

A Level Religious Studies - Ethics and Philosophy (EP)

“The unexamined life is not worth living” (Socrates)

Key content

A Level Ethics and Philosophy is a rigorous, demanding and thought-provoking subject. It is a systematic study of religion comprised of three components:

- Philosophy of Religion;
- Religious and non-religious Ethics;
- Developments in Religious Thought.

There are three different A Level teachers each of whom delivers one of these components. All three teachers are experienced subject specialists and examiners at A Level.

Aims

A Level Ethics and Philosophy will encourage you to:

- develop your interest in a rigorous study of religion and belief and relate it to the wider world.
- develop knowledge and understanding of philosophical questions relating to religion and religious belief.
- explore a range of ethical theories (both religious and secular) and know how to apply them to a range of ethical issues such as euthanasia, sexual ethics and business.
- adopt an enquiring, critical and reflective approach to the study of religion, philosophy and ethics.
- enhance your study skills, develop your confidence in presenting ideas, critical thinking, essay writing, the ability to argue effectively.
- identify logical fallacies and flaws in argumentation, which allows you to develop your critical faculties and ability to form cogent lines of argument.
- reflect on and develop your own values, opinions and attitudes in the light of your study.

Course Requirements

- GCSE Religious Studies Grade 6 or above (for external candidates who have not taken the GCSE, a grade 6 pass in a humanities subject will suffice).
- GCSE English Language Grade 5 or above.
- Success in the examinations is in no way dependent upon any religious faith or lack thereof.

Structure of the course

Durham Johnston follows the OCR examination board and the full AS and A Level RS specifications can be found by clicking on the following links:

AS Level specification: <https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/242912-specification-accruited-as-level-gce-religious-studies-h173.pdf>

A Level specification: <https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/242913-specification-accruited-a-level-gce-religious-studies-h573.pdf>

The following is a summary of the topics explored at A Level:

Component	Year 1 (AS Level)	Year 2 (A Level)
Philosophy of Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ancient philosophical influences (Plato and Aristotle) • Arguments for and against God's existence • Religious experience • Challenge for religious belief and the problem of evil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideas about the nature of God • Issues in religious language both traditional and 20th century
Religious Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normative ethical systems: Kant, Utilitarianism, Natural Law and Situation Ethics • Business Ethics • Euthanasia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual Ethics • Conscience • Meta-Ethics
Developments in Christian Thought	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Augustine's teaching on human nature • Death and afterlife • Christology • Revelation • Moral Principles (Bonhoeffer) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious pluralism • Gender and Theology • Secularism • Liberation Theology

Assessment details

There is no coursework – the assessment is entirely based on the examination. Candidates are required to answer three open-essay style questions for each component of the course at the end of one year (AS) or two years (A Level) study period.

Year 1: Three one hour 15-minute examinations, each worth 60 marks or 33 1/3% of the AS level grade.

Year 2: Three two-hour examinations, each worth 120 marks or 33 1/3% of the A level grade.

How to prepare for A Level EP (Religious Studies)

- Start by reading the OCR specification. There are several useful pieces of reading suggested in this document. You will not be able to access all of them (due to cost implications – you are not expected to buy any of the books on the suggested reading list) but a few of them are freely available.
- In addition to the books suggested by OCR, other suggested reading can be found below

Ethics:

- The Puzzle of Ethics (Peter Vardy)
- Ethics Matters (Charlotte Vardy and Peter Vardy)
- A very short introduction to Ethics (Simon Blackburn)
- Teach Yourself Ethics (Mel Thompson)
- <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aquinas-moral-political/>
- <https://peped.org/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kBdfcR-8hEY>

Philosophy

- The Puzzle of God (Peter Vardy)
- The God Delusion (Richard Dawkins)
- God Matters (Charlotte Vardy and Peter Vardy)
- Philosophy A Graphic Guide (Dave Johnson and Judy Groves)
- Sophie's World (Jostein Gaardner)
- <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato/>
- <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ancient-soul/>
- <https://www.teachphilosophy101.org/>
- <https://www.philosophybites.com/>

Developments in Christian Thought

- Bible Matters (Peter Vardy)
- Puzzle of Christianity (Peter Vardy)
- The Shack (William Young)
- The Story of the Book (Terence Copley)
- Christianity – A Very Short Introduction (Linda Woodhead)
- <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/christiantheology-philosophy/>

There is no expectation that you will read all the above. Have a look through some of these resources and see what you think. Don't worry if you don't understand anything you read. You're new to this. Write it down and ask when the term begins. Read around the topics you will be studying – use the internet, newspapers and books to find out about the main philosophical and ethical issues and how they relate to current affairs.