

## **Optional Course: Philosophy**

### **1. General Principles**

#### **1.1. Learning and Educational Objectives**

The aim of the upper secondary school optional Philosophy course is to guide students to:

- 1) recognize philosophical questions, be aware of their different solutions and understand the nature of philosophy as a field;
- 2) form correct lines of reasoning, think about those of others and apply techniques of philosophical thinking while doing so;
- 3) think about philosophical questions connected to science and ways of knowing as well as human and social values following their own experience;
- 4) characterize periods of history of philosophy according to the most important approaches, concepts and thinkers; and
- 5) think about their knowing, perceiving and valuing side in the light of the things studied during the course.

#### **1.2. Description of the optional course**

In the first philosophy course, 'Introduction to Philosophical Thought', the emphasis is on practicing philosophical reasoning modes. The second course, 'Questions of Modern Philosophy', reinforces the basic skills acquired during the first course, paying attention to the philosophical approach to ways of knowing, values, society and environment. Passing the first course is a requirement for participating in the second course because it is assumed that the student will have basic skills in philosophical thinking.

The main focus of Philosophy is to examine discussion topics about philosophical questions through tools of philosophical thinking and, in the course of this, give an overview of philosophy as a field of study. The course consists of three main areas:

- 1) philosophy as a field of study;
- 2) philosophical thinking; and
- 3) discussion topics about philosophical questions.

These main areas take up about the same amount of time in the course.

In the framework of philosophy studies, the concepts, areas, branches and history of philosophy and philosophy's role in the sciences are discussed. The techniques of philosophy are practised through their correct application in spoken and written form. The discussion topics include philosophical questions about ways of knowing, values, society and environment. The course is based on findings from the academic field of research in philosophy, which are presented in a simplified and didactic way in the form that is most useful.

The discussion topics are integrated with specific knowledge of other subjects and with students' general

experience of knowledge. When discussing values, studies are integrated with subjects that involve ethical issues and ethical questions concerning students. When discussing society and the environment, studies are integrated primarily with social and nature subjects, as well as with locally relevant issues of the living environment.

Examining the topics specific to the area of study is not a goal in itself for the subject but the main emphasis is on preparing for the discussion topics of courses and acquiring the general intellectual background necessary for studying philosophy. Students study the concepts and approaches that are necessary for discussing the philosophical questions of the discussion topics and which are important for understanding the meaning of the area of study.

In the framework of the topics specific to the area of study, primary knowledge is acquired about the periods of history of philosophy and the lines of thought that characterize them. Studying the history of philosophy through lines of thought means focusing on the thoughts characteristic of certain periods, how they changed and what their role in the history of philosophy was.

The discussion of the subject field of philosophy is integrated with appropriate topics from other subjects, establishing associations with philosophical topics and other areas of science and life. The study of philosophical thought is integrated with subjects that promote development of spoken and/or written reasoning and self-expression skills. Philosophical thought shares important elements with the modes of reasoning in sciences, as well as with general self-expression skills taught in linguistic subjects.

**Philosophical reasoning.** The central role of reasoning is a specific trait of philosophy studies. Consequently, spoken and written exercises to practice philosophical reasoning are an essential part of this subject. Philosophical reasoning is practiced in spoken and written reflection through argumentation and interpretation. The aim is to learn how to apply reasoning techniques in a correct manner in free philosophical reflection and when working with philosophical texts. The modes of philosophical reasoning can be learned through the study of basic terminology and practical techniques of reasoning.

Good practice is expressed in an appropriate attitude towards philosophical discussion, including a serious attitude towards arguments and a respectful attitude towards those who present them, respecting the reader and the listener, expressing the thoughts in an understandable way and being open to discussion and critique. The principal endeavour of philosophical discussion is thinking about concepts and ideas. In thinking about them the aim is to use arguments according to different philosophical premises and approaches. In discussions about philosophical viewpoints students must not merely express opinions: their opinions must always be based on something and they should be ready to give reasons for them. Elementary techniques of critical thinking and philosophical interpretation are used.

**Topics for reflection on philosophical issues.** The main part of the subject is focused on elaboration of philosophical issues, included in the subject syllabus, using methods of philosophical reasoning. Philosophical questions are based on modes of knowledge, values and social and environmental sustainability. The study of reasoning consists of theoretical and practical parts. The theoretical part entails a gradual presentation of the concepts and approaches required for discussion of different topics. Previous experiences of students are taken into account when selecting and elaborating on specific questions for reflection.

### **1.3. Planning and Organisation of Learning Activities**

Students have to assume a predominantly active role in lessons in order to develop their reflection skills and independent reasoning ability. The teacher, like the students, plays an inquiring, questioning and studying (and at the same time errant) role, but is an authority who gives advice, judgements and directions drawing on broader knowledge and developed skills.

The task of students is to learn to apply techniques of philosophical thinking in a knowledgeable way. They express and explain their personal views and those acquired in the classroom and try at the same time to be philosophically correct and consistent. The teacher gives feedback on students' endeavours during the course and gives advice and directions for later studies.

In addition to leading discussions and introducing concepts and approaches, the task of the teacher is to support the identity of the students and the shaping of their worldviews. Therefore, the teacher may not prevail with personal views. The teacher must also introduce opposing positions and give students the chance to give reasons or develop their own personal viewpoints.

Lines of thought may be rearranged between the first or second course if necessary in order to better organize the studies. Lines of thought may be modified in relation to the choice of discussion topics.

#### **1.4. Physical learning environment**

The school:

- 1) arranges the majority of the studies in a classroom, where it is possible to rearrange the furniture for group work and round-table discussion;
- 2) arranges the carrying out of work which requires a computer and Internet connection in a classroom that has at least one computer per two students; and
- 3) provides students with access to thematic literature that supports the aims of the national curriculum.

#### **1.5. Basis for Assessment**

Assessment is based on respective provisions of the general part of the national curriculum for upper secondary schools. Detailed assessment procedures are specified in the school curriculum. The main purpose of assessment is to support students' development in shaping a positive self-concept and adequate self-assessment, with students' role in assessment recognised as being important by providing opportunities for self-assessment. Diverse forms of testing and assessment of learning outcomes should be used. The objective of testing and assessing learning outcomes is to receive an overview of the level of attainment of learning outcomes and development of students in the subject, and to use this information for more productive planning of studies. Students have to be informed about what and when is going to be assessed, which assessment tools and criteria will be used. Diverse forms of verifying and assessing learning outcomes should be used.

In philosophy, assessment focuses on the specific skills that are developed particularly through philosophical studies, i.e., understanding and developing philosophical reasoning, applying different modes of philosophical reasoning, explaining the meaning of philosophical concepts and using them in context. The assignments to be assessed are designed to develop creativity and independent reasoning, but require systematic use of philosophical concepts and reasoning techniques. Formative assessment plays an important role in philosophy due to the need to provide feedback on the reasoning modes. Summarising grading is secondary in philosophical studies and is suitable only for establishment of an adequate level of attainment. Using an assignment to write an essay is advisable as a form of assessment. The essays should be prepared in stages to enable combining methods of formative assessment and summarising grading. When reviewing essays, assessment should focus on reflection skills, while mastery and originality of writing are of secondary importance. Compliance with basic rules of native language orthography and composition is a strict requirement for philosophical essays.

## **2. Course plans**

### **2.1. Learning Outcomes at the Upper Secondary School Level**

At the end of the upper secondary school, students will be able to:

- 1) describe the structure of the area of the subject of philosophy and its most important concepts and discuss the role of philosophy in today's world;
- 2) characterize some of the most important approaches, concepts and thinkers from the history of philosophy and associate them with periods of the history of philosophy;
- 3) apply some of the most important techniques of critical thinking and philosophical interpretation in philosophical discussion;
- 4) apply good practice in philosophical discussion in seminars, thinking about feasible sources and texts and writing essays;
- 5) discuss philosophical questions in relation to ways of knowing and being scientific, building on the knowledge acquired and their own experience;
- 6) discuss philosophical questions in relation to values and the way they function, building on the knowledge acquired and their own experience;
- 7) discuss philosophical questions in relation to society and environment, building on the knowledge acquired and their own experience; and
- 8) acknowledge their own capacity for independent thought and decision-making and use this quality in discussing philosophical questions.

### **2.2. Course: 'Introduction to Philosophical Thought'**

#### **The Area of Study of Philosophy**

The aim of the first course specific theme of study is to give an elementary overview of the area of study of philosophy and the approaches characteristic of it. The theme forms one third of the volume of the course.

#### **Learning outcomes**

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

- 1) describe the area of study of philosophy and the philosophical approach, distinguishing it from that of the sciences and other areas of life;
- 2) distinguish between the different areas of philosophy and discuss issues characteristic of them; and
- 3) describe the periods of the history of philosophy in terms of the approaches, concepts and thinkers characteristic of them.

#### **Learning content**

Areas of philosophy. Philosophical questions and their specificities. Periods of the history of philosophy. Philosophical questions and areas characteristic of the periods and (exemplary) philosophers who posed these questions and examined these areas.

The beginnings of philosophical thinking and its meaning. The role of thinking and philosophy in a person's life, culture and history. Philosophy and science, religion, literature and life.

Important concepts, lines of thought and philosophers as well as the arguments characteristic of them related to philosophical thinking and the discussion topics examined.

Lines of thought examined in the course:

- 1) philosophy of antiquity and the formation of philosophical thinking;
- 2) philosophy of the Middle Ages and the application of thinking in the service of religion;
- 3) philosophy of the Early Modern Era and the birth of experimental natural science;
- 4) philosophy of the Early Modern Era and the rise of the individual/subject; and

- 5) philosophy of the Early Modern Era and the thinking of the Enlightenment.

Lines of thought may be rearranged between the first or second course if necessary in order to better organize the studies. Lines of thought may be modified in relation to the choice of discussion topics.

### **Philosophical thinking**

The aim of philosophical thinking is to introduce the language characteristic of philosophy, study the necessary terminology and practise its use. Philosophical thinking is practised through the use of the study content of central discussion topics. Philosophical thinking comprises around half of the course load.

### **Learning outcomes**

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

- 1) identify some of the most important terms of the techniques of discussion and interpretation and notice where these are applied in philosophical discussion;
- 2) independently compose simple statements, definitions and arguments and think them through using tools of critical thinking;
- 3) identify good practice in philosophical discussion and notice where this is applied in reading, speaking, debating and writing;
- 4) form correct philosophical questions and discuss the answers, remaining on the level of philosophical discussion and following rules of argumentation; and
- 5) read philosophical texts and compose simple philosophical essays under supervision.

### **Learning content**

Language. Language of science, natural language and language of philosophy.

Sentence, resolution, statement and argument. Concept and definition. Premise and hidden premise. Deduction, correctness and truthfulness. Validity of argument. Interpretation and context. Reasoning and explanation. Harmony and contradiction. Meaning and truth.

Question, philosophical question and correctness of questions. Argumentation and rhetoric. Good practice in philosophical discussion. Thinking and expression. Essay-writing.

### **Discussion topics about philosophical questions**

The aim of discussion topics about philosophical questions is primarily to practise philosophical thinking. The more detailed and systematic examination of these questions can form part of the second course. If desired, the first course may focus more thoroughly on just one discussion topic and take part of the study content from the second course for this purpose. In that case, what is left out will need to be covered in the second course. The discussion topics comprise around a quarter of the course load.

### **Learning outcomes**

At the end of the course, students:

- 1) discuss simple philosophical questions, ways of knowing, values, society and environment, distinguishing philosophical discussion from regular discussion; and
- 2) value philosophical discussion and its results, but with an awareness of the relativity of the results, including their connection to different approaches and basic premises.

### **Learning content**

Ways of knowing. Nature of knowing and theory of perception. Differentiation between knowledge and ways of perception. Relation between knowledge and belief and justification. Relations with subjects and areas of life.

Values and normative systems (morality, religion and law). Nature of values and axiology. Values and action. Difference between value and fact. Universality and relativity of values.

Society and environment. Nature of justice. Philosophy of society, politics and environment. Relation between society and environment. Arrangement of society and living environment.

## **2.3. Course: 'Questions of Modern Philosophy'**

### **Learning Outcomes and Learning Content**

#### **The area of study of philosophy**

The aim of the second course that is specific to the area of study is the interpretation of the history of thinking provided by the area of study of philosophy in greater depth and to think through the different roles of philosophy in the modern world. This comprises around a third of the course.

#### **Learning outcomes**

At the end of the course, the students will be able to:

- 1) think through the different roles of philosophy in the modern world, building on the knowledge acquired about the branches and schools of philosophy and the corresponding applied fields;
- 2) characterize the most important approaches belonging to the classics of the history of philosophy and turning points in the history of concepts and ideas; and
- 3) characterize the periods of philosophy in terms of the approaches, concepts and thinkers belonging to them.

#### **Learning content**

Branches of philosophy. Analytical and continental philosophy. Application of philosophy in sciences and other areas of life. Contemporary philosophy.

History of concepts. Conceptual changes characteristic of the history of philosophy, corresponding lines of thought and the philosophers and theories that represent them.

Important concepts, lines of thought and philosophers with their characteristic arguments connected to the discussion topics examined.

Lines of thought examined in the course:

- 1) the historical roots of contemporary knowledge and understanding of science;
- 2) important contemporary approaches to science;
- 3) important contemporary theories of ethics;
- 4) important contemporary trends in human philosophy; and
- 5) basic viewpoints on important contemporary philosophy of society and philosophy of environment.

#### **Philosophical thinking**

The aim of philosophical thinking in the second course is to deepen the knowledge and skills acquired in the first course and, in addition, for students to familiarize themselves with the main principles of formalizing arguments and interpreting source texts. This comprises around a quarter of the course.

#### **Learning outcomes**

At the end of the course, the students will be able to:

- 1) apply techniques of critical thinking and philosophical interpretation in philosophical discussion; and
- 2) apply good practice in philosophical discussion during participation in seminars, thinking about source text and compiling essays.

#### **Learning content**

Formalization. Example of formalized language and its use.

Interpretation and the hermeneutical circle.

Reading source texts. Holding a seminar.

#### **Discussion topics about philosophical questions**

In the second course, the systematic approach to discussion topics is already a goal in itself and is achieved on

the basis of the techniques of philosophical thinking acquired in the first course. The discussion topics are examined philosophically and broadly, in connection with the lines of thought of the history of philosophy. Depending on the school or class, the proportions of discussion topics can be changed. The examination of discussion topics comprises around half of the course.

### **Learning outcomes**

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

- 1) discuss philosophical questions about ways of knowing and being scientific, employing the elementary vocabulary of theories of perception and science and drawing on their own experience;
- 2) discuss philosophical questions, values and the way they work, employing the elementary vocabulary of the study of values and drawing on their own experience;
- 3) discuss questions of the philosophy of society and environment, employing the elementary vocabulary of the philosophy of society and environment and drawing on their own experience; and
- 4) acknowledge their role as active thinkers in thinking about the areas of life and science, questions of value and questions of society and environment and discuss the philosophical nature of this role.

### **Learning content**

Ways of knowing. Theories of truth (compatibility and harmony theory, pragmatic theory and truth minimalism). Scientific method. Development of scientific knowledge (hypothesis, experiment and theory). Science and technology and the engineering sciences. Induction and deduction. Branches of science and their forms of perception. Humanities, social science and the natural sciences. Pseudo-science. Subjectivity, intersubjectivity and objectivity. Fact and opinion.

Values. Theories of ethics (following obligation, consequence and virtues). Normativity and descriptiveness (metaethics and normative ethics). Benefit and obligation. Pluralism and tolerance. Value relativism and absolutism. Nature of value judgements and treatment of human beings. Benefit and enjoyment.

Society and environment. Philosophical theories of society. Definitions of freedom. Holism and individualism. Development and society. Philosophy of environment. Anthropocentrism and question of moral community. Anarchism and utopia.