

AS & A-Level Religious Studies

Entry Requirements: 5 in English Language and a 5 in GCSE Religious Studies if studied.

Exam Board: OCR

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Main Syllabus Area

This is essentially a Philosophy and Ethics course leading to a qualification in Religious Studies. The two year course is made up of three modules. The modules chosen build on knowledge gained at GCSE Level, both Full and Short courses, but is not dependent on previous experience.

Subjects in bold are studied at A Level.

Philosophy of religion

- Ancient Greek influences on philosophy of religion, specifically looking at Plato and Aristotle.
- The nature of the soul mind and body.
- Arguments for the existence or non-existence of God.
- Issues in religious language
- The nature and impact of religious experience.
- The problem of evil and suffering and its challenge to belief.
- **Ideas about the nature and attributes of God.**
- **Issues in religious language**

Religion and Ethics

- Normative ethical theories such as Kantian ethics, natural law and situation ethics.
- The application of ethical theory to euthanasia and business ethics.
- **Ethical language and thought.**
- **Debates surrounding conscience and free will.**
- **Sexual ethics and the influence of ethical thought on developments in religious belief**

Developments in religious thought

- Beliefs, teachings and ideas about human life, the world and ultimate reality: Augustine's teaching on human nature; Death and the afterlife
- The origins and development of Christianity, and the sources of wisdom on which it is based: knowledge of God's existence; the person of Jesus
- Christian moral principles; Christian moral action
- **Gender and society; gender and theology**
- **The challenge of secularism; liberation theology**

Method of Assessment

Assessment is entirely by written examination, both at the end of AS Level and at the end of the A Level course. There is one paper per unit each comprising 33.3% of the total marks. Students are required to answer two, one part exam questions from a choice of three at AS level and three, one part exam questions from a choice of four at A level.

Qualities Required

An open and enquiring mind and a willingness to examine issues in a rigorous and logical fashion.

Links with other subjects

A Level Religious Studies is an academic discipline which aims to promote an enquiring, critical and sympathetic approach to the study of religious, philosophical and ethical issues. It combines well with both arts and science A Levels and is highly regarded by universities and College Admissions Tutors. It is not considered to be a soft option; rather it features on the Russell Group Universities higher tier of preferred subjects at A Level. The only difference between Religious Studies and facilitator subjects is that it may be studied without prior knowledge while others may not.

Career Prospects

A Level Religious Studies and in particular the Philosophy and Ethics options places emphasis on problem solving and a rigorous examination of evidence together with the development of sustained and well supported arguments. While it is a perfect choice for students hoping to pursue degrees in Philosophy, Theology or Religious Studies, it is also particularly useful for students considering careers in medicine, social work, personnel management, education, public relations, the police force, journalism and the legal professions.

Extension and Enrichment Opportunities

Trips to conferences organised by examinations boards and Higher Education Providers are offered to students as and when they are available.

Reading Lists:

The Philosophy Files, Steven Law, Orion, 2002
Philosophy a Graphic Guide, Judy Groves and Dave Robinson, Icon books, 1998
The Puzzle of Ethics, Peter Vardy, SCM, 1999
The Pig that Wants to be Eaten, Julian Baggini, 2005
Sophie's world, Jostein Gaarder Phoenix House 1995
You Kant Make it Up, Gary Hayden, One World publications, 2005
101 Ethical Dilemmas, Martin Cohen, Routledge, 2003
The Philosophy Gym, Steven Law, Orion, 2004 Christian Theology, Alister McGrath
The Sage Train, Nicky Hansell, Troubadour, 2016