**Preparing for A level – Study Support Pack: Summer 2022**



**Subject: Philosophy**

The aim of this pack is to help you bridge the gap between GCSE and A level. It is specific to one of the many A level subjects that are taught at The Bedford Sixth Form and we encourage you to work through all the relevant packs for the subjects that you would like to study.

www.bedfordsixthform.ac.uk

**A Level Philosophy Year 11 Bridging the Gap**

*Welcome, year 11! This is your ‘Bridging the Gap’ task for A level Philosophy, which you’ve chosen to take at A level this September. The pack is designed to give you a flavour of what A level Philosophy is all about. The pack will introduce you to some core philosophical ideas and theories, to aid your understanding of politics ready for sixth form. The work in these packs will take a long time, so you can break it up. Don’t feel you need to complete it all in one go! You can complete the tasks in this booklet in the spaces provided or on a separate piece of paper.*

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| **A Level course outline** | | | |
| **Year 12: Epistemology** | **Year 12: Moral Philosophy** | **Year 13: Metaphysics of God** | **Year 13: Metaphysics of Mind** |
| What is knowledge? | Normative ethical theories | Concept and nature of God | What do we mean by mind? |
| Perception as a source of knowledge | Applied Ethics | Arguments relating to God’s existence | Dualist theories |
| Reason as a source of knowledge | Meta-ethics | Problem of Evil | Physicalist theories |
| The limits of knowledge |  | Religious language | Functionalism |

Useful resources

The philosophy department would love for you to use this time over the coming weeks and months to get interested and immersed in philosophy. The following are suggestions, are not compulsory, but we would love for you to engage in any that you find interesting.

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| Books | C:\Users\noconnor.T0362\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.MSO\6586677.tmpC:\Users\noconnor.T0362\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.MSO\E123AEFB.tmpC:\Users\noconnor.T0362\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.MSO\EBEA153F.tmpC:\Users\noconnor.T0362\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.MSO\F8C85D43.tmpFront CoverSophie's World |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Useful academic essays:  • Descartes, Meditations [pdf online]  • Bertrand Russell, A History of Western Philosophy [1996] [pdf online]  • Bertrand Russell, The Problems of Philosophy [pdf online]  • John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding [pdf online] |

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| Theatre | C:\Users\noconnor.T0362\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.MSO\4FA88D6D.tmpThe Matrix - WikipediaA.I. Artificial Intelligence movie review (2001) | Roger EbertEternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind [DVD] [2004]: Amazon.co.uk ...The Good Place - Rotten Tomatoes |

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| Headphones | • https://www.philosophersmag.com/games • philosophybites.com/  • feministphilosophers.wordpress.com/  • Philosophypages.com  • alevelphilosophy.co.uk/ | * BBC: In our TIme |

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| Open book clipart silhouette symbol icon design Vector Image | • AQA A-level Philosophy Year 1 and AS: Epistemology and Moral Philosophy: by Jeremy Hayward, Gerald Jones, Dan Cardinal. | • My Revision Notes: AQA A-level Philosophy Paper 1 Epistemology and Moral Philosophy: by Jeremy Hayward, Gerald Jones, Dan Cardinal. |

Task One: What is Philosophy?

*“The unexamined life is not worth living.”*

*Socrates*

Quite literally, the term "philosophy" means, "love of wisdom." In a broad sense, philosophy is an activity people undertake when they seek to understand fundamental truths about themselves, the world in which they live, and their relationships to the world and to each other. As an academic discipline philosophy is much the same. Those who study philosophy are perpetually engaged in asking, answering, and arguing for their answers to life’s most basic questions.

Your first task is to help you garner an understanding of what Philosophy is really all about. Use the internet (e.g. Wikipedia, YouTube and other sources) to research and understand what the following key terms mean and create a short definition for each *in your own words*.

You are welcome to try to get your families involved in this – they may have some understanding of these concepts already! The most important thing in an A level is *your understanding* – so it’s not about having the “right” or “word-perfect” definition, it’s about you *understanding* what a concept means ☺

**Total marks: 20**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Term** | **Explanation** |
| Epistemology |  |
| Ethics |  |
| Analytic argument |  |
| Synthetic argument |  |
| A priori |  |
| A posteriori |  |
| Necessary truth |  |
| Contingent truth |  |
| Tautology |  |
| Paradox |  |
| Proof |  |
| Antecedent |  |
| False |  |
| Objective |  |
| Syllogism |  |

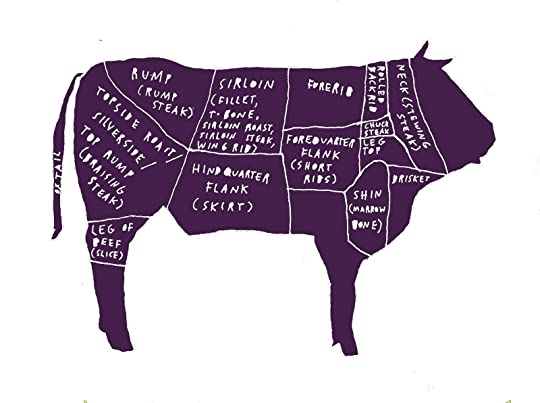
Task Two: Debates

Philosophy is a subject that is guaranteed to get you thinking. Whether this be introducing you to entirely new concepts or giving you different takes on issues you thought you knew, your brain will be working.

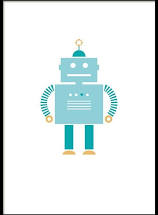
Below there will be two debate topics. If you can, discuss them with your family or friends, but make sure you write down your answer to the questions giving your reasoning. Then we would like you to read the brief articles by the academics. Finally go back to your original answer and see if your view has been changed. Make a note of any new developments.

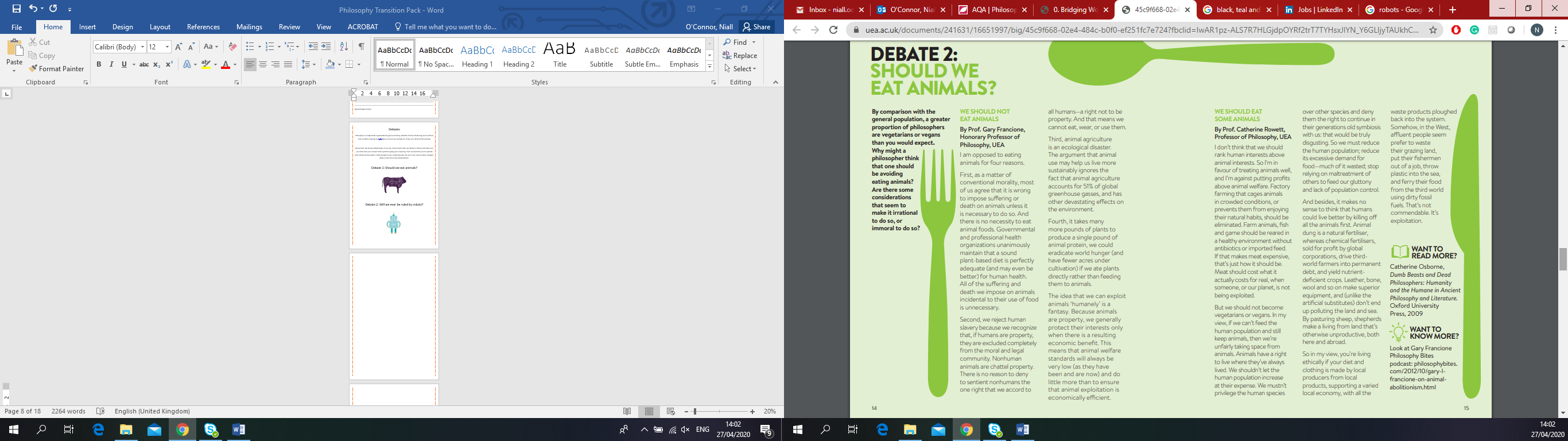
**Total marks: 30**

Debate 1: Should we eat animals?

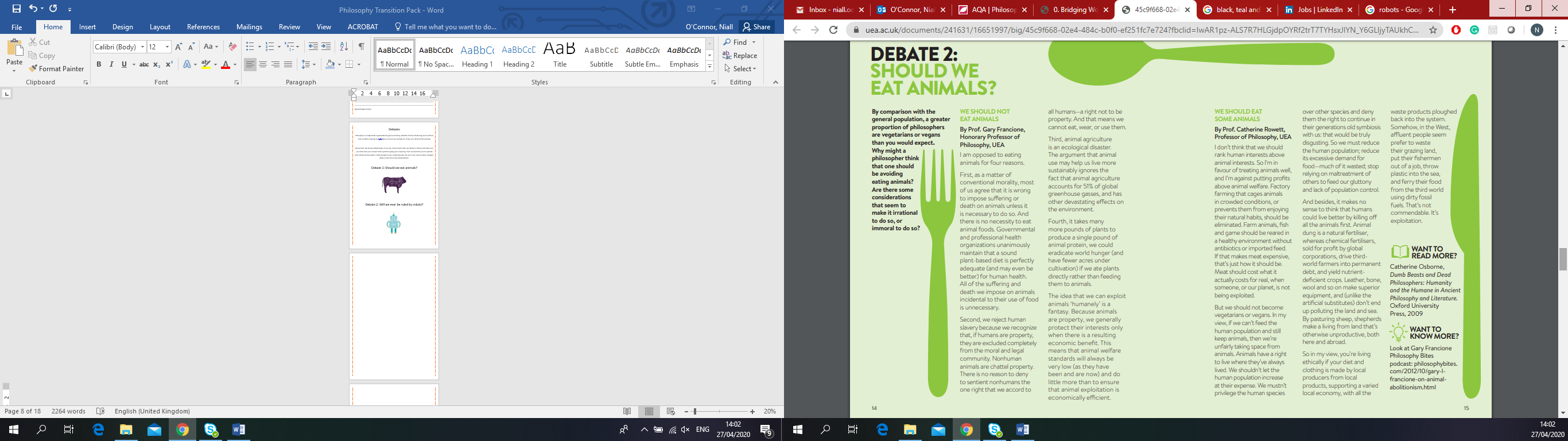


Debate 2: Will we ever be ruled by robots?

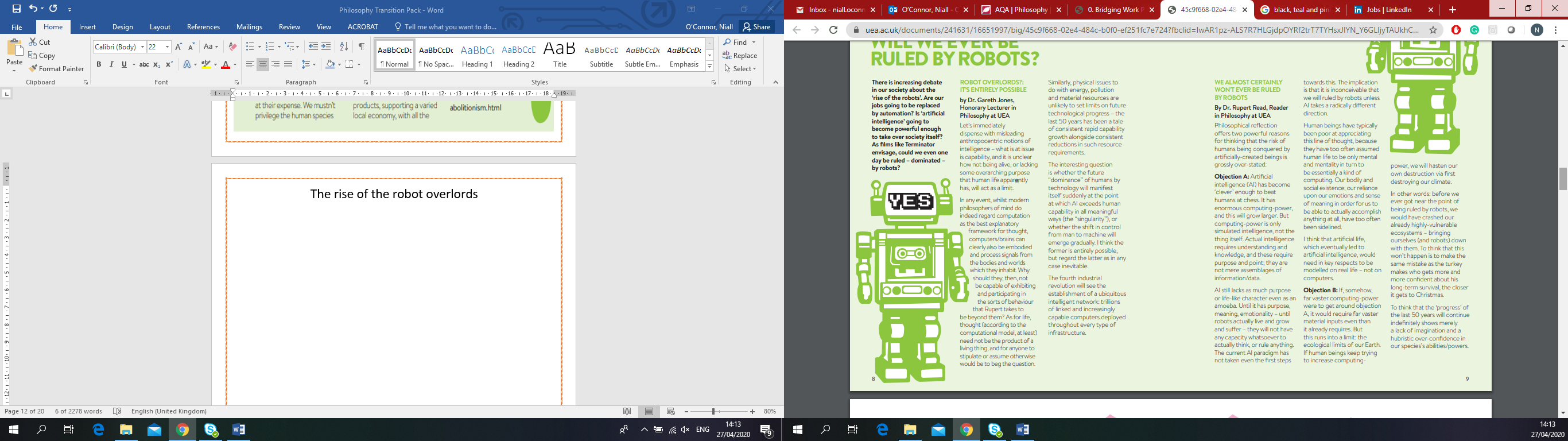


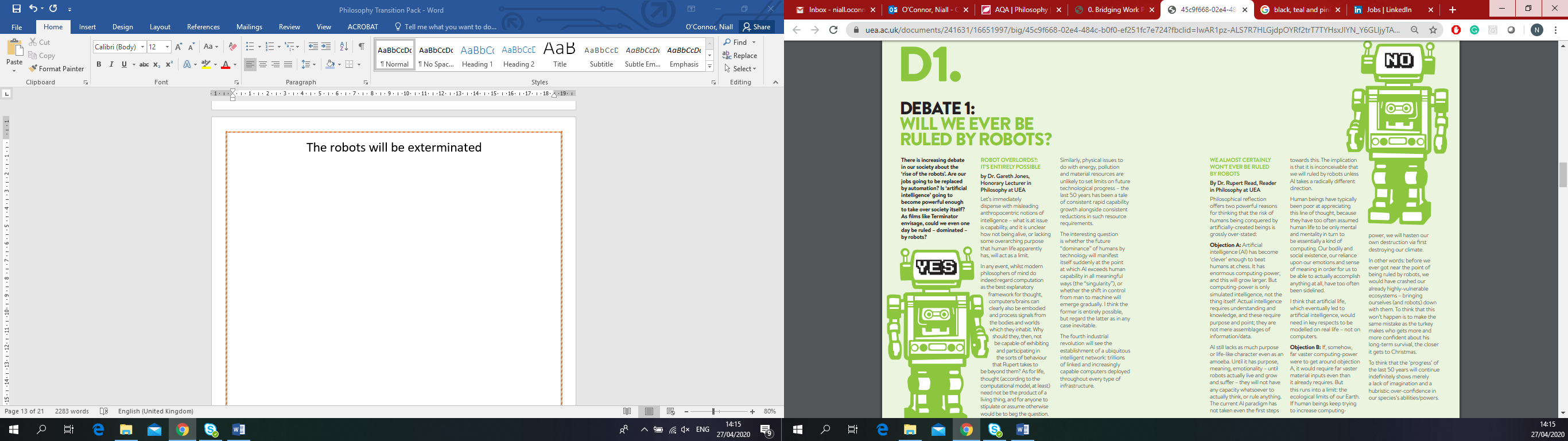
We shouldn’t eat animals

We should eat animals



The rise of the robot overlords



The robots will be exterminated

**How philosophy is done**

As a kind of inquiry, philosophy is aimed at establishing knowledge and understanding. Once we raise a philosophical issue, whether about the nature of justice or about the nature of reality, we want to ask what can be said for or against the various possible answers to our question. Here we are engaged in formulating arguments. Some arguments give us better reasons for accepting their conclusions than others. Once we have formulated an argument, we want to evaluate the reasoning it offers. If you want to know what philosophers do, this is a pretty good answer: **philosophers formulate and evaluate arguments.**

Once a philosophical position is considered:

• We want to ask what arguments can be advanced in support of or against that issue.

• We then want to examine the quality of the arguments. Evaluating flawed arguments often points the way towards other arguments and the process of formulating, clarifying, and evaluating arguments continues.

• This method of question and answer in which we recursively formulate, clarify, and evaluate arguments is known as **dialectic**. Dialectic looks a lot like debate. **The goal of a debate** is to win by persuading an audience that your position is right and your opponent’s is wrong. **Dialectic, on the other hand**, is aimed at inquiry. The goal is to learn something new about the issue under discussion.

**Dialectic is sometimes referred to as the Socratic Method** after the famous originator of this systematic style of inquiry.

**Arguments**

The common sense everyday way to assess a claim for truth or falsity is to consider the reasons for holding it or rejecting it.

An argument is a reason for taking something to be true. **Arguments consist of two or more claims, one of which is a conclusion**. The conclusion is the claim the argument purports to give a reason for believing. The other claims are the **premises. The premises of an argument taken together are offered as a reason for believing its conclusion.**

Some arguments provide better reasons for believing their conclusions than others. In case you have any doubt about that, **consider the following examples:**

**1. Sam is a line cook.**

**2. Line cooks generally have good kitchen skills.**

**3. So, Sam can probably cook well.**

**1. Sam is a line cook.**

**2. Line cooks generally aren’t paid very well.**

**3. So, Sam is probably a millionaire.**

Assuming the premises in the first argument are true, we have a good reason to think that its conclusion is true. The premises in the second argument give us no reason to think Sam is a millionaire. **So whether or not the premises of an argument support its conclusion is a key issue**. Now consider these examples:

**1. London is in England.**

**2. England is south of Scotland.**

**3. So London is south of Scotland.**

**1. London is in Wales.**

**2. Wales is west of England.**

**3. So London is west of England.**

Again, the first of these two arguments looks pretty good, the second not so much. **But the problem with the second argument here is different**. If its premises were true, then we would have a good reason to think the conclusion is true. That is, **the premises do support the conclusion. But the first premise of the second argument just isn’t true.** London is not in Wales. So the latter pair of arguments suggests another key issue for evaluating arguments. **Good arguments have true premises.**

That is pretty much it. A good argument is an argument that has true premises that, when taken together, support its conclusion.

**So, evaluating an argument involves just these two essential steps:**

**• Determine whether or not the premises are true.**

**• Determine whether or not the premises support the conclusion (that is, whether we have grounds to think the conclusion is true if all of the premises are true).**

Task three: formulating arguments

Thinking about how Philosophers formulate strong deductive proof arguments (as above), come up with **three** additional arguments yourself. These arguments must have at least two premises and a solid conclusion that naturally leads from these premises- like the London is south of Scotland example! ☺

Total marks: 10

Task four: what do you *know*?

In first year, one of the units you will study is all about *how you know that you really know things.* One theory, supported by the ancient Greek philosopher Plato, is that in order for someone to truly *know* something, their knowledge must be a *justified, true belief (JTB)*. In other words, they must have viable evidence, they must believe it, and it must be an objectively true fact.

1. Read the scenarios given below. **Using your common-sense intuition only**, decide in each case whether the person in bold **knows** the fact in question, and explain why you think this. [10 marks]
2. Then check to see whether:
3. The person believes the fact
4. The fact is true objectively
5. The person would be justified in believing it (they have viable evidence for it).

(10 marks)

1. If all three conditions are met, then according to Plato and the JTB definition then this should be a case of knowledge. Does this match up to what your intuition tells you? If not, why not? [10 marks]
2. Consider whether JTB is a good analysis of the concept of knowledge. What problems could the definition run into? How good must the ‘justification’ be in order for something to be considered knowledge? [10 marks]

**Scenarios:**

1. **Davina** thinks that monkeys are more intelligent than humans because her mate told her so.

1. **Ravi** reckons the Sun will set at 19:02 on Sunday having read as much in the paper. And it does.

1. The forecast says there is a 50-50 chance of rain tomorrow. Looking at the sky, farmer **Clare** is convinced it will be dry. It stays dry the whole day.

1. Having been told by his parents and having read books and watched DVDs on the subject, young **Victor** is convinced that Santa Claus exists.

1. **Hamid** is convinced that Pluto is the furthest planet from the sun because Mickey Mouse told him so in a dream.

1. **Tamsin** learns from a textbook that *Hamlet* is Shakespeare’s longest play (which it is).

1. **Wanda** watches five films of Shakespeare plays and concludes by their length that *Hamlet* must be Shakespeare’s longest play.

1. **Samma** has been dating Joel for five years now. She knows that he is faithful to her. She just knows it in her heart.

1. Colin is going out with Simone. However, at a party Colin drunkenly flirts with Fiona. No one sees a thing. Back at college Nigel is secretly in love with Simone. To try and get Simone and Colin to split up he makes up a rumour, telling Brian that Colin and Fiona flirted at the party. Later on **Chanise** hears this rumour and believes it.

Total marks: 40

**Total marks for this booklet: 100**

**Ethics and epistemology thinking exercises**

**Ethics:**

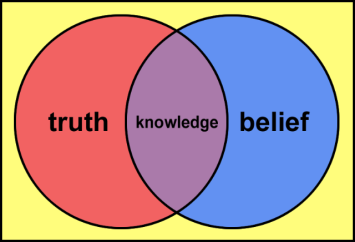
* Think of something that’s pretty good.  
  Now think of something that’s better than pretty good, that’s good.  
  Now think of something that’s better than that, that’s really good.  
  Think of something that’s pretty bad.  
  Now think of something that’s worse than pretty bad, that’s bad.  
  Now think of something that’s worse than that, that’s really bad.  
  Now think of something that’s both good and bad.  
  Now think of something that’s neither good nor bad.



* Do you have memories that make you feel a certain way?  
  Can you have a memory that makes you happy?  
  What is happiness?  
  Can you be happy but feel sad?  
  Can you feel sad but be happy?  
  Can you be happy and sad at the same time?  
  What makes you happy?

**Epistemology:**

* Think a big thought (about something small)  
  Think a small thought (about something big)  
  Think a really hard thought (about something soft)  
  Think softly. Can you?  
  Think a funny thought  
  Think a serious thought  
  Think of a part of your body: think of your foot  
  Think of your hand  
  Think of your head  
  Think of your mind: What is your mind?  
  Think of something that’s true: What is true?  
  Think of something that’s false: what is false?  
  How do you know the difference between true and false?



* Think the biggest thought you can.  
  Think the tiniest thought you can.  
  Think the oldest thought you can.  
  Think the newest thought you can. Can you think of an even newer one?  
  Think of something about yourself.  
  Think of something about someone else.  
  What’s the difference between you and someone else?  
  What makes you you?