



A Level

Religious Studies: Philosophy and Ethics

Why Study Religious Studies?

The study of philosophy dates back to the Ancient Greeks. Since this point in time its themes, concepts and methods have provided human beings with the opportunity to explore their own existence and contend with the nature of humanity itself. Alongside this, the study of ethics has emerged as humans attempt to codify the concept of morality in order that right and wrong are clearly distinguished. Intertwined within these disciplines, Religion has profoundly influenced the thinking of philosophers and ethicists alike, providing new perceptions of the world and the nature of existence. The study of religion, philosophy and ethics therefore enables us to open our minds to the world around us, challenging our perceptions of everyday life while developing valuable life skills in the process.

What is the course structure?

We follow the AQA syllabus:

A Level Component 1: Philosophy of religion and ethics

SECTION A: Philosophy of religion

A philosophical exploration of some of the biggest questions surrounding human existence, including arguments for the existence of God; evil and suffering; religious experience; religious language; miracles and self and life after death.

SECTION B: Ethics and religion

An ethical exploration of major ethical theories and systems, evaluating these and applying them to issues of human and animal life and death; an introduction to meta ethics; free will and moral responsibility; conscience; Jeremy Bentham and Immanuel Kant.

ASSESSMENT:

Written exam: 3 hours

50% of A Level

Students will be assessed on both their knowledge and understanding as well as on their ability to analyse and evaluate key concepts and teachings.

A Level Component 2: Study of religion and dialogues

SECTION A: Study of religion

An exploration of the concepts central to the Christianity, including God; ultimate reality; life after death; sources of wisdom and authority; key moral principles; religious identity; religion, gender and sexuality; the challenge from science; secularisation and religious pluralism.

SECTION B: The dialogue between philosophy of religion and religion

How religion is influenced by, and influences, philosophy of religion in relation to the issues studied.

SECTION C: The dialogue between ethical studies and religion

How religion is influenced by, and influences, ethical theories and systems in relation to the issues studied.

ASSESSMENT:

Written exam: 3 hours

50% of A Level

Students will be assessed on both their knowledge and understanding as well as on their ability to analyse and evaluate key concepts and teachings.

Which activities will I be engaged in during the course?

You will be involved in a range of activities during your studies, including:

- Investigating key philosophical, ethical and theological ideas, breaking these down and evaluating them.
- Entering into debate in order to substantiate opinions and respectfully challenge the views held by others.
- Reading the works of key philosophers and ethicists and critiquing their ideas and arguments.
- Asking 'big' questions about the nature of reality and morality, investigating and evaluating attempts by religion to answer these.
- Sharing research and presenting ideas.

How can I prepare for the course?

You can prepare for the course in a number of ways:

- Start to read around the subjects of philosophy and ethics. There are some excellent general reference books available in these areas, such as *Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction* by Edward Craig and *Ethics: A Very Short Introduction* by Simon Blackburn.
- Check out the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy online at: <http://plato.stanford.edu/>
- Look into the BBC Religion section on the BBC website for lots of excellent information and resources: http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/subjects/religious_studies.shtml
- Watch *The Good Place*, which is a television series based around deep philosophical questions, significant ethical dilemmas and moral decision making.

Further information: Adam Thomson (Head of Citizenship, Personal and Religious Education)