

RELIGIOUS STUDIES AS/A Level

Main areas of study : Philosophy of Religion and Ethics

Examination Board **OCR**
Syllabus Number **H172**

Why study Religious Studies at AS Level?

One reason is because it deals with some of the most important questions in life:

- Does God exist?
- Why is there suffering in the world?
- How do we know what is right or wrong?

Through studying and discussing these issues you will improve your thinking skills and ability to develop an argument. You will learn to think philosophically about issues, understand how key ideas have developed through the work of philosophers in the past and recognise their influence on ideas in society today. You will also have the opportunity to reflect upon your own points of view in relation to these ideas.

Why study Religious Studies at A2 Level?

A2 enables you to deepen your philosophical reasoning and evaluative skills further. You will be required to think in a critical and reflective way that enables you to make the connections between the different elements of the course.

Entry – who can do the course?

Anyone who has been accepted in to the Sixth Form and whose GCSE Grades show a good command of reading and writing skills. a GCSE grade C in English is essential. It is not necessary to have taken the subject at GCSE and you do not have to be religious. You do need to be interested in ideas and discussion and in learning more about the reasons behind why people hold beliefs.

Higher Education

As well as preparing a student for one of the variety of degree courses in Philosophy, Ethics or Religious Studies, an A Level Religious Studies pass is of the same value as any other A Level. This can be used as part of basic entrance qualifications for a university course, especially in the Arts, Humanities or Law. The study of Ethics compliments work in the field of medicine, medical sciences or the caring professions. Religious Studies is also a valuable subject for those intending to enter the teaching profession. Most Primary School teachers are involved in teaching Religious Studies and at Secondary level there is still a shortage of specialists.

Careers

This extract from a leaflet produced by the Professional Council for Religious Education provides a useful summary.

‘In the world of work employers look for someone with an enquiring mind, an appreciation of different viewpoints, an ability to come to clear and balanced decisions. These skills all develop through RS. If you want to work with people, in caring work, teaching, journalism, publishing, police work, health, work with children or to work abroad in a cosmopolitan setting, RS will give you plenty to think about, and valuable expertise’.

AS Course Content

The course will focus on two areas:

1. Philosophy of Religion including arguments for the existence of God, the problem of suffering, the nature of religious experience and religious language. Philosophers studied will include Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, Descartes and Kant, as well as more recent contributions from Russell, Hick and Swinburne. The major challenges to religious belief will also be discussed considering the ideas of Darwinism, the psychology of Freud and Richard Dawkins.
2. Religious Ethics including the main ethical theories of Natural Law, Kantian Ethics and Utilitarianism. An important aspect of this course will also be the application of these theories to the issues of Abortion, Euthanasia, Genetic Engineering and War and Peace.

Assessment 1

This will be by two examinations of one and half hours length at the end of Year 12. The examinations will count as an AS Level or as 50% towards the A Level if students wish to continue to A2.

Assessment 2

This will be by two examinations at the end of Year 13.

There is no coursework element in this AS/A2 subject.

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