

An abstract graphic consisting of several overlapping, curved, blue shapes that resemble waves or a stylized landscape. The shapes are in various shades of blue, from a very dark navy to a medium blue. They are layered, with some appearing in front of others, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall effect is a modern, minimalist design.

Sixth Form Handbook
Religious Studies
(Philosophy, Ethics and DCT)

Contents

Contents	2
About the course	3
How you will be assessed	4
A Level (Second Year).....	4
Our Expectations.....	5
Your Notes	5
Independent Study	5
Assessment.....	5
Other expectations	5
Course reading list and materials	6
Books	6
Useful websites	6
Tasks before September	7
Who can I contact for help?.....	7

About the course

Why study 'A' Level Ethics & Philosophy?

Our new specification challenges your thinking to a whole new level. 'A' Level Ethics and Philosophy is an academically challenging subject that will make you THINK. You will need to grapple with the most difficult questions of life as you study how philosophers reason about what is truth about morality. This subject will help you to understand the viewpoints of others and develop the essential skill of communication which is needed in all areas of life. You will develop an in-depth explanation about how philosophical arguments develop and how ethicists reason about how to live a moral life.

You will build on some of the skills that you have learned in GCSE, particularly in the Philosophy side of the course: remember David Hume's response to miracles? Can you develop Aquinas' First cause argument in 4 stages? You will learn how to critically assess ethical and philosophical theories, identifying strengths and weaknesses of the argument. In particular, you will need to be able to use one philosopher to challenge or support another.

The course is divided into 3 sections:

Philosophy of Religion:

In this unit you will consider questions such as:-

- How do I be sure that this is not a dream world?
- Can God's existence (or non-existence) ever be proved?
- Is suffering the biggest obstacle to a belief in God?

Religion & Ethics:

In this unit you consider questions such as:-

- What is it to live a morally good life? Should this ever involve torture to save the innocent?
- Is it greedy and immoral to seek the biggest profits in business?
- What is the purpose of sex?

Developments in Christian thought:

In this unit you consider questions such as:-

- How can we be sure of Heaven and what is it like?
- Is selfless love the best way to understand Christian morality?
- Should Bonhoeffer have betrayed his pacifist principles to kill Hitler?

How you will be assessed

A Level (Second Year)

Each exam is two hours long. You will be expected to write answers to 3 essay questions in each exam.

Paper 1 – Philosophy of religion (120 minutes)

- Ancient philosophy: Plato and Aristotle
- Soul, mind and body
- Arguments about the existence or non-existence of God
- Religious Experience
- The problem of evil
- The nature of God
- Religious language

Paper 2 – Religion & Ethics (120 minutes)

- Normative ethical theories – Natural Law, Situation Ethics, Utilitarianism and Kantian Ethics
- The application of ethical theory to euthanasia and abortion
- Meta Ethics
- Conscience
- Sexual ethics

Paper 3 – Developments in Christian thought (120 minutes)

- Human Nature
- Knowledge of God's existence
- Jesus Christ
- Christian Moral Principles
- Christian Moral Action
- Pluralism in society and theology
- Gender in society and theology
- Secularism
- Liberation theology and Marxism

In addition there will be internal exams at the end of Year 12 to assess progress made.

Our Expectations

Your Notes

We expect all students to maintain a well-organised folder and record your notes on a contents page for each unit. These will be spot checked at times during the course.

Your folder should include:

- Class notes organised in sections
- Home learning tasks and essays including green pen
- Philosopher Cards
- Self-made knowledge organisers
- Key word cards

Independent Study

To achieve a good grade it is imperative that you work outside of lessons to consolidate and develop the ideas covered during lessons. It is our expectation that from the start of the course, for each lesson, at least 1 hour of independent study is completed. .

This independent work should include (but is in no way limited to):

- Reading/watching videos/podcasts around the subject
- Extra notes as necessary to ensure full understanding
- Research – before a lesson to prepare yourself and after the lesson to ensure depth of understanding
- Revision
- Answering exam questions
- assignments

Assessment

Throughout the course, you will be given essay tasks regularly for all three topics.

Throughout the unit, you will be taught how to answer exam questions. We will practice questions regularly. You will also be given an essay to answer at the end of every unit. All students not achieving their target grade, due to lack of effort will be reassessed until they meet their target grade.

Other expectations

- Any assignment not handed in on time will not be marked.
- If you know that you will be away on any deadline date, for a school trip or otherwise, then it is your responsibility to get the work in before you leave
- It is your responsibility to collect a copy of the assignment if you are absent.
- Essays are not to be completed on evening before a deadline. Start your assignment as soon as possible and if you have difficulties there will then be time for you to seek help.
- Progress will be tracked against your target grade. Underachievement will be identified and interventions will be put in place. You may be required to attend additional support sessions.

- Always act on your feedback and record this on your overview sheet to ensure you move forward as rapidly as possible.

Course reading list and materials

Books

You will be provided with a textbook for the course to use in school. It is advisable to buy your own copy that you can annotate and highlight as the course progresses. Oxford A Level Religious Studies, AS and Year 1 Student Book, Libby Ahluwalia, Bob Bowie. It is absolutely fine to buy these second hand.

In addition you may wish to purchase revision guides, the best of which, our students report, is: My Revision Notes by Hodder. All three revision guides are excellent.

Useful websites

<http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as-a-level-gce-religious-studies-h173-h573-from-2016/>

Tasks before September

In order to prepare for the first topic in Philosophy, please:
Complete the TEDed tasks

Philosophy

Please use the following website: <https://ed.ted.com/lessons/plato-s-allegory-of-the-cave-alex-gendler>

Complete all the tasks and then write 500 words:

- 1) What conclusions do you draw from the allegory?
- 2) If people have developed a way of understanding the world that makes them comfortable, does it matter if it is false?
- 3) Is there some higher moral duty to expose them to the truth regardless of their own preferences?

Who can I contact for help?

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