

Philosophy and Ethics

Qualification Level: A Level

Qualification Duration: 2 Years

Exam Board: OCR

A level Religious Studies encourages students to develop an appreciation of religious thought and its contribution to individuals, communities and societies. Students will develop a holistic understanding of religions by enquiring and evaluating the ultimate questions about the purposes and commitments of human life, especially as expressed in philosophy, ethics and religion. Students will undertake a scholarly approach to the subject and it will enable them to reflect on and develop their values, opinions and attitudes in the light of their studies, carrying out a critical enquiry into each topic taught. This will be carried out through the study of 3 main branches; Philosophy of Religion, Ethics and a chosen world religion (Buddhism). Each of these will be approached individually but students will also identify synoptic links between them.

Year 12

Unit 1: Philosophy of Religion

Students will undertake a close study of philosophical issues and questions, including analysing a range of theories for the existence of God. Ancient Greek philosophy will be explored alongside the study of the relationship between the Body, Mind and Soul. Scholars such as Aristotle and Plato will be closely studied. Students will also explore the nature and influence of religious experiences and investigate claims against the existence of God through examining the Problem of Evil. Students will also examine a range of theodicies developed to argue for the co-existence of God and suffering.

Unit 2: Religion and Ethics

This unit allows students the opportunity to study a range of significant theories such as Utilitarianism, Natural Law and Kantian ethics. Students will explore and question how to make moral decisions, critiquing the theories. Scholars such as Aristotle and Aquinas will be studied closely. Students will also apply these theories to ethical issues of importance in today's world, such as, euthanasia and business ethics.

Unit 3: Study of Religion (Buddhism)

Students will develop an understanding of the core religious beliefs, values and teachings within Buddhism, including the Eightfold path and Enlightenment. The Buddha's life and teachings will be closely studied as well as practices that shape and express religious identity, with a particular focus on meditation.

Year 13

Unit 1: Philosophy of Religion

Students will examine and question the nature of God and impact of religious language in discussions surrounding the existence of God with reference to scholars such as Wittgenstein and Ayer and other 20th Century philosophers

Unit 2: Religion and Ethics

This unit involves a look at meta-ethics and the relationship between religion and morality which will include considering religious and atheistic viewpoints. Students will engage in explorations about the concept of conscience and its impact upon the actions of humans. The theories studied will also be applied to contemporary ethical dilemmas such as sexual ethics where questions will be asked about the morality of homosexuality and extra marital sex.

Unit 3: Study of Religion (Buddhism)

This unit provides the opportunity for students to investigate the social and historical developments within Buddhism with a focus on Eastern culture and its impact upon Western culture. Key scholars in the field of Buddhism will be introduced as well as comparing Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism; primary texts will also be explored. Students will also develop an understanding of religion in modern society, and its role to play in interfaith dialogue, alongside possible barriers which exist, particular in a multi-cultural society.

Careers and additional information

Critical enquiry skills, the ability to effectively formulate well-reasoned arguments and use evidence to support these and logical thinking makes Religious Studies an appealing subject for universities, who, according to the Russell Group of top universities, consider it a 'suitable preparation for university generally' as its skills carve a pathway for a vast range of subjects including Law, Anthropology, History as well as continuing the study of Religion or Philosophy and Ethics (to name a few).

Religious Studies not only enables students to develop a vast range of skills but also an understanding of cultures and customs which prepares students for a wide range of careers including law, teaching, civil servants, public services, medicine and business (to name just a few). It is likely that there will be a recommended core text book to purchase.