



GET READY TO STUDY A LEVEL RELIGIOUS STUDIES

If you are planning to study A Level Religious Studies with us in September, please review this document and complete the required activities. Please bring the completed activities with you at induction.

FAQ

What specification will I study?

You will be studying the OCR Religious Studies specification.

Year 12 will focus on developing skills for extended essay writing. You will study the fundamentals of philosophy of religion and the metaphysics of mind, ethical theories and applied ethics, and the foundations of Christianity.

Year 13 will include the study of meta-ethics, advanced debates in philosophy of religious language and divine attributes, and contemporary debates in theology.

How many lessons will I have a week?

You'll have 4 lessons a week, each lesson is 1 hour and 5 minutes (there will be one double lesson).

Who can I contact if I have a question about this subject?

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What subjects go well with Religious Studies?

Politics, English Literature, History, Sociology and Economics

What grades should I have? In addition to the general Sixth Form entry requirements, learners must have grade 5 or above in GCSE English and a humanities subject.

WHAT WILL I STUDY?

In Year 1, you will study the following topics:

Philosophy of Religion:

Plato and Aristotle (metaphysics and epistemology)

Mind, body and soul

The design argument

The cosmological argument

The ontological argument

The argument from religious experience

The problem of evil

Ethics:

Natural law theory

Kantian ethics

Situation ethics

Utilitarianism

Euthanasia

Business ethics

Developments in Christian Thought:

Person of Jesus Christ

Augustine on human nature

Bonhoeffer on duty to God

Knowledge of God

In Year 2, you will study the following topics:

Ethics:

Meta-ethical theories

Conscience: psychological and religious views

Applied ethics: sex and relationships

Developments in Christian Thought:

Secularisation and secularism

Feminism and feminist theology

Marxism and liberation theology

Religious pluralism

Philosophy:

Attributes of God

Religious Language

WHAT WILL I NEED?

To study the course, you will need the following equipment:

A folder with dividers

Lined paper

Pens and pencils

Highlighters

A ruler

A textbook or revision guide

Students also find it useful to have:

Flashcards

A whiteboard and whiteboard pens

BibleGateway App on their phones

FIND OUT MORE

These activities are to help broaden your understanding of the subject in preparation for studying this subject at an advanced level.

Careers	https://uk.indeed.com/career-advice/finding-a-job/philosophy-degree-jobs
YouTube	https://www.youtube.com/c/IThinkThereforeITeach
Further Reading / Useful websites	https://www.philosophycat.org/philosophy

REQUIRED ACTIVITIES

It is important that all the required activities are completed in preparation for starting your course. Please bring these completed activities with you at induction.

Choosing your A Levels can be a challenge for some learners therefore if you are undecided around which subjects you are planning to study completing these activities will give yourself greater insight into the course to help ensure you have made the right choice.

Induction Task 1: Scholars Ethics

There are a number of named scholars for Philosophy, Ethics and Religion. Your task over the next few weeks is to create a factfile on each of the ones below. This will help you to become familiar with their key ideas and gain an overview of the developments of philosophical thought and ideas over time.

Name: Aristotle	Born – died:	Place of birth:
Areas linked to:	Quote:	Key idea/s:

Name: Bentham	Born – died:	Place of birth:
Areas linked to:	Quote:	Key idea/s:

Name: Joseph Fletcher	Born – died:	Place of birth:
Areas linked to:	Quote:	Key idea/s:

Name: Immanuel Kant	Born – died:	Place of birth:
Areas linked to:	Quote:	Key idea/s:

Induction Task 2: Scholars Philosophy

There are a number of named scholars for Philosophy, Ethics and Religion. Your task over the next few weeks is to create a factfile on each of the ones below. This will help you to become familiar with their key ideas and gain an overview of the developments of philosophy of religion.

Name: Plato	Born – died:	Place of birth:
Areas linked to:	Quote:	Key idea/s:

Name: William Paley	Born – died:	Place of birth:
Areas linked to:	Quote:	Key idea/s:

Name: Bertrand Russell	Born – died:	Place of birth:
Areas linked to:	Quote:	Key idea/s:

Name: David Hume	Born – died:	Place of birth:
Areas linked to:	Quote:	Key idea/s:

Induction Task 3: Scholars Theology (Developments of Christian Thought)

There are a number of named scholars for Philosophy, Ethics and Religion. Your task over the next few weeks is to create a factfile on each of the ones below. This will help you to become familiar with their key ideas and gain an overview of the developments of Christian theology.

Name: Mary Daly	Born – died:	Place of birth:
Areas linked to:	Quote:	Key idea/s:

Name: Karl Barth	Born – died:	Place of birth:
Areas linked to:	Quote:	Key idea/s:

Name: Gustavo Gutierrez	Born – died:	Place of birth:
Areas linked to:	Quote:	Key idea/s:

Name: St Augustine	Born – died:	Place of birth:
Areas linked to:	Quote:	Key idea/s:

Induction Task 4: Ethical Language

What do we mean when we say that something is 'good'?

Our moral sense of good refers to actions, consequences, situations, people, characters, choices and lifestyles.

Different philosophers explain 'good' in many ways. Good can mean:

In accordance with God's will (divine command theory)

Following moral rules (absolutism)

Doing your duty (Kantian ethics)

Becoming a virtuous person (Virtue ethics)

Promoting pleasure and avoiding pain (Utilitarianism)

George Edward Moore on 'Good'

Moore taught that there is a difference between good things and 'goodness itself'. An action may be good because it is a generous action, but good isn't being generous. Instead 'good' is a simple concept that cannot be broken down into its composite characteristics.

Key quote:

"If I am asked 'what is good? My answer is that good is good, and that is the end of the matter. Or if I am asked 'How is good to be defined?' my answer is that it cannot be defined, and that is all I have to say about it." G.E Moore (Principia Ethica)

Plato on 'Good'

Plato held that 'good' is an absolute that does not change depending on circumstance. Plato maintained that human nature preferred good to evil. The Form of the Good, is a perfect, immutable (unchanging) entity which exists in the World of the Forms, all other examples of 'good' are mere copies that only reflect part of what it is to be 'good'. In The Republic, Plato introduces the cardinal virtues of wisdom, courage, temperance and justice.

Key quote:

*"Once one has seen it, however, one must conclude that it is the cause of all that is correct and beautiful in anything, that it produces both light and its source in the visible realm, and that in the intelligible realm it controls and provides truth and understanding, so that anyone who is to act sensibly in private or public must see it."
(Plato, The Republic)*

"Virtue is a kind of health, beauty and good habit of the soul." (Plato)

Your task: using the information provided, and your own additional research, produce your own definition of 'good'. In your answer you must consider whether a good action is always a good action irrespective of the motive or the outcome and provide examples to support your view.

You must also make reference to the definition of Moore and Plato and examine whether they would agree with your definition. Your answer must be at least one side of A4.

Websites for research

General:

https://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/introduction/intro_1.shtml#:~:text=What%20is%20ethics%3F,also%20described%20as%20moral%20philosophy.

For further information on G.E. Moore:

[BBC - Ethics - Introduction to ethics: Intuitionism](#)

For further information on Plato:

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-ethics/#VirStaSou>

Write your answer below: what is 'good'?

Task 5:

Philosophy of Religion: Miracles

Source 1: March 1st 1950

All 15 choir members arrived 10 minutes late for their choir practice. This was fortunate as at 7.25 there was a large gas explosion, and the building was completely destroyed. Their individual reasons for being late were not extraordinary and there was no hint of a supernatural occurrence. They had never all been late before, however, were late when it was needed for their survival. The probability of them all being late is less than 1 in 16 million. People have described this as a miracle.

Source 2: Jesus Heals a Paralytic

When Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." ...He said to the paralytic, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Source 3: R.F. Holland states...

"A coincidence can be taken religiously as a sign and be called a miracle." Holland argues that an event that some people claim to be a coincidence can be called a miracle. He suggests that a religiously significant coincidence may qualify as a miracle. What makes an event a miracle, if it is, is its significance, which is given at least in part by its being an apparent response to a human need."

Source 4: David Hume

"A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined. Why is it more than probable, that all men must die; that lead cannot, of itself, remain suspended in the air; that fire consumes wood, and is extinguished by water; unless it be, that these events are found agreeable to the laws of nature, and there is required a violation of these laws, or in other words, a miracle to prevent them? Nothing is esteemed a miracle, if it ever happen in the common course of nature. It is no miracle that a man, seemingly in good health, should die on a sudden: because such a kind of death, though more unusual than any other, has yet been frequently observed to happen. But it is a miracle, that a dead man should come to life; because that has

never been observed in any age or country. There must, therefore, be a uniform experience against every miraculous event, otherwise the event would not merit that appellation. And as a uniform experience amounts to a proof, there is here a direct and full proof, from the nature of the fact, against the existence of any miracle; nor can such a proof be destroyed, or the miracle rendered credible, but by an opposite proof, which is superior.”

Source 4 Aquinas

“Those things must properly be called miraculous which are done by diving power apart from order generally followed in things.”

Aquinas argues that miracles are caused by God and affect the natural order of the world.

He goes further and classifies 3 type of miracles:

- 1) something done by God that nature could never achieve
- 2) something that nature could do but not in the order as God can (in a miracle)
- 3) something that nature can do but, in this instance, caused by God e.g. rain

Your tasks:

- 1) Read through the Sources
- 2) What are differences between case studies 1 and 2?
- 3) Why would some argue that 2 is a miracle?
- 4) What are the differences between Holland and Aquinas’ understandings of a miracle?
- 5) ‘A miracle is just an amazing coincidence, nothing more.’ Discuss this statement, using Holland and Aquinas’ ideas in your answer. Write at least one side of A4.

A series of 20 horizontal lines for writing, with small vertical tick marks at the end of the 5th and 19th lines.

Task 6: Developments in Christian Thought (Theology)

Christology is the study within Christian theology of the nature and role of Christ. 'High Christology' asks questions about Jesus' divinity: is he fully God and fully man? Is he capable of suffering? 'Low Christology' is concerned with the ethical teachings and earthly ministry of Jesus. These debates have created great conflict within Christianity and often led to schisms (splits) within the religion?

Read the extracts below. For each one, note what they are saying about the purpose and nature of Jesus. Are they engaged in 'low' or 'high' Christology?

John Hick

[In the world religions,] "although the language, concepts, liturgical actions, and cultural ethos differ widely from one another, yet from a religious point of view basically the same thing is going on in all of them, namely, human beings coming together within the framework of an ancient and highly developed tradition to open their hearts and minds to God, whom they believe makes a total claim on their lives.

If God has revealed himself in the person of Jesus, all other revelations are thereby marginalised as inferior and secondary. Indeed, their effect can only be to draw people in a different direction, away from God's direct self-disclosure in Christ. For if the Creator has personally come down to earth and founded his own religion, embodied in the Christian Church, he must surely want all human beings to become part of that Church. Indeed it would seem to follow that sooner or later they must become part of it if they are to participate in the eternal life of the redeemed. Thus the doctrine that Jesus was none other than God himself – or, more precisely, that he was the Second Person of the divine Trinity living a human life – leads, by an inevitable logic, to Christian absolutism, a logic that was manifested historically in the development of the dogma *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* [outside of the Church there is no salvation].

see the incarnation as a mythological idea applied to Jesus to express the experienced fact that he is our sufficient, effective, and saving point of contact with God, we no longer have to draw the negative conclusion that he is man's one and only one effective point of contact with God. We can revere Christ as the one through whom we have found salvation, without having to deny other points of reported saving contact between God and man. We can recommend the way of Christian faith without having to discommend other ways of faith. We can say that there is salvation in Christ without having to say that there is no salvation other than in Christ.

St Athanasius (On the Incarnation of the Word)

“Not even His birth from a virgin, therefore, changed Him in any way, nor was He defiled by being in the body. Rather, He sanctified the body by being in it. For His being in everything does not mean that He shares the nature of everything, only that He gives all things their being and sustains them in it. Just as the sun is not defiled by the contact of its rays with earthly objects, but rather enlightens and purifies them, so He Who made the sun is not defiled by being made known in a body, but rather the body is cleansed and quickened by His indwelling, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth."

St Anselm (Why God became Man)

How necessary it is for the same being to be perfect God and perfect man.

Anselm. The Divine and human natures cannot alternate, so that the Divine should become human or the human Divine; nor can they be so commingled as that a third should be produced from the two which is neither wholly Divine nor wholly human. For, granting that it were possible for either to be changed into the other, it would in that case be only God and not man, or man only and not God. Or, if they were

so commingled that a third nature sprung from the combination of the two (as from two animals, a male and a female of different species, a third is produced, which does not preserve entire the species of either parent, but has a mixed nature derived from both), it would neither be God nor man. Therefore the God-man, whom we require to be of a nature both human and Divine, cannot be produced by a change from one into the other, nor by an imperfect commingling of both in a third; since these things cannot be, or, if they could be, would avail nothing to our purpose. Moreover, if these two complete natures are said to be joined somehow, in such a way that one may be Divine while the other is human, and yet that which is God not be the same with that which is man, it is impossible for both to do the work necessary to be accomplished. (For God will not do it, because he has no debt to pay; and man will not do it, because he cannot.) Therefore, in order that the God-man may perform this, it is necessary that the same being should be perfect God and perfect man, in order to make this atonement. For he cannot and ought not to do it, unless he be very God and very man. (Since, then, it is necessary that the God-man preserve the completeness of each nature, it is no less necessary that these two natures be united entire in one person, just as a body and a reasonable soul exist together in every human being; for otherwise it is impossible that the same being should be very God and very man.

Task: using the extracts above, answer the following question:

How do Christians view the role and nature of Jesus?

INDUCTION TASK

The study of knowledge in philosophy is called epistemology. One key debate in epistemology is how reliable our senses are and to what extent we can *know* the external world (the world outside our own minds). This induction task focuses on this debate with two popular fiction movies to frame the debate.

One of the earliest philosophers to hone in on this debate was Descartes (1596-1650), he hypothesised what has become known as 'Cartesian doubt' a form of hyperbolic (exaggerated doubt) about *all* our knowledge.

Read the following on Descartes:

In the First Meditations, Descartes aims to determine which of his many beliefs amount to knowledge. Descartes argues that if there is any doubt regarding the truth of a proposition, one does not know that proposition. For example, Descartes reflects that although he may appear to know that he is sitting by the fire, the sensory experience of sitting by the fire could be an illusion or a dream. If a sensory experience could be caused by a dream, it is not certain and hence not knowledge. Descartes introduces the idea of an 'evil demon' as a device to subject all beliefs to rigorous sceptical doubt. He reasons that a demon intent on deceiving could easily make it appear to Descartes that he is sitting by the fire, even if this was not the case. If Descartes' sensory experience of sitting by the fire could be caused by an evil demon, Descartes does not know that he is sitting by the fire. It is important to note that Descartes is not suggesting that such a demon exists – the mere possibility of the demon existing suffices to deprive Descartes of knowledge. Since we cannot determine whether we are being deceived by an evil demon, we cannot rule out the evil demon possibility.

More formally, Descartes' argument can be structured as:

P1: I know a proposition only if I can rule out the possibility of it being false.

P2: If I am being deceived by an evil demon then all propositions I believe are false.

C1: Therefore, in order to know a proposition I need to rule out the evil demon possibility.

P3: I cannot rule out the evil deceiver possibility.

2: Therefore, I lack knowledge.

Having established the strict criterion for knowledge as being immune from doubt, Descartes goes on to argue that knowledge of one's own existence does in fact meet this criterion. For Descartes, we do know that we exist. Knowledge of one's own existence escapes the sceptical conclusion because if I am being deceived, I must

exist in order for there to be an 'I' which is deceived. Therefore, "this proposition: I am, I exist, whenever it is uttered from me, or conceived by the mind, necessarily is true" (Meditations on First Philosophy, 1641, Second Meditation §25). In other words, one's own existence is something that we cannot doubt, even postulating an evil demon, and so amount to knowledge.

Read Russell's response to this type of argument below:

Whilst there is no "*logical absurdity*" in the claim that the world of appearance is an illusion and that "*the whole of life is a dream*", this hypothesis is more elaborate than the claim that there are real physical objects "*whose action on us causes sensation*" (Russell, 1998, p.297). The most economical conclusion is that the external world exists and is known by us.

The Truman Show

Truman is a man whose life is a fake one. The place he lives is, in fact, a big studio with hidden cameras everywhere, and all his friends and people around him, are actors who play their roles in the most popular TV-series in the world: The Truman Show. Truman thinks that he is an ordinary man with an ordinary life and has no idea about how he is exploited. Until one day he finds out everything.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=loTlzXAS7v4>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zYn-HHcyA>

The Matrix

Neo has always questioned his reality, but the truth is far beyond his imagination. Neo finds himself targeted by the police when he is contacted by Morpheus, a legendary computer hacker branded a terrorist by the government.

Morpheus awakens Neo to the real world, a ravaged wasteland where most of humanity have been captured by a race of machines that live off the humans' body heat and electrochemical energy and who imprison their minds within an artificial reality known as the Matrix.

As a rebel against the machines, Neo must return to the Matrix and confront the agents: super-powerful computer programs devoted to snuffing out Neo and the entire human rebellion.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9vGMMPM5Lg>

INDUCTION TASK: Essay question. Complete your answer on A4 paper – you should aim to write 4 sides of A4. This needs to be handed in during your first RS lesson.

Assess the view that ‘it was right for Truman to leave the film set, but foolish for Neo to swallow the red pill’ (40 marks).

In your answer you should:

Compare Truman and Neo’s world
Compare these simulations of reality with our reality
Discuss the issue of human knowledge more generally
Refer to Descartes and Russell in your answer

Guidance for structure:

Introduction
4-6 paragraphs
Conclusion