells you how to upgrade your IT account. Once you’ve done this, you can access pages on the University’s [Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)](https://vle.york.ac.uk/). Here you’ll find a number of modules to support your studies. Some of these will not be available until teaching begins.

The *Academic Integrity Tutorial* is compulsory for all students. It explains the rules about plagiarism, referencing etc. which the University enforces. Again, you do not have to start it before term begins, but you may want to do so once it becomes available; it will not take you long to complete.

You can [find out more about the University](https://www.york.ac.uk/) from the website, and [more about the Philosophy Department](https://www.york.ac.uk/philosophy/). Take a look at these before you arrive at York; the departmental pages [*About Us*](https://www.york.ac.uk/philosophy/about/), and [*For Current Students*](https://www.york.ac.uk/philosophy/current/) will be most useful to you.

The Department has its own [Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/PhilosophyYorkUK). There is also a [student-run Philosophy Society](https://www.facebook.com/yorkphilosophysoc).

See the University of York [Students’ Union webpage](https://yusu.org/) for Facebook pages and Twitter feeds giving information about Freshers Week events.

## Communication

We will normally communicate with you via your university e-mail account, so it is really important that you check this regularly once your course starts—at least once each weekday during term. Don’t forget to check it regularly outside of term time too, as otherwise you might miss important information.

## People

You can find out more about the [Department’s staff from our webpage.](https://www.york.ac.uk/philosophy/staff/) There are some people you will meet soon after you arrive:

### Your supervisor:

You will be allocated a supervisor, a member of academic staff who will be a constantly available point of contact with the Department during your time at York. You’ll meet with them at the start of each term to review your progress and talk through any problems. The relationship with your supervisor is very important: they are your first point of contact if you have any problems, need advice or want to discuss course options. The best way to contact your supervisor quickly is by e-mail (e-mail addresses are given on the About Us pages of the Department’s website), but you can also telephone or visit them during their Feedback and Advice Time (aka Office Hour). This is a time each academic sets aside every week to see students (to give advice or guidance, answer questions, discuss problems or just talk philosophy). We’ll be pleased to see you at Feedback and Advice sessions—you don’t need to make an appointment. Each academic will set a regular Feedback and Advice time at the beginning of each term—you’ll find details on our office doors, on a list in the Department reception area and on our website.

### Your module leaders and tutors:

Each module is led by a member of academic staff who gives the lectures and is responsible for module administration. In the first year they are assisted by seminar tutors who are carefully selected and trained research students. Module leaders and tutors will be happy to see you during their Feedback and Advice Times. Note that the best ways to contact academics are by email or by dropping in to a Feedback and Advice (Office Hour) session.

### Director of the First Year Programme:

The first year of your course is particularly important in helping you get settled into university life and work, so there is a member of staff who oversees the first year as a whole. This is currently Dr Chris Jay, who can be contacted at christoper.jay@york.ac.uk Chris’s office is Sally Baldwin A/111, upstairs next to the photocopier.

### The departmental office and administrative staff:

The Philosophy Department is based in Sally Baldwin Buildings, Block A, and most staff have offices here. Unless it is open for teaching or other events, the building is only accessible from 9.00am–5.00pm.

The Departmental Office is on the ground floor, next to the front door. Here you will find our administrative staff, Carol Dixon, Karen Norris and Andzelika Skarupa-McShane. The Departmental Office is open for enquiries Monday to Friday, 10.00 am to 12.30 pm and 1.30 pm to 4.00 pm. *Please keep to these times.* Here are the contact details:

Department of Philosophy

University of York

Heslington

York Y010 5DD

Tel: 01904 323251

E-mail: philosophy@york.ac.uk

### The Philosophy Society:

York is lucky to have a very active student-run Philosophy Society, and joining the Society is an excellent way of meeting other students and pursuing your philosophical interests outside the seminar room. They’re a friendly bunch and organise social events, film shows, talks and discussions. Join their Facebook group (see above) and meet them at our welcome events and/or the Freshers’ Fair.

## Preparing to study

The best way of studying philosophy is by *doing* it, not by learning *about* it, and this means reading (and thinking hard about) works of philosophy. There are some very good ‘Introductions…’ or ‘Guides…’ but they are never a substitute for the real thing. As Bertrand Russell put it: ‘The student who wishes to acquire an elementary knowledge of philosophy will find it both easier and more profitable to read some of the works of the great philosophers than to attempt to derive an all-round view from handbooks’. You can find some suggestions for things to read to get your philosophical brain warmed up in [Summer Reading Suggestions](https://www.york.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/subjects/philosophy/philosophy-reading/).

# Your first week at university

The first week of Semester 1 (‘Freshers Week’) is Monday 18th September to Sunday 24th September (overseas students will arrive a little earlier). When you’ve upgraded your IT account and enrolled online, you will be able to see your timetable for Welcome and Orientation Events (see the [University’s Welcome page](https://www.york.ac.uk/students/new/)). You will receive information about department-specific events at the start of Semester 1.

## Important things to do during Freshers Week:

### Meet your supervisor:

You will be allocated an academic supervisor when you register, and you should attend an introductory meeting with him or her in Freshers Week. We’ll be in touch with you to tell you when this will be.

### Complete the online *Academic Integrity* tutorial:

This is a University requirement. You must have completed this module (available mid-September at [Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)](https://vle.york.ac.uk/).) before you can submit any written work. Why not do it as soon as possible? It will only take an hour or so.

### Find out about the Library:

Even if you think you know all about libraries please visit their ‘[new users](https://www.york.ac.uk/library/visit/new-students/)’ page, and make sure you also visit the real thing! (Also, look out for a library skills session on your timetable in Semester 1.)

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### Check your timetable and your module requirements:

Check your [online timetable](https://timetable.york.ac.uk/schedule) and read the *Your first year modules* section below.

### College events:

The Head of each college will hold welcome events for new students.

### Medical registration:

Ensure that you register with a GP. See the University pagesfor details of [health centre](https://www.york.ac.uk/students/health/) registration.

### Collect your University card:

This acts as your ID, room access, library and printing card — so it matters. Collect yours from college reception if you’re living on campus, or from the Unicard desk in the Information Centre otherwise.

### YUSU (the Students’ Union):

See [University Student union website](https://www.york.ac.uk/study/student-life/yusu/) and their [freshers' site](https://freshers.yusu.org/) for information on Students’ Union activities, and join their official freshers’ Facebook group

### International students:

See the University *Welcome* page for ‘blue box’ information [specifically for international students](https://www.york.ac.uk/students/new/international/).

# Studying philosophy at York

Philosophy is not a subject where you will be asked to memorise and repeat a lot of material. The main aim of the course is to equip you to think seriously and independently about major philosophical questions, to understand what is involved in these questions, and to form and defend your own answers to them.

These questions are always difficult, and you usually have to think hard about them for a while to understand them. Don’t expect to pick things up on a first reading. Since philosophy involves questions which are sometimes more complex than they appear at first, and ideas which require careful reflection, you will find that a lot of your course involves private study — reading and thinking on your own. But it is also important that you learn to discuss philosophical ideas orally and in writing. You’ll probably find that explaining to others what you think and trying to support it with arguments lets you see where an idea needs work, or helps you to an insight which changes your view. You’ll do this formally in seminars and written work and, we hope, in informal discussions with other philosophy students.

Your course is made up of distinct units or *modules*, which each run for one semester. The first year consists of certain set modules. In your second year you choose from various modules representing different areas of philosophy. This will give you a foundation which you can build on in your third year where you will have a further choice of modules.

## Seminars and tutorials

An essential part of our teaching, seminars/tutorials are regular structured meetings with other students and a tutor to discuss some specific module material. Preparation is essential to make the most of these opportunities. Seminars give you the chance to develop your skills by discussing ideas with others: presenting ideas clearly, forming and evaluating arguments, listening carefully to others and working together to develop and deepen your understanding. Often, students feel that they cannot contribute to a seminar unless they are absolutely certain that what they think is correct. This is a mistake: we can only have a productive discussion if people are willing to contribute, and someone who is prepared to put forward an idea helps everyone to clarify their own thoughts. Seminars are not about always being right, or winning an argument, but about working together to develop your skills and understanding.

## Lectures

Most modules supplement seminars and tutorials with formal lectures. Lectures are not like classroom teaching; they aim to give you an introduction to the subject under discussion, and stimulate you to think harder about it by raising questions and possible lines of criticism for you to reflect on. But they will not tell you all that you need to know; instead, they introduce key ideas and arguments, and you should think of them as guiding and supporting your own reading and thinking about a subject.

All classes (lectures and seminars) are compulsory, and you must give an acceptable explanation (illness or other compassionate circumstances) for any unavoidable seminar absences. This is a basic courtesy to your seminar tutor and fellow seminar members (although your reason for absence will not be shared with other students).

## Private Study

You will find that you have about three to ten hours per week of formally scheduled teaching in philosophy, depending on your particular degree programme. This may not seem like very much but *each teaching (or ‘contact’) hour should be backed up by significant periods of private study* (reading, note-taking, essay preparation and *thinking*). University teaching and learning is very different from school or college learning: contact hours are *intensive* — they should be used to develop and refine ideas you’ve already started to form in advance. To make the most of seminars and lectures you’ll need plenty of time to prepare and to reflect after discussion.

Use your private study time carefully and systematically: read and think hard about the topics studied and also record your ideas in writing, building up structured notes. This will help your understanding (you may think you understand a topic, but try writing about it… !); and of course it is good preparation for writing essays and examination answers.

## Working Together

You will get to know and work with other students in various contexts: most formally in seminars; but you will be encouraged to develop less formal working relationships, too. A ‘critical friend’ is someone (one of your immediate peers, i.e. a member of your own cohort, or someone in a different year) you are comfortable talking to and with whom you can discuss philosophy. The mutual benefits of critical friendship are numerous: amongst other things, critical friends act as sounding boards for each other’s ideas and arguments, help each other to formulate those ideas and arguments orally and in writing, build strong independent working habits (working together on ideas, rather than relying on what lecturers or tutors say), and help you to feel part of an intellectual community rather than just an individual working away in isolation. Philosophy is all about exchanging and challenging ideas, and nobody reaches their full potential in the discipline without talking to others about what they are working on – professional philosophers do it almost constantly, and you should get into the habit of doing it early on.

## Feedback and Advice Times (Office Hours)

All of your lecturers and seminar tutors will have Feedback and Advice hours. You should use these to supplement your private study. If there is something you are struggling with, you can go along to one of these sessions to work with your lecturer or seminar tutor one-to-one. You should not only use these opportunities when the time comes to write an essay; you should also use them throughout the module – these are some of the most useful contact times you will have, because you get to set the agenda and talk about what *you* find most interesting or difficult in the module. These are also great opportunities to try out ideas and talk philosophy – they’re not just a resource for when you are stuck!

## IT use

There are computer rooms across the campus. We will usually communicate with you via e-mail to your university account, so check that account regularly.

All your written work must be word-processed and you’ll be submitting work online, so you need at least these basic IT skills. You can find details of the [IT training](https://www.york.ac.uk/students/computing/) available for students.

## Your written work

Writing philosophy well does not come easily; it is a skill that everyone has to learn, and even experienced philosophers find it hard at times. You will do some work on philosophy-specific writing skills in Semester 1.

The important things are to write *clearly* and to *argue* for *a particular answer* to the question you have been set, explaining carefully why you think this is correct. Unless you have specifically been asked to do so, do not just report what another writer has said, or describe all the possible answers to the question. Don’t be woolly, or try to sound profound at the cost of clarity. You should argue for a firm conclusion. In the first year you will receive written feedback on all your essays, and in some cases tutors will offer you a tutorial to discuss their comments. *Always* take these opportunities to learn. But please don’t think of written work as something that you do only for assessment: practising writing clearly and accurately is an essential part of your private study. You might find it useful, for example, to write up your notes at the end of each week into a short essay on the topic covered.

At a more basic level, make sure that you understand the words you use, that your writing is grammatical, and that your spelling is correct. This may seem obvious, but it is important to get these basic points right, and your tutors will mark your work down if it is full of errors. If you know or suspect that you have a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, contact the [Disability Support Office](https://www.york.ac.uk/students/support/disability/) so that we can ensure that you receive appropriate advice and support.

##

**Submitting written work**

We have rules about submitting written work, which you must follow. These are to help us mark and give feedback on the work, to ensure fairness and to prevent cheating. Be sure to come back to this section once you have work to submit:

* Your essays should always be word-processed (there are computer rooms across campus if you do not have your own computer). **Back up your work, and keep an electronic copy of the final version in a cloud storage system, on an external hard drive or on a memory stick – this is essential (not least because failure of IT equipment is not an acceptable reason for submitting work late).**
* On non-assessed (‘formative’) work, include **your name** and that of **the seminar tutor** for whom you have written the work. Assessed (‘summative’) work is marked anonymously, so give your **examination number** (from your ID card) but **not** your name or the tutor’s name.
* **Keep within the upper word limit** set for the work. For instance, if you are asked to write ‘two 1,500–2,000 word essays’ the upper word limit for each essay is 2,000 words. If you over-run the word limit, you will be penalized, as follows:

| **Over-run of** | **Penalty applied**  |
| --- | --- |
| 0-10% of upper word limit | 5 marks deducted  |
| 10-20% of upper word limit | 10 marks deducted |
| 20-30% of upper word limit | 15 marks deducted |
| 30-40% of upper word limit | 20 marks deducted |
| 40-50% of upper word limit | 25 marks deducted |

(Longer over-runs will be penalized on the same pattern, with 5 further marks deducted as each 10% band is passed until the mark for the essay is zero.)

* **Include a word count:** Every submitted essay must declare the number of words it contains (its ‘word count’) at the top of the first page. Essays which do not carry a word count will not be accepted until one is added. Unless you’re told otherwise, the word count is the total number of words an essay contains excluding only the bibliography. *All* other text must be included in the word count. This includes any quotations, footnotes, notes and appendices.

If you declare a word count that exceeds the word limit you will be penalized, as above. If we think that the word count is inaccurate, we will check your essay; in addition we may select some essays for random checking.

If we need to check an essay we will ask you for an electronic version in Microsoft Word. Where an essay is over length and declares a word count that understates its true length, you will have to submit electronic copies of all assessed essays submitted for that and subsequent deadlines.

* **All quotations from or use of other writers’ work must be properly referenced**. We prefer you to use the ‘Harvard’ or ‘MLA’ referencing systems, which is explained at the [University’s *Academic Integrity*](https://www.york.ac.uk/students/studying/skills/integrity/) site.
* Include **a list of references** at the end of your essay. This must include all those works that you have referred to in your essay, presented in alphabetical order of author’s surname.
* **Avoid plagiarism:** Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of the words and/or ideas of others, whether from books, online material, other students’ work or any other source. ***Plagiarism is a serious offence***, since it undermines learning and assessment by allowing the plagiarist to present him/herself as having skills and knowledge s/he probably lacks. It’s cheating, it’s easy to detect, and ***if you plagiarise the consequences for your degree can be very serious indeed***. Fortunately plagiarism is also easy to avoid, by taking care over referencing and reference lists. The online *Academic Integrity Tutorial* explains more.
* **Meet deadlines**. You will be told the deadlines applying to any written work, and you must meet them (make sure you know the *time* as well as the *date* of the deadline: in Philosophy, deadlines are always **12 noon** on the deadline date; *other departments have different deadline times, though*). If you will be unable to submit a summative (assessed) assessment on time, and this is for reasons to do with genuinely exceptional circumstances, you can apply for an extension using the [Exceptional Circumstances affecting Assessment (ECA) procedure](https://www.york.ac.uk/philosophy/current/exceptional-circumstances/). Please note that these applications should be made *before* the deadline, and that (aside from the self certification provisions explained at the site linked to) applications will be assessed on the basis of evidence provided, and might not be granted. Please read the policy carefully. We will not grant extensions for quite trivial, predictable or avoidable reasons, e.g. computer breakdown (you should be backing up your work), late nights, sporting fixtures, forgetfulness or holidays.

Tutors are not obliged to give feedback on formative work which is submitted late. Summative work which is submitted late without valid exceptional circumstances will have 10 marks (or 10% of the highest possible mark, where the work is not marked out of 100) deducted for each day or part of a day that it is late, up to a total of five days *including weekends and bank holidays*. For example, if your work is awarded a mark of 57/100 but is up to one day late, the final mark is 47. Work more than five days late is marked at zero.

## Beyond your course

Make the most of your time at university. You are unlikely ever again to have the same opportunities to develop your skills, try out new activities or build your confidence by taking on new responsibilities. This is all part of learning and developing, and it will count when you finally head out into the world looking for work (sorry to raise this delicate topic, but the time will come). Be realistic and don’t over-commit yourself, but do look for positive and worthwhile ways of using your time outside your course. The University offers *The York Award* to recognize students’ training and achievements in areas beyond their formal study. You can find out more about it on [York Award](https://www.york.ac.uk/students/work-volunteering-careers/skills/york-award/) pages.

# Programme Learning Outcomes

Work on your degree is designed to help you towards a range of ‘Programme Learning Outcomes’ (PLOs) specific to your degree programme. What does that mean? Simply that by the end of your degree, if you have participated fully, you should have certain skills and be able to do certain things. The Programme Learning Outcomes for single subject Philosophy are listed below; joint (‘combined honours’) degrees involving philosophy each have their own set of Programme Learning Outcomes, but since they involve substantial philosophy components these will contain at least some PLOs closely related to those for single subject Philosophy, especially the 'core' Philosophy PLOs 1 to 4.

By the end of the degree, single subject Philosophy students should be able to:

1. Understand and explain key problems, issues, and debates across a wide range of areas of philosophy and its history—including some at the forefront of contemporary work—and communicate complex and difficult ideas in clear, precise, and accessible terms in a variety of formats

1. Develop and articulate ranges of alternative solutions to problems and issues in an open-minded and imaginative way, and establish ways of making progress in answering questions even where it is unclear in the first instance how to proceed or what the standards for a good answer to the question might be

1. Develop and articulate systematic, logical arguments for and against the alternative solutions considered in relation to a particular problem, subjecting key concepts and principles to critical scrutiny and presenting the best case that can be made for each proposal

1. Make a measured judgement about what is the best view on a particular problem and present a sustained line of argument in defence of this judgement based on careful consideration of what can be said for and against the proposed solutions

1. Work effectively and productively as a thinker and learner, individually and in collaboration with others—planning and scheduling, seeking help where appropriate, initiating and pursuing projects, and working collaboratively with others in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding

1. Amend and develop their practice as thinkers and learners in the light of critical reflection, advice, and feedback—identifying their strengths and weaknesses, and developing strategies for making improvements in performance

1. Demonstrate informed sensitivity to cultural and historical context in interpreting and responding to the work and ideas of others
2. Critically engage with social, political, cultural, ethical, and value issues to contribute to the solution of key contemporary problems by applying philosophical methods and insights

Joint degree students will develop similar abilities through the philosophy component of their degree programme.

Remember that in your first year you will be starting your journey towards acquiring these abilities. They are the Programme Learning *Outcomes*, so you should not expect to be able to do these things to a high level at the end of your first year. Work in your first year is organised with these desired outcomes in mind, but as you progress the work we ask you to do will change as you become more able and confident.

# Your course requirements

## The modular structure: assessment and progression

All degree courses at York are organised into modules, and students normally gain 20 credits for each module successfully completed, reflecting the work required. You must take 120 credits in each year; joint honours students obtain some of their credits from Philosophy modules and some from their other subject.

Each module is assessed by essays, by formal examination, by both or (in the case of an element of Beginning Philosophical Research) by presentation or (in the case of the second year Philosophy and Society module) by podcast, and you need to pass enough of these assessments to pass the modules, accumulate the 120 credits and progress to the next stage of your programme. So, although marks from your first year Philosophy modules do not count towards your final degree classification, your first year performance must be satisfactory in order for you to progress to the second year.

The pass mark for each module is 40. If you badly fail a module assessment (below 30) you will have to be reassessed, but there is a limit to the amount of reassessment allowed. Reassessment normally takes place in York in August. If you marginally fail a module (30–39), you may not need to be reassessed if your overall performance for the year is good enough to compensate. Again, there is a limit to the amount of compensation which is allowed.

For a guide to the University’s progression rules, see the *Guide to Progression and Final Degree Classification*, under ‘[Assessment guides](https://www.york.ac.uk/philosophy/current/undergraduate/assessment/)’.

You will get results and feedback regularly throughout the year, and will be formally notified by the end of July whether you have completed the first year satisfactorily, or need to be reassessed in any module. If you are at all concerned about your progress, please speak to your supervisor as soon as possible—they are there to help.

## Exceptional circumstances

You should keep your supervisor informed of any issues affecting your work, especially if you think that your performance in assessment may be affected by *exceptional circumstances*. The University defines a mitigating circumstance as a problem that you have encountered which goes beyond the normal difficulties experienced in life and which has affected your academic performance adversely during the assessment period for which you are claiming.

You notify the department of exceptional circumstances by submitting an Exceptional Circumstances Claim Form by the appropriate deadline. Details will remain confidential and will be disclosed only to those considering or administering the claim. A successful claim will not change your mark, but sometimes means that you can be reassessed in a module ‘as if for the first time’

See details of the [exceptional circumstances policy, the claim form and the departmental deadlines for claims](https://www.york.ac.uk/philosophy/current/exceptional-circumstances/).

## Your first year modules

Which modules you study in your first year depends on which degree course you are taking. The requirements for each course are outlined below, and the modules are described in the next section.

**ADD LINKS TO PROGRAMME SITES**

# First year modules

The Philosophy modules running in your 1st year are listed and briefly described below. You will not take *all* of these modules, though: to see which modules are part of your particular programme, you can check your e:vision account or look at the relevant course page:

[Single Subject Philosophy](https://www.york.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/courses/ba-philosophy/#course-content)

[Philosophy with Sociology](https://www.york.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/courses/ba-philosophy-sociology/#course-content)

[Philosophy & Linguistics](https://www.york.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/courses/ba-philosophy-linguistics/#course-content)

[Language, Logic & Communication](https://www.york.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/courses/bsc-language-logic-communication/#course-content)

[Philosophy with Languages & Cultures](https://www.york.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/courses/search?q=Philosophy+with+Languages+and+Cultures&level=undergraduate)

[Mathematics & Philosophy](https://www.york.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/courses/ba-bsc-mathematics-philosophy/)

[Physics with Philosophy](https://www.york.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/courses/bsc-physics-philosophy/#course-content)

[History & Philosophy](https://www.york.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/courses/ba-history-philosophy/#course-content)

[English & Philosophy](https://www.york.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/courses/ba-english-philosophy/#course-content)

[BSc PPE](https://www.york.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/courses/bsc-philosophy-politics-economics-ppe/#course-content)

[BA PPE](https://www.york.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/courses/ba-philosophy-politics-economics-ppe/#course-content)

[Philosophy & Politics](https://www.york.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/courses/ba-philosophy-politics/#course-content)

[Economics & Philosophy](https://www.york.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/courses/ba-economics-philosophy/#course-content)

Your module activities will also show up on your timetable for each semester.

## Semester 1

### Philosophical Analysis

This module has two main aims: it introduces you to various aspects of how *arguments* work, and their purposes; and it also gives you plenty of practice and support in the *close reading of texts*, to work out what they are saying (before, of course, trying to decide whether what they are saying is correct - partly by analysing the arguments they are presenting). Lectures will provide background context for the texts you are reading closely in seminars, and explain various aspects of informal argumentation theory. In the seminars, you will be using what has been explained in the lectures to help you interpret and understand the set texts. You will then be expected to critically evaluate the arguments and ideas you find in them.

### Knowledge & Perception

This module introduces some fundamental issues in epistemology (the theory of knowledge). In the first part of the module we will consider what knowledge is. In the second part, we will explore some philosophical puzzles and problems about ways of acquiring knowledge, including perception.

### Power & Consent

Who has power over you, and have you consented to that? A state has great power over its citizens. It can enforce its laws and punish those who disobey. Some political philosophers have thought that people’s consent is required to make this political power legitimate. But can consent make power legitimate, and if so, what kind of consent can do that? Beyond the state’s power, what are the limits to what we can consent to between individuals? And how do existing power relations between people complicate the validity of consent in various contexts? We will investigate these questions over the course of the module, in order to shed light on the complicated relationship between power and consent.

## Semester 2

### Reason & Argument

As a philosopher, you'll need to be able to tell good arguments from bad. In this module, you will study one of the most important ways for an argument to be good: an argument is **valid** if, but only if, it is impossible for its premises to be true and its conclusion to be false. You will learn how to take arguments written in ordinary English, and symbolise them in formal languages that better reveal their logical forms. Then you will learn how to test these formal arguments for validity. Along the way, you'll be introduced to a host of key logical concepts that are used in all branches of philosophy.

### Ethics

This module involves considering some of the following questions: Is morality subjective or objective? (Hard question? Some forms of subjectivism, the view that morality has to do with how we feel about things, are, it turns out, quite objective.) Should you help more people rather than fewer? (Many think that’s an easy question to answer. It is not.) What on earth is axiology? Why might lotteries be a splendid idea for distributing resources? (Aristotle knew, and evolutionary psychology shows, how important fairness is.) Is every moral theory a form of consequentialism? (Answer: No, but it takes work to figure out why not.) Why should one fly less and buy less even if one’s contribution makes no difference whatsoever? (After all, you must fly an awful lot (on your private jet plane) to actually make a difference to global warming.) What does philosophy have to say about climate change? (If we can’t solve the so-called Non-Identity Problem, there won’t be much wrong with leaving a depleted and overheating planet to the next generations; however, we know it is wrong, very wrong, so we had better tackle this problem!) Is it okay to kill animals in their millions or billions? (After all, as Cora Diamond says, we are at the table and they are on the table.) It’s not the aim of this module to change the world; we need to understand it. No (or at most little) repeat of A-level material. Independent thinking required. A genuine interest in understanding ethical issues a plus.

### Free Will

Free will is the idea that we have a certain kind of control over our actions, that when we do something, we could have done otherwise. This idea seems practically very important, but theoretically fragile. If we are not free, our lives make no sense. But there seems to be good reason to think we are not free. In this module, we investigate the problem of free will, and we use it as a jumping off point for some of the most fundamental questions in philosophy, including questions in metaphysics, ethics and about the nature of philosophy.

### Beginning Philosophical Research

This module involves more independent study. In one part of it, you will conduct your own research into the ideas of a particular philosopher of your choice (from an approved list), supported by a member of academic staff who will be assigned to meet with you to discuss your progress and direct you. The culmination of this research will be a poster presentation. The other part of the module involves a series of one-off topic lectures introducing you to ideas in philosophy which you might not come across in your other modules, giving you a sense of the range of the subject, and perhaps some ideas about where you might like to take your studies when you have choices to make between modules in Years 2 and 3. For this part of the module, you will be expected to write an essay on the ideas from *one* of these lectures (it’s your choice which topic you write about).