VCE Philosophy

Prescribed texts for 2023

The following texts are prescribed for the *VCE Philosophy Study Design 2019–2024* and are referred to in the study design as set texts.

The editions listed below will be used by the examination panel in setting the 2023 VCE Philosophy examination. Teachers need to ensure that students are familiar with these editions.

The prescribed texts can be sourced from major booksellers, including online and academic new and second-hand booksellers, or directly from the publisher.

Note: The 2023 set texts are the same as for the 2022 list.

Unit 3 – Minds, bodies and persons

Area of Study 1 – Minds and bodies

Descartes, René 2017, *Descartes: Meditations on First Philosophy: With Selections from the Objections and Replies*, 2nd edn, ed. and trans. John Cottingham, Cambridge University Press. ‘First Meditation’, ‘Second Meditation’, and ‘Sixth Meditation’ pp. 61–2 extract ‘First, I know that everything which I clearly and distinctly understand … And accordingly, it is certain that I am really distinct from my body, and can exist without it’. ISBN: 978-1-107-66573-6.

Nagel, Thomas 1974, ‘What is it like to be a bat?’, *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 83, no. 4, pp. 435–50. JSTOR stable URL: [www.jstor.org/stable/2183914](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2183914).

Smart, JJC 1959, ‘Sensations and brain processes’, *The Philosophical Review*, vol. 68, no. 2, pp. 141–56. JSTOR stable URL: [www.jstor.org/stable/2182164](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2182164). Extracts: pp. 141–3, ‘Suppose that I report that I have at this moment … there are no philosophical arguments which compel us to be dualists’; pp. 144–8, ‘Why should not sensations just be brain processes … If the meaning of an expression were what the expression named, then of course it *would* follow from the fact that “sensation” and “brain-process” have different meanings that they cannot name one and the same thing’; pp. 150–2 ‘*Objection 4* … So we have adopted a rule of language that (normally) what Smith says goes’; pp. 155–6 ‘I have now considered … as the irreducible facts about the paleontology of the earth with which we are faced on Philip Gosse’s theory’.

Area of Study 2 – Personal identity

Hume, David 1985, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book I, Part IV, Section VI, Penguin Classics, Penguin Books. Two extracts: pp. 299–304 ‘There are some philosophers … and are apt to imagine, that ’tis nothing but a continu’d survey of the same object’ and pp. 306–11 ‘We now proceed to explain the nature of *personal identity* … and to proceed in the accurate anatomy of human nature, having fully explain’d the nature of our judgment and understanding’. ISBN: 978-0-140-43244-2.

Locke, John 2008, ‘Of Identity and Diversity’ (Chapter 27), *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, in John Perry (ed.), Chapter 2 ‘John Locke: *Of Identity and Diversity*’, *Personal Identity*, 2nd edn, University of California Press. Sections 8 ‘An animal is living, organized body … the supposition of a rational parrot’, 9–11, 14–15, 17–20, 22 and 26. ISBN: 978-0-520-25642-2.

Michaels, Meredith 2016, ‘On “Personal Identity”’ in Robert C Solomon, Kathleen M Higgins & Clancy Martin, *Introducing Philosophy: A Text with Integrated Readings*, 11th edn, Oxford University Press, pp. 392–5. ISBN: 978-0-19-020945-2.

Unit 4 – The good life

Area of Study 1 – Conceptions of the good life

Aristotle 2009, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. David Ross, ed. Lesley Brow, Oxford World’s Classics, Oxford University Press, Book I Chapters 1–5 and 7–8 and Book II. ISBN: 978-0-19-921361-0.

Nietzsche, Friedrich 2003, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. RJ Hollingdale, Penguin Classics, Penguin Books, Sections 199, 201, 203, 225, 228, 260 and 284. ISBN:  978-0-140-44923-5.

Plato 2008, *Gorgias*, trans. Robin Waterfield, Oxford World’s Classics, Oxford University Press, 480a–509c. ISBN: 978-0-19-954032-7.

Wolf, Susan 2012, *Meaning in Life and Why It Matters*, Princeton University Press, Chapter 1 ‘Meaning in Life’, pp. 1–33. ISBN: 978-0-691-15450-3.

Area of Study 2 – Living the good life in the twenty-first century

Schools must provide philosophical sources for Unit 4 Area of Study 2.

These philosophical sources should include the set texts for Unit 4 Area of Study 1.

Schools should also provide additional philosophical sources beyond these set texts to support development of the key knowledge and key skills.