

## Philosophy Suggested Reading

Do we act freely? How do we construct just political states? What is it to know something rather than merely believe it? Philosophy (from an Ancient Greek word meaning 'love of wisdom') is the study of fundamental questions of reality, morality, language, reason, the mind, and much more. What distinguishes it from other disciplines is the emphasis on a critical and systematic approach and a reliance on rational argument. The study of Philosophy is an excellent training for a variety of careers. You will learn to think critically, analyse arguments, and understand their hidden assumptions. This will enable you to produce well-constructed arguments of your own, and express them clearly both verbally and on paper. The skills you will gain from studying Philosophy are highly transferable, both within other academic disciplines and, later on, in fields as varied as journalism, politics, business, law, the arts, and medicine.

We have put together some suggestions below to help you start exploring Philosophy but the key to enjoying a subject and getting the most out of it is to follow your nose and look into what interests you. Starting with something more general and then asking yourself 'What do I want to know more about?' will help guide you towards reading which you will find interesting.

1. **Think** by Simon Blackburn is an accessible introduction to philosophy which argues for its continued relevance to the way we live. The book covers the major thinkers and big questions, while giving you the tools to take your exploration further. Another very good introduction to the subject is Thomas Nagel's **What does it all mean?**
2. Bertrand Russell's **The Problems of Philosophy**, available on Project Gutenberg (<http://www.gutenberg.org/>) is a classic, but accessible, text from the Nobel Prize winning philosopher and author.
3. The **Very Short Introduction** series is excellent and includes titles on a lot of the big names in philosophy – Nietzsche, Kant, Schopenhauer, Plato, and Descartes among others.
4. There is a podcast series called **Philosophy Bites** available on iTunes. Almost all of them are good so pick what grabs you.
5. The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy <http://plato.stanford.edu/> is a great tool to use for reference – the Wikipedia of Philosophy.
6. Slavoj Zizek is a contemporary philosopher and a real intellectual powerhouse. This is a short animated video he made with the RSA, but it is worth investigating his other work: <http://www.thersa.org/events/rसानimate/animate/rसानimate-first-as-tragedy,-then-as-farce>.

### Ethics

Ethics is a great place to start in your exploration of Philosophy as it has a lot of immediate relevance to our day to day lives. The BBC has some good introductory material on Ethical theory, and relates it to key contemporary issues such as abortion, contraception, lying and torture:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/introduction/>.