

Optional themes and the prescribed text

IB DP Philosophy optional themes and prescribed text full package

1. Themes and text at a glance

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IB Philosophy optional themes (SL one, HL two, from seven) and the prescribed text: ethics and epistemology kitted in depth here, the other five compactly, and the fourfold read for whichever classic the school chose.

Must-know: ethics' three-way debate (consequentialism, deontology, virtue ethics, each with its burden); JTB and Gettier; rationalism vs empiricism with Kant; the definition of art; the arguments for God and the problem of evil; induction, falsification, paradigms; contract, liberty, Rawls vs Nozick; the social self with Marx and de Beauvoir.

2. Ethics and epistemology

Ethics and epistemology

Ethics: consequentialism judges by outcomes (utilitarian arithmetic - power and burden: the tyranny cases); deontology by duty (the categorical imperative - burden: conflicting duties); virtue ethics by character (the phronimos - burden: guidance vagueness). Applied issues run three ways.

Epistemology: knowledge as justified true belief, broken by Gettier's stopped clock (luck between justification and truth); responses - no false lemmas, reliabilism, virtue epistemology. Rationalism against empiricism with Kant's synthesis; skepticism as the stress-test (the demon, the vat).

3. The other five themes

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Aesthetics: the definition of art (imitation, expression, form, institution) and disinterested pleasure with Hume's standard of taste. Religion: the ontological, cosmological and teleological arguments with their objections; the problem of evil, logical and evidential, with the free-will and soul-making replies.

Science: Hume's induction problem, Popper's falsification, Kuhn's paradigms and theory-ladenness, realism vs anti-realism. Political: the contract debate, negative and positive liberty with Mill's harm principle, Rawls's veil against Nozick's entitlement. Social: the social self, Marx's alienation, de Beauvoir's othering.

4. The prescribed text

The prescribed text

The text is read philosophically, not literarily: CONTEXT (the question the text answers), CLAIMS (its positions in its own terms), ARGUMENTS (reconstructed with the core craft - premises, conclusions, suppressed premises), CRITIQUE (objections developed and the text's best reply).

Worked: Meditation I - the foundational context; the doubt's escalation (senses, dreaming, demon); the deceiver argument reconstructed; the critique (hyperbolic doubt charges science more than common life; the cogito's reply assumes the self the doubt questioned).

Check yourself

Check yourself

Ethics' three theories with signature burdens; one issue run three ways.

JTB and Gettier with one response; rationalism vs empiricism with Kant; skepticism as stress-test.

The five compact themes' anchor pairs (definition/attitude; arguments/evil; induction/paradigms; contract/liberty/justice; social self/alienation/othering).

The fourfold read with the worked Meditation example.