

Religious Studies A Level 2022-24 (OCR)



Why choose Religious Studies?

At some point in our lives we are confronted with ultimate questions such as, 'Is there a God?' 'Where did the universe come from?' 'Is there a life after death?' 'How do I know what is right or wrong?' 'Is there a purpose to life?' 'Are we alone in the universe?' Reflecting on such questions is one of the things which make us human. Religious Studies is a unique subject which provides you with an opportunity to explore such questions in depth through philosophy, religion and ethics. As such it involves thinking deeply, analysing and evaluating thought systems, religions, values and concepts and the chance to develop your own worldview. The subject's key skills are clear and coherent communication, the ability to understand and represent other people's points of view, the ability to present persuasive arguments and the skill of reading, analysing and synthesizing information, ideas and different types of literature. The subject can be combined with any other AS/A Level and is a useful qualification for a wide variety of university degree subjects, including economics, English, Geography, History, Law, Medicine, Philosophy, Politics, Psychology, sociology and Theology.

Possible careers and courses that link to Religious Studies

The skills involved in religious studies are relevant in any career which requires clear thinking, careful analysis, balanced evaluation, effective communication and good presentation of ideas, e.g: law, journalism, radio and television, police, social services, politics and public administration, teaching, the health service, working with children, tourism and advertising.

There are **three papers** for A level RS:

1. **Philosophy** of Religion (H573/01)
2. Religion & **Ethics** (H573/02)
3. Developments in **Christian thought** (H573/03)

If you look @ page 3 of the OCR syllabus list of contents (see link below) & click on those three sections it will take you to the appropriate starting page for each of the three papers. In June you will be required to sit three examination papers each two hours long. You will write 3 x 40 minute essays in each paper – 40% of the marks will be given for knowledge and understanding – 60% of the marks will be awarded for analysis and evaluation.

<https://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/242913-specification-accredited-a-level-gce-religious-studies-h573.pdf>

Course Content

1. Philosophy of Religion

The philosophy of Plato, Aristotle and Descartes with particular reference to existential reality and what it means to be human – the mind, body and soul debate. Arguments about the existence of God – Aquinas, Paley, Hume, Anselm and Kant. Religious experiences, eg: mysticism, conversion – is God just a figment of our imagination? The problem of evil and suffering – how can an omnipotent, omnibenevolent God exist in the face of so much suffering in the world? Augustine, Irenaeus, Hick

2. Religion and Ethics

Aquinas' natural law theory; Fletcher's situation ethics; Kant's deontological ethics; Utilitarianism - Bentham and Mill. How these theories are applied to euthanasia and business ethics. Different theories about conscience. Sexual ethics – pre-marital sex, extra-marital sex and homosexuality.

3. Christianity

In this component, you have the opportunity to undertake a systematic study of 10 key concepts within the development of Christian thought. You will explore religious beliefs, values and teachings, their interconnections, how they have developed historically and how they are presently discussed. The changing roles of men and women, and feminist approaches to theology, form the basis of two of the ten topics. These topics encourage learners to reflect on issues of gender identity, equality and discrimination and the social influence of religious institutions, and provide the opportunity to compare the works of two key scholars. As well as these two, students will explore pluralism and secularism alongside the historical and theological understandings of the person of Jesus.

We use two textbooks for all 3 papers: Oxford A Level Religious Studies for OCR: Year 1 & 2 Student Books: Christianity, Philosophy & Ethics

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Oxford-Level-Religious-Studies-OCR/dp/0198392850>

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Oxford-Level-Religious-Studies-OCR-ebook/dp/B072JWHZJT>

A superb introduction to Philosophy is Prof. Bryan Magee's "The Story of Philosophy"

<https://www.dk.com/uk/book/9780241241264-the-story-of-philosophy/>

You should try to **keep up with the news**, especially re: ethical issues. Anything to do with medical ethics, business ethics/ethical consumerism and sexual ethics would be relevant to the issues specified on the A level course. The **BBC** has a constantly updated news service which you should look at on a daily basis <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news> as well as a series of online articles which are excellent and have helpful weblinks <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/0/> the BBC also has its own A- Z of religions <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/> and ethical issues <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ethics/guide/>

As you embark on an in-depth study of some of the world's great systems of philosophy, religion and ethics, it is important that you become aware of your own philosophical presuppositions (what you actually believe about the world yourself). Below are some quotations you might want to reflect on as you begin the course and we may well have some discussion on these statements in one of our early lessons. Try doing some research on some of these statements & then jotting down your own thoughts and ideas about them.

- ***Religion is the opium of the people.***
- ***Man made God in his own image.***
- ***Jesus is the only way to salvation.***
- ***There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet.***
- ***No religion has a copyright on the truth.***
- ***Studying RE makes you a better person.***
- ***Religion causes violence – we're better off without it.***

If you have any specific questions about the course, please feel free to get in touch with either myself (Mr. Cornish) cornishh@ripongrammar.com or Miss Jackson JacksonC@ripongrammar.com (or both of us).

We are really looking forward to meeting and working with you.