

religious studies

A Level Preparation Pack



Overview

Religious Studies is part of the Humanities department at Birkenhead Sixth Form College.

Religious Studies A Level involves learning about 3 areas – ethics, philosophy of religion and Christianity. You'll learn about a range of ethical theories, both religious and non-religious, and apply them to some ethical issues such as abortion and euthanasia. In the philosophy of religion, you will consider different attempts to prove that God exists and make judgements about the success of these philosophical arguments. The study of Christianity involves finding out more about Christian ideas about God, key moral principles and gender and sexuality. There are huge numbers of books, websites, TV programmes, films and YouTube clips that deal with the topics you will learn about. Here is a very small selection of them.

Activities

Philosopher Michael Sandel talks about ethical issues in his Harvard University course, starting with the famous 'trolley problem':

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kBdfcR-8hEY&list=PL30C13C91CFFEFEA6>

TED talks on YouTube are great for many of the topics we cover. Here's one from Stephen Cave on immortality, which fits with our unit on self, death and afterlife:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PB7xs7UpIfY>

There are several websites that include the topics we learn about. One example is Revision World:

<https://revisionworld.com/a2-level-level-revision/religious-studies-level-revision>

The BBC's In Our Time radio programme has a large archive at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006qykl>

Here you will find discussions on many relevant topics. You could start with the programme on the Trinity, the Christian doctrine of the 3-in-1 God:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03xgl3m>

Films



- **The Two Popes** on Netflix concerns the present Pope Francis and the previous Pope, Benedict XVI
- **The Last Temptation of Christ** – an artistic take on how Jesus went to his death on the cross
- **The Passion of the Christ** – about the final days of Jesus
- **Noah** – the story of the Flood and the ark
- **Creation** – the story of Charles Darwin and evolution

TV



- **The Good Place** on Netflix gets into many ethical and philosophical topics and is quite funny
- **A.D. Kingdom and Empire** (also on Netflix) is a drama that tells the story of the early followers of Jesus as they come to terms with their faith and persecution
- Louis Theroux has made many documentaries that touch on what we study – try his **Weird Weekends** show about born-again Christians: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p02q5prq/louis-therouxs-weird-weekends-series-1-1-christianity>

Suggested Reading



- Peter Vardy's **Puzzle** series of books are written for A level students and cover many of the topics we learn about: The Puzzle of Ethics, The Puzzle of Christianity, The Puzzle of Evil (the newer editions are called things like Ethics Matters, but they cover the same ground)
- Julian Baggini's **The Pig That Wanted to be Eaten** (2010) contains a range of short thought experiments that ask you to think about ethical and philosophical topics
- By the same author is **How The World Thinks** (2019), which will introduce you to many philosophical ideas

Course Specifications



We use the AQA specification:

<https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/religious-studies/as-and-a-level/religious-studies-7062>

Here you can find a full list of all the topics at A level, plus past papers and mark schemes.