

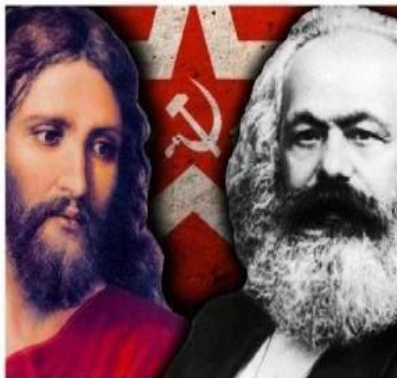


Langley Park School for Boys

Religious Studies

GCSE to A Level

CHRISTIAN THOUGHT



Topics include:

1. Faith and Reason: how do they relate together?
2. Who was Jesus: Radical Liberator or Preacher of Salvation?
3. How should the Church respond to Multiculturalism?
4. Can faith survive scientific advances? Has religion got a future in Britain?
5. How can religion respond to changing gender roles?
6. Should the Church engage with Marxism? Are advocates of Liberation Theology going too far in seeing Christianity and Marxism as natural partners in developing "a preferential option for the poor"?

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Topics include:

1. Plato's world-view - the allegory of the cave & the theory of forms and Aristotle's world-view - the theory of causation & teleology
2. Arguments for the existence of God - Teleological, Cosmological, Ontological - challenges to these arguments.
3. Religious Experience as a reason for belief in God & challenges to Religious Experiences from Medicine, Psychology etc.
4. The problems of evil & suffering - why would a good God create a world like this one?
5. The concept of God - are attributes like omnipotence, omniscience, omni-benevolence and eternity coherent?
6. Religious Language - can we really mean what we say about God?



RELIGIOUS ETHICS



Topics include:

1. Christian Ethics - what are the central principles of Christian decision-making. (How) should we use the Bible, Church teachings or reason in making decisions?
2. Natural Law & Situation Ethics, including an in-depth study of Dietrich Bonhoeffer
3. Kantian Ethics & Utilitarianism - non-religious approaches to ethical decision making
4. Euthanasia, Business Ethics & Sexual Ethics - applying the theories above to contemporary moral challenges.
5. Conscience - what is it and should we follow it?
6. Meta-Ethics - do words like "good", "bad", "right" and "wrong" mean anything at all?

Passionate, highly qualified teachers
 Well-rounded classical education
 Think critically and analytically
 Traditional, academic subject
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 Excellent preparation for University
 Write persuasively
 One offer from Cambridge, others from Durham, Birmingham, London, Edinburgh...

Debate and discuss every lesson
 Engage with the "big questions" that affect us all
 Learn from the wise
 Become fully human
 Other cultures
 Become reflective and self-aware

Analyse
 Individual care and attention
 Practice healthy scepticism
 Boost your communication skills
 Empathy
 Employability
 Sympathy
 Find yourself

Join the fastest growing Humanities subject nationally
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 Excellent A Level results and value-added
 More than half our students chose to apply to study the subject at university in 2017

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Think about things that really matter
 Truth or post-truth?
 Learn to resist all attempts to manipulate you!
 Engage with scholarship, ancient & modern
 rigour
 Rationality
 Oxfordbridge Success

INTRODUCTION

If you're keen to keep your brain active, and you'd like to make a start on shifting from GCSE ways of thinking to A level standard, here are some ideas you might like to try. Reading, note-making, practising your research skills and, above all, critical thinking will all help to sharpen your skills so that when you can begin A levels, you will be in the best position to make the most of your learning.



Reading

Reading good quality material is excellent preparation for A level, whether it's fiction or non-fiction and whether it's about religion and philosophy or not. Try to read something of quality every day, whether as a book or online. If you're going to be studying Christianity at A level, you might also find it useful to read one of the gospels all the way through, as you would a story, to understand more about Christian beliefs about Jesus. Luke's gospel might make a good choice.



Note-making

Note-making is a valuable skill at A level and also for later life if you're hoping to go on to university. Use podcasts and talks (such as the TED talks) as a stimulus, and try to make notes of different points and reasons as the speaker is talking. Make sure you note the name of the speaker and the talk as well; and at the end, when the speaker has finished, go back through your notes and pick out the key, essential messages of the talk. If you try to use handwriting at least two or three times a week, with luck when you go back to school your handwriting will still be legible.



Research skills

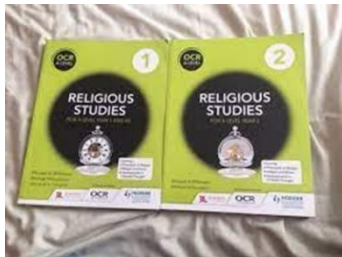
Nobody will expect you to start A level already knowing the content of the course. However, you can keep up your research skills while studying at home, and it would be a good idea to do some research about some of the thinkers you'll meet during your course. Use online search engines to see what you can find out about: St Augustine, St Thomas Aquinas, Jeremy Bentham, Immanuel Kant and David Hume. There are lots of other

philosophers too, but these ones appear in the course a lot. Find out about the context of their lives – when did they write? Who were they writing for? Why have they become so well-known?



Critical evaluation

Being good at RS involves critical evaluation, not just learning material and describing what others think. So, while you're studying at home, try to develop your critical thinking skills. If you watch a film or a documentary, think about the different views expressed in it and whether or not you agree with them; consider the reasons behind your own position. If you read, think about whether or not you agree with the opinions of the writer. If you listen to a talk, think about what the speaker is saying and how someone who disagrees might respond.



The Course

The OCR A Level in Religious Studies (H573) will build on the knowledge, understanding and skills established at GCSE. Learners will be introduced to a more advanced approach to Religious Studies, and will develop a deeper understanding of the beliefs, teachings and philosophy they study.

All learners will study three components; Philosophy of Religion (01), Religion and Ethics (02) and Developments in Christian Thought (03).

In **Philosophy of Religion** learners will study philosophical issues and questions raised by religion and belief. These include arguments regarding the existence or non-existence of God, the nature and influence of religious experience and the problems of evil and suffering. They will also explore philosophical language and thought, through significant concepts and the works of key thinkers, illustrated in issues or debates in the philosophy of religion.

Religion and Ethics is characterised by the study of ethical theories including Utilitarianism, Natural law, Situation Ethics and Kantian Ethics. Additionally, the course includes the study of ethical language and thought, with exploration of key concepts and the works of influential thinkers such as St Thomas Aquinas, Freud, David Hume and A. J. Ayer. Ethical theory will be applied to issues of importance; namely euthanasia, business ethics, and sexual ethics.

Developments in Christian Thought includes study of the foundation of Christian thought, including the Person of Jesus, life after death and human nature, as well as a study of the writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. This strand also includes the exploration of religious beliefs and the challenge posed by secularism, religious values and how they link to multi-faith society, gender issues, feminist theology. Also central are the ways in which Christianity has developed over time, and religious responses to challenges and significant contemporary social issues.

<u>Examinations</u>	<u>Expectations each week</u>
3 X 2 hour exams – one for each component = (Each exam requires 3 essays to be written in 120 minutes) Each exam is worth 40 marks which is 33.3% of the final grade.	5x 1 hour lessons: 3 hours of Philosophy and Ethics 2 hours of DCT Text book and course folder with complete notes must be brought to each lesson If any lessons are missed for whatever reason – it is the student’s responsibility to catch up before the next lesson



What could this qualification lead to?

Doctors & Nurses need a firm understanding of medical ethics and many religious teachings have a direct influence on their job: Abortion, Euthanasia, Organ Transplants, Blood Transfusions, Genetic Engineering

Police Officers need to have a good understanding of multi-faith and multi-cultural issues in order to do an effective job. They must show tolerance & understanding and be against prejudice and discrimination. Many UK laws are based on Christian laws and teachings!

Lawyers & Judges must study Religion & Law as part of their training. Religion has influenced most of the laws in the UK, and also in other countries. They must have a good knowledge of religious beliefs & teachings as this may affect how a person lives and acts; they should also have a good knowledge of moral issues and ethics. It is vital that a lawyer is free from prejudice as they must treat everyone equally.

Social Workers must have a good understanding of religious and cultural issues in order to understand and empathise with the people they are entrusted to help. Religion and culture affect all aspects of life, from birth to death, in the home and at work. All social workers must be free from prejudice and must treat everyone with respect!

PREPARATION FOR THE COURSE

At A Level we start out study with the Ancient Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle. We then look at arguments for and against the existence of God. This involves the study of many philosophers including Kant, Descartes, Dawkins and Aquinas.

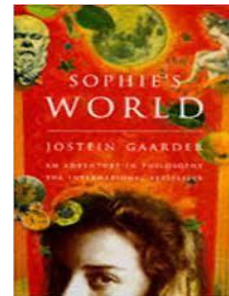
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Empiricism – In philosophy, empiricism is a theory which believes that all knowledge comes from experience.

Reading:

Sophie's World by Jostein Gaarder ISBN 1858815304

Watch: <https://www.invaluable.com/blog/famous-philosophers/>



Ethics

• Teleological Ethics • Deontological Ethics • Utilitarianism • Situation Ethics • Sexual Ethics • Environmental Ethics • Virtue Ethics • Medical Ethics • Religion and morality

Create a glossary of key terms with definitions – Start with the ethical terms learnt at GCSE

Explain the difference between absolute and relative morality.



Listen to : “The Global Philosopher” (BBC Radio 4) – Pandemic Ethics

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b075ft6f>

Watch: https://www.ted.com/talks/damon_horowitz/transcript Ted Talk by Damon Horowitz – We Need a Moral Operating System

Reading: *The Puzzle of Ethics* by Peter Vardy & Paul Grosch

(ISBN: 0-00-628144-3)

Development of Christian Thought

First and Foremost – **know the Bible!** Both Old and New Testament – even reading a children’s Bible will help you to understand who’s who & when.



Then look at St Augustine's life - this had an impact upon his theological ideas and the start of Christianity. These influences include:

- His mother.
- The classical scholars he read as a student.
- His 'wild' youth and life-long struggles with sexual urges.
- Fatherhood (he had a son by his concubine)
- His involvement in Manicheanism (especially the dualistic world view) and his eventual disillusionment with it.
- His interest in neo-Platonism
- His argument with Pelagius about free will.

Reading : Vardy, P. The Puzzle of God Fount ISBN-10: 0006281435

Watch: Augustine documentary

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9nz7C0Kr9OA&t=5s>

<http://www.philosopherkings.co.uk/augustinebiography.html> Key info/biography page

Extra Suggestions for the Summer



- Go to speaker's corner in Hyde Park and listen to some of the debates- even get involved!
- Visit the British museum and art galleries; view all the different types of religious art and artifacts
- Visit the Imperial war museum and see the Holocaust exhibition
- Visit Westminster Abbey, St Paul's Cathedral or Canterbury
- Research and listen to some TED talks on religion, theology, ethics or philosophy.



Read newspapers or at least watch the news at least once a day.

- Listen to some Radio 4 programs on relevant topics
- Watch 'The Big Questions' on You tube
- Watch "The Matrix"