



PHILOSOPHY and ETHICS

Religious Studies

Entry Requirement: Grade 6 in GCSE English (Language or Literature) or a Grade 6 in GCSE Religious Studies

Examination Board: OCR H573

Course Content and Assessment

It is not a requirement to have studied GCSE Religious Studies as the course material is very different at A Level. However, students who have completed the GCSE will have developed skills that will prove useful at A Level; the subject will teach you to argue well using structured reasoning to support arguments. It is an academic A Level, so wider reading and developing essay writing are essential to success in this subject. The subject is under the umbrella of A Level Religious Studies, but the modules selected are focused on Philosophical and Ethical Enquiry. It is a challenging and engaging course, which develops students' analytical skills and critical thinking. It will enable students to reflect on and develop their own values, opinions and attitudes and appreciate the development in religious thought and its contribution to societies. There is no coursework element.

At A Level, students study three components on Philosophy, Ethics and the Development of Religious Thought. Assessment is by three two hour written examinations. Each examination is worth 33.3% of the total A Level.

A Level

Component 1: Philosophy of Religion includes:

- ancient philosophical influences
- the nature of the soul, mind and body
- arguments about the existence or non-existence of God
- the nature and impact of religious experience
- the challenge for religious belief of the problem of evil
- ideas about the nature of God
- issues in religious language.

Component 2: Religious Ethics includes:

- normative ethical theories
- the application of ethical theory to business ethics and euthanasia
- ethical language and thought
- debates surrounding the significant idea of conscience
- sexual ethics and the influence on ethical thought of developments in religious beliefs.

Component 3: Development in Religious Thought includes:

- Human nature and the teachings of Augustine
- Death and the afterlife
- Whether anything can be known of God's existence
- Christian moral action - Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- Religious Pluralism
- Gender and Society
- The rise of secularism

Teaching and Learning Methods

Students will be expected to do a great deal of wider reading and to make notes, present their views in front of the class, work in groups and respond to events in the media.

Homework

Homework is set regularly and students will be encouraged to develop sustained and critical arguments (a skill required at university), use technical vocabulary and form their own views on morality by evaluation and analysis. They will be expected to read widely and discuss different scholarly viewpoints.

Students will answer examination style questions and learn how to use technical vocabulary. They will also learn how to criticise scholars and think 'outside the box', use logical reasoning and be analytical.

Trips and Visits

The Department has organised Master Classes, where examiners debate issues on the Syllabus. There is also the opportunity for visiting speakers to engage with the students in lessons.

Materials

Students will be required to purchase a textbook each year that covers the components taught. They will also receive supplementary materials, revision notes and guides and will be expected to further supplement their notes with case studies from the media.

Key Features

This course is a popular choice at A Level because it challenges students to question the nature of reality and truth and to examine the ethics of many stimulating moral dilemmas – issues which are crucial to aspiring university students who think deeply about the world and their place in it. It gives the opportunity to explore the work of some of the world's greatest minds and analyse the impact of their ideas on us today. This course has a high technical content and requires students to be very disciplined in their studies to develop the skills to explain complex concepts and evaluate and offer critical analysis of different viewpoints.

If students are hard-working, have an enquiring mind, enjoy critical thinking and are motivated, then they will have some of the qualities needed to succeed on this course. The course covers very different material to GCSE Religious Studies, though those who have studied for the GCSE will be well placed to begin the course. It is technically demanding and learning how to argue and analyse concepts and ideas is exciting and challenging. If you are someone who wants to be challenged and enjoy exploring some of life's biggest questions, we look forward to seeing you in September.