

A-Level Religious Education (Philosophy, Ethics & a Study of Religion: Christianity)

There are three parts (exam papers) for the A Level Religious Education course:

- Philosophy of Religion
- Religion & Ethics
- Study of Religion: Christianity

Over the summer, to get you off to a flying start in Year 12, please complete the following tasks. When completing the tasks, you are expected to include some independent research & to actually read the information you find. Do not copy from the internet/book (unless it is a definition) – you will not develop understanding – and do not rely on Wikipedia – use it as a starting point, but look elsewhere too (suggested websites & books at the end). I expect this work to take you approx. six-eight hours to complete, plus a couple of hours of research time.

Completion of these tasks is compulsory; hand in your completed work, named, during your first RE lesson in September

Task 1 – Philosopher's Timeline

Create a 'Philosophers Timeline'. You will study each of these philosophers listed below (and others) throughout the course in relation to one or more areas. For each philosopher listed below you should include the following:

- Birth & death dates and background (brief)
- Early influence (who influenced them)
- Key/main beliefs & teachings and what area(s) of study they are related to & how (if possible)

NB: be aware that some of the philosophers listed may fall into more than one area of study

- | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| o Socrates | o John Stuart Mill | o G. E. Moore |
| o St. Augustine | o F. C. Coplestone | o Peter Singer |
| o William Paley | o Richard Dawkins | o Alistair McGrath |
| o Bertrand Russell | o Irenaeus | o J Moltmann |
| o John Hick | o Immanuel Kant | o Karl Barth |
| o Plato | o Charles Darwin | o Karl Rahner |
| o St. Thomas Aquinas | o J. Ayer | o William James |
| o Jeremy Bentham | o Peter Vardy | o Rudolph Otto |
| o Joseph Fletcher | o St. Anselm | o J Mackie |
| o Richard Swinburne | o Rene Descartes | o Paul Tillich |
| o Aristotle | o Jesus | o L Wittgenstein |
| o David Hume | o William Barclay | |

Task 2 – Glossary

Start a glossary. Find out the definitions for the following key words (and add any other new words to it that you have found whilst completing this work). Create a colour code for the key words – you will need three colours (philosophy, ethics & Christianity). You may copy the definition, but also rewrite in language you understand!

- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|--|
| 1. Inductive | 16. Omnipotence | 31. Cognitivism |
| 2. Deductive | 17. Omnipresence | 32. Non-cognitivism |
| 3. A Priori | 18. Omniscience | 33. Emanation |
| 4. A Posteriori | 19. Transcendence | 34. Construction (in relation to God as Creator) |
| 5. Synthetic | 20. Imminence | 35. Artistic expression |
| 6. Analytic | 21. Allegory | 36. Stewardship |
| 7. Relativism/Relativist | 22. Analogy | 37. The Trinity |
| 8. Absolutism/Absolutist | 23. Dualism | 38. Unity |
| 9. Deism | 24. Empiricist | 39. Holiness |
| 10. Theism | 25. Empirical evidence | 40. Ethics |
| 11. Theist | 26. Rationalist | 41. Morals |
| 12. Atheist | 27. Innate | 42. Philosophy |
| 13. Agnostic | 28. Immutable | |
| 14. Creatio ex nihilo | 29. Deontological | |
| 15. Omnibenevolence | 30. Teleological | |

Task 3 – Knowledge (Plato's Republic)

- A. Read Plato's Allegory of the Cave from his book 'The Republic' (Book VII, 514a-521d)
- B. Make notes on the allegory of the cave & explain what it means (you may choose to use YouTube to help you with this)
- C. Where is Plato suggesting knowledge comes from? Do you agree?
- D. Discuss the following statement, making links to Plato's view - 'Knowledge only comes from experience'

Task 4 - Ethical Approaches

- A. Research the difference between deontological (absolutist) vs. teleological (relativist) ethics
- B. Which do you think is better way of making an ethical decision (deciding what is right or wrong)? Give a real-life example where either could be applied & explain what the outcome might be if each ethical theory were followed.

This doesn't have to be in-depth, but it should show your understanding of the ethical approaches

- C. Discuss the following statement 'Moral decisions should be made on the basis of the consequence, not the action itself'

Task 5 - Existence of God

- A. Does or can God really exist? Answer this question from your own perspective, drawing on real life experience and any valid arguments.
- B. Choose one of the following – Teleological (Design) Argument, Cosmological (Causation), Argument or Ontological Argument – and do some research. Summarise the main argument
- C. Explain how the argument you have chosen to summarise (b) either supports or refutes your point of views/claims made in (a)

Task 6 - What about you?

- A. Complete the survey found at <http://www.outofservice.com/morality/> - you will need to bring a copy of the results with you at the beginning of the year. Along with this you should write an evaluation of the results of the test; were you surprised by the results?
- B. Pick 3 ethical dilemmas as listed at <http://www.friesian.com/valley/dilemmas.htm>. Explain what you would do in these 3 dilemmas
- C. Whilst we will review this in far more detail throughout the course, a summary of the main theories we are concerned with can be found at: http://www.philosophybasics.com/branch_ethics.html. In light of your responses to (b), justify whether you are a consequentialist, deontologist or an Aristotelian.

Task 7 – Your Thoughts

Answer questions 1 & 2

1. French Philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (21st June 1905 – 15th April 1980) is quoted to have once said, "If God does not exist then anything is permissible" - what do you think he meant by this?
2. Socrates is reported to have said "The unexamined life is not worth living" - what do you think he meant by this?

Choose three of the following questions (a-q) to answer in detail. You may want to do some research to add more depth to your answer, but you do not have to. Try to limit your answers to no more than two A4 sides for any one question. You should show different points of view in your answer, as well as giving reasons why to support those views. You should include any other relevant information.

- a. If God 'saw everything he had made, and it was good' why is there suffering in the world?
- b. How do we decide what is right or wrong?
- c. Can religious beliefs have a role to play in medicine?
- d. Who owns the world?
- e. What is truth?
- f. Is God responsible for everything that happens in the universe?
- g. Are we free to make moral choices?

- h. Do animals have rights?
- i. Is killing an unborn human as immoral as killing a born human being?
- j. Should people care more about doing the right thing, or doing things right?
- k. What is the difference between living and being alive?
- l. Is it better to be knowledgeable or wise, or are they the same thing?
- m. Is a “wrong” act okay if nobody ever knows about it?
- n. How do you know your perceptions are real?
- o. If money cannot buy happiness, can we ever be truly happy with no money?
- p. Can we have happiness without sadness?
- q. Why do people believe in truths without evidence?

Useful Websites

- www.sparknotes.com/philosophy/republic/section7.rhtml
- www.mesacc.edu/~davpy35701/text/empm-v-ratm.html
- www.rsrevision.com
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/introduction/>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/guide/>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion>
- <http://plato.stanford.edu/>
- www.iep.utm.edu/home/about/
- <http://www.philosophyofreligion.info/theistic-proofs/>
- theologicalstudies.org/resource-library/philosophy-dictionary/135-kantian-ethics
- www.phil.cmu.edu/Cavalier/80130/part2/sect9.html
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion>
- <http://www.iep.utm.edu/home/about/>
- <http://www.mel-thompson.co.uk/>
- <http://www.routledge.com/cw/alevelphilosophy/s2/god/>
- http://www.philosophybasics.com/branch_philosophy_of_religion.html

Suggested Reading/Watching List

- Ethical Studies – Robert A Bowie
- The Puzzle of Ethics – Peter Vardy
- The Puzzle of God – Peter Vardy
- The Puzzle of Evil – Peter Vardy
- Sophie's World – Jostein Gaarder
- Philosophy of Religion Anthology – Brian Davies
- The God Delusion – Richard Dawkins
- The Great Divorce – C.S. Lewis
- God & Ethical Matters – Peter & Charlotte Vardy
- The Selfish Gene – Richard Dawkins
- A Very Short Introduction to...(series).
- Philosophy of Religion – Peter Cole
- Is there a God? – Richard Swinburne

- Applied Ethics – Peter Singer
- A Companion to Ethics – Peter Singer
- Anything by John Grisham
- Anything by Jodi Picoult
- The Chronicles of Narnia (especially The Lion, The Witch & The Wardrobe) – C. S.Lewis
- Any other books by C. S. Lewis
- Life of Pi – Yann Martel (& film)
- Left Behind Series – Tim LaHaye & Jerry B. Jenkins (& film)

If you are interested, Google films with a religious theme/to do with any of the topics you will be covering...there is just SO much!!

Topics covered in A-Level RE

Proofs, Arguments & Reasoning & The nature of God of Classical Theism

Paper 1: Philosophy of Religion – Philosophical Issues & Questions, inc. the Teleological (Design), Cosmological (Causation) & Ontological Arguments; the Nature & Influence of Religious Experience; Problems of Evil & Suffering, inc. theodicies (solutions & responses); Religious Language; works of key scholars; Influences of Developments in Religious Belief, including life after death & debates between religion & science

Paper 2: Religion & Ethics – Significant concepts in issues or debates in religion & ethics, inc. Environmental Issues & Equality; Ethical Theories – Utilitarianism, Situation Ethics, Natural Moral Law, Deontology, Virtue Ethics; Application of ethical theories – War & Peace & Sexual Ethics; Ethical Language; works of key scholars; Medical Ethics & beginning/end of life issues

Paper 4B: Study of Religion (Christianity) – Religious Beliefs, Values & teachings, inc. nature of God & the Church, the Trinity & Key Moral Principles; Sources of Wisdom & Authority – the Bible & Jesus; Religious Practices; Social & Historical Developments, inc. Science, Secularisation & New Movements in Theology; key works of scholars; Religion & Society

List of equipment needed for RS A- Level

(you must have these at the start of September!)

- Lever Arch Folder
- 2 x Pack of 10 Dividers (or one pack of 20)
- Pad of lined paper (if you prefer an exercise book, this will be given to you)
- Black or blue biro/writing pens
- Set of highlighters
- Set of coloured pens (optional)